Reconceptualising Poverty in Europe:
Exclusion, marginality and absolute poverty reframed through participatory relational space

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Introduction

Poverty is a significant global issue. An affluent European Union (EU) has been unable to eliminate poverty despite having some of the richest countries in the world with welfare states providing institutional solidarity to support those on no or low incomes. Why is this so? I consider this question by arguing that contemporary poverty has become individualised and restricted conceptually to *domestic relational space*, that is, an individual managing to meet daily needs and routines on a limited income while disengaging from governance structures or *public relational space* where the decisions affecting the policies that govern what happens in both relational spaces are made. Exercising agency by asserting control over one's life constitutes *political* or *participatory relational space* and occurs in both domestic and public relational spaces. Responsibility for addressing societal levels of poverty rests with the nation-state that is increasingly restricting its concerns to activating its nationals to rise out of poverty through paid work and restricting the human rights claims of non-nationals including the right to migrate.

I reach this conclusion in this chapter by examining contemporary European poverty, exploring Peter Townsend's (1979) notions of universal and relative poverty and finding them insufficient for twenty-first century social relations. These two concepts have been popularised in policy circles as monetarised conditions configured around an individual not managing to live at subsistence levels, i.e., *subsistence poverty*. Monetarisation ignores *existential poverty,* a structurally rooted condition wherein a nation-state fails to guarantee an individual's, family's or group's capacity to exercise citizenship or agency, develop their talents to the fullest extent, and make all decisions about their lives. I explore the conceptual limitations of absolute and relative poverty, reconceptualise poverty holistically within participatory relational space, expose its relational dimensions involving self-fulfilment, agency, and realisation of welfare entitlements as universal human rights rather than a citizenship status applied only to nationals of a particular nation-state. I conclude that eliminating contemporary poverty requires European nation-states to tackle both structural and personal determinants of poverty by eliminating both subsistence poverty and existential poverty and providing the resources and governance structures that facilitate the realisation of their 'duty of care' to all those residing within their territorial borders whether nationals or not.

Poverty Levels within 21st Century Europe

Post-war European welfare states dreamt of eliminating poverty through the welfare state, an institutional arrangement that ensured no national fell below a safety net, historically-

determined for each country. In the UK, the 1942 Beveridge Report declared that the welfare state would abolish the starkness of absolute poverty by eliminating the Five Evil Giants of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. Achieved by cash transfers funded through taxation, this would express institutional solidarity between different social groups. These institutional arrangements monetarised poverty by tying its eradication to the waged labour market and ensuring benefits would not exceed the lowest wage (Meacher, 1974).

By the 21st century, poverty had been eradicated in neither the UK nor the rest of Europe. Using monetarised measurements, Inequality Watch estimates that 16.4 percent of Europe's population is poor – defined as 60 percent of the median wage (throughout Europe), although the amount of this minimum threshold varies acrosss countries. Under neoliberal regimes, the proportion of poor British households grew from 14 percent in 1983 to 24 percent in 1999. New Labour's social policies for eliminating child poverty reduced this figure until the 2007 fiscal crisis. The Coalition Government's determination to curtail public expenditures led a Joseph Rowntree Report to conclude in 2012-2013 that 40 percent of British families with children fell below the minimum income threshold. They were too poor to participate in society and excluded from participatory relational space. The situation is dire for those on means-tested benefits: 50 percent of couples without children and 80-90 percent of lone parent families, mainly those headed by women, fell below this monetarised threshold. Families with children were 70 percent below the poverty line, a reality British politicians have largely ignored (Wintour, 2015).

In 2014-15, another Joseph Rowntree Report claimed that 21 percent or 13.5 million Britons lived in poverty. Mining these statistics reveals that 55 percent are in working families and 29 percent are children. The remaining 45 percent is composed of: pensioners (12 percent), families with disabled people (17 percent), lone parent families (6 percent), 11 percent living in varying circumstances like single adults without work (Tinson et al., 2016). Their experiences are differentiated. Women are the majority of the 3.8 million working poor, making poverty gendered (Chant, 2006). Children of Pakistani, Bangladeshi or black minority ethnic heritages having two parents born overseas endure higher levels of poverty, despite having been born in the UK (Tinson et al, 2016). The punitive turn in benefit levels, including the abolition of Council Tax Benefit in 2013, the cap on benefits for a household, and 'shared room benefit rate which becomes effective in April 2018 for adults under age 35', will intensify income vulnerability for poor families and individuals. This produces institutional or state-induced structural poverty, enforced through policy. By 2015, five families in the UK held more wealth than 50 percent of the population. Moreover, half of poor people earning less than the minimum income threshold were employed (*Economist*, 2016). These figures mask regional disparities because some parts of the country, e.g., the North East, are poorer than others.

Marshall's (2006) definition of citizenship rights continued the tradition of excluding non-nationals residing within a territory, especially migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Consequently, a citizen from country A, migrating to country B loses all rights of citizenship including a decent quality of life, simply for crossing a border unless a treaty safeguards these rights as occurs within the EU (Dominelli, 2014). Universal human rights covering food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and income security, stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), vest rights with the individual. This can be utilised to transcend the nation-state's territorial, nationality-based welfare entitlements if nation-states endorsed their portability and inalienability, enabling these to accompany the person wherever they go (Dominelli, 2014).

Whether measured by the proportion of households living in poverty or the concentration of wealth in fewer hands, Europe's wealth is unevenly spread, polarised, and aggravates existing inequalities. The gini coefficient measures poverty reformulated as inequality. In this measurement, a gini coefficient of zero (0) reflects total equality, so the closer to zero, the more equal a society; one (1) indicates complete inequality. The gini coefficient, expressed at societal level, masks inequalities both within and between social groups in a given country, and does not expose deep-seated forms of poverty experienced locally by specific individuals and groups. The OECD claims that Nordic countries report the lowest levels of poverty. In 2014, it calculated Europe's average gini coefficient as .282; the UK's above that at .356; and Nordic countries below this average. In the UK, the richest one percent or 634,000 individuals had twenty times more wealth than the poorest 20 percent (13 million people) (Credit Suisse, 2016). State neglect of growing inequalities in determining the incidence of poverty within a population indicates that it has abrogated its duty of care towards its citizens according to commitments under the United Nations (UN) Charter, and UDHR which all member states have ratified.

Poverty within affluent countries encompasses more than Europe. In 2011, American statistics revealed that 10.4 million people were 'left behind'. The 2014 Forbes List had Bill Gates, the world's richest man with $76 billion, while the richest woman, Christy Walton held $36.7 billion, less than half that amount; both are American. This statistic also exposes gender inequality even among rich people. By 2016, poor unemployed white people excluded from participatory relational spaces in employment, normal governance and civil structures, voted for Donald Trump, expecting to regain the lost well-paid jobs of white working class men in the American 'rust-belt'. In England and Wales, those excluded from the labour market voted for Brexit hoping to benefit from ending the free movement of people, i.e., EU immigrants, blamed for all Britain's social ills. Similar sentiments expressed by extreme right-wing nationalists on the continent included the National Front in France, Pegida in Germany, Jobbik in Hungary and Finns Party in Finland.

Conceptualising Poverty as Absolute and Relative: Definitions and Critiques

Naming or conceptualising a problem adequately is crucial to resolving it. That poverty remains a contentious term, proving difficult to define and assess is unfortunate. Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree's ground-breaking research in York in 1899, 1935 and 1951, alongside Charles James Booth's study of squalor in working-class, Victorian London initially defined absolute poverty. Rowntree's evidence highlighted the structural nature of poverty by demonstrating that low wages, not poor people's behaviour, produced York's poverty. Booth's data were used to provide free school meals for the poorest children and old age pensions for older people. These endeavours raised expectations about eradicating poverty through research and evidence-based social policies.

In 1980, the World Bank defined absolute poverty as the condition of anyone living on less than $1-00 per day, thus monetarizing it. In 2008, absolute poverty encompassed 2.7 billion people living on less than $2-00 per day. Increased to $1-25 a day in 2013, absolute poverty encompassed 1.3 billion people. Updated to $1-90 daily in 2015, this amount symbolises those living in *extreme* poverty; those in *moderate* poverty live on less than $3-10 daily. Malnutrition and squalor are usually associated with such low levels of subsistence, hence its perception as *subsistence poverty*. Half of those now in extreme poverty live in Sub-Saharan Africa, thus (re)configuring absolute poverty as a problem of the Global South. Relative

poverty, associated with purchasing power parity for a given basket of goods essential to sustaining life at subsistence levels, contrasts with absolute poverty. Monetarised definitions are useful, but provide an insufficient basis for (re)considering poverty in relatively affluent Western Europe..

Peter Townsend sought to account for the complex situations post-war Europe faced and emphasised poor peoples' experiences. He originally measured 60 items, later reduced to 12 for simpler conceptualization and use. Townsend (1979) popularized the distinction between absolute and relative poverty. The latter, he defined as: 'the condition wherein an individual's resources are substantially below the levels held by an average individual or family, that they are seriously excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities'. He deemed this enlarged definition more appropriate for determining historically relevant national poverty levels. Poverty levels could change over time in historical, country-specific settings as the general standard of living improved within these.

Townsend (1987) highlighted the multidimensionality of relative poverty using indicators that included a good education, access to health care, housing, employment and leisure activities to express multiple deprivation. By addressing poverty's capacity to change over time and its multidimensional nature, Townsend (1979, 1987) aspired to transcend the absolute-relative poverty binary favoured by Western policymakers. Its multidimensionality was utilised to justify Western Europe's claim to have eradicated absolute poverty. In 2007, the UK's Department for Communities and Local Government measured poverty through seven indices of multiple deprivation:

- Inadequate Income.
- Unemployment.
- Health Deprivation and Disability.
- Lack of Education Skills and Training.
- Barriers to Housing and Services.
- High Levels of Crime.
- Poor Living Environment.

Lists of factors ignore the experiential or existential dimensions of poverty. Another difficulty with this conceptualisation is that new factors are constantly being incorporated into the poverty equation (Bradshaw et al, 2008; Wright, 2011).

Consensus over definitions of absolute poverty or its meaning is lacking (Famy et al, 2015). Despite Townsend's attempts to understand poverty's multidimensionality, most social policies focus on easily quantified, measurable income levels. Factors that situate people in poverty include unemployment, poor education, lack of access to social resources, and poor health. Assigned monetarized values, these become commodified through the market-place, thereby losing their experiential components.

Quantitative measurements of relative poverty proved inadequate for today's world. Setting Europe's poverty-line at 60 percent median wage is arbitrary. On this basis, the poverty line in the UK would be £14,400. In 2009, Hirsch and colleagues reported that to avoid poverty, a single person required purchasing power equivalent to £13,900 yearly in pre-tax income and a couple with two children £27,600. Such calculations exclude house purchases, energy costs, participation in wider society, the stigmatisation associated with being poor, and humiliation of making do with(out) sub-standard goods and services.

Missing from minimum income threshold calculations is fuel poverty, a reality for people on low incomes. Fuel poverty is defined as spending more than 10 percent of net income on fuel for domestic purposes. The British Government's Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 aimed to eradicate fuel poverty by 2010, a goal not yet realised. In 2016, the UK had 2.3 million inhabitants living in fuel poverty. The EU Fuel Poverty Network estimates that fuel poverty affects 30 percent of households in Southern and Eastern Europe. While the figures vary by country, between 50 and 150 million people experience fuel poverty across Europe. Their numbers will rise as fuel prices increase, despite having a minimum income threshold because median wages have stagnated since 2008 while energy prices have risen. Fuel poverty brings a neglected dimension into poverty debates and links to citizenship-based entitlements.

Although the West lacks the appalling levels of absolute poverty characterizing the Global South, critics argue that poverty covers more than income inequality. Meeting basic needs is unacceptable in defining either absolute or relative poverty given people's constantly rising expectations. In Europe, Townsend (1997) enhanced the basic list with holidays, leisure activities, good education, health services, and housing. Rights to energy, and increasingly human rights and environmental rights, are being added to this mix (Dominelli, 2012, 2014). Configuring poverty through the absolute-relative binary does not encapsulate the totality of poor people's experiences of precarious lives or precarity (Moore, 2017).

Additionally, feminists have questioned family income-aggregation. Income is spread unevenly between family members. Housing costs are reduced by cutting each person's personal space. Specific individual expenses necessary for fulfilled lives are excluded, e.g., sanitary napkins for post-menstrual girls and women, mobility costs for disabled people (Dominelli, 1991; Anderson, 2005).

Levitas (1996) critiques labour market-oriented policies for proclaiming paid work as the key out of poverty for ignoring the many unpaid (women) carers and working poor. Levitas (2012) refined Townsend's work by exposing how injustice perpetrated by austerity measures affects poor people's experiences of poverty. Levitas deemed that Prime Minister David Cameron's 'Big Society', sanctioned by the British Coalition government, harnessed the energies of community residents to manage welfare cuts and reduce services in housing, education, health, public transportation and benefits that impacted heavily upon poor people. This strategy, quietly followed by his successor Theresa May, contains inclusive rhetoric, while continuing the savage onslaught on the welfare state with education, health and housing being particularly hard hit.

Corporate elites benefit from austerity because cuts apply disproportionately to individual welfare (benefits), not corporate welfare, i.e., subsidies, tax breaks and other concessions corporations receive to locate in particular countries (Bartlett and Steele, 1998; Chakraborty, 2014). Poor individual's reliance on welfare benefits is stigmatised and amplified in public discourses, while state contributions to corporate welfare are barely mentioned. Kevin Farnsworth claims hidden subsidies to British corporations in 2011-2012 reached £14 billion compared to £5 billion for individuals receiving Job-Seekers' Allowance. DC Johnston tweeted America spends $110 billion in corporate welfare yearly. Good Jobs First revealed that Buffet's (the world's 3rd richest man) Berkshire-Hathaway holding company received $1.1 billion. Yet, corporate welfare remains invisible and unstigmatised.

On the experiential or existential level, valuing diverse identities within a nation-state, feeling accepted as belonging to it, participating in its decision-making arrangements, developing one's talents to the full, and enjoying healthy, sustainable physical environments are critical to having a reasonable quality of life today. Being fully involved in making decisions about having rights and enjoying these encapsulate participatory politics within *participatory relational spaces,* and must be integrated into contemporary definitions of poverty. Monetarized configurations of absolute and relative poverty exclude these existential dimensions of life and paint an incomplete picture of poor people's experiences, with serious repercussions for their quality of life, as the vignettes below indicate.

Consequently, contemporary understandings of poverty must include emotionality articulated as the stigmatisation and embarrassment poor people endure because they lack resources to engage fully in society. They become empowered through participatory relationships that cover identity, belonging, cultural expression, decision-making, and healthy sustainable environments alongside the traditional material ones revolving around purchasing power (Davies and Smith, 1998; Flaherty, 2008; Hirsch et al., 2009). The inclusion of relational politics or power relations between social groups is essential to understanding and devising holistic action to eliminate poverty in a globalized world driven by wealthy elites (Moore, 2017).

Poverty reduces social interaction between and across social groups, and leads to forms of social exclusion discounted from quantitative measurements. Incorporating differentiated qualitative accounts of poverty structured around gender, age, and disability which exacerbate individual conditions becomes one response for overcoming this weakness. French policymakers acknowledged tensions inherent in quantitative explanations of poverty and formulated the terms social inclusion/exclusion to concentrate on social cohesion and integration. Social inclusion/exclusion became popular throughout 1990s Europe because these allowed poverty analyses to incorporate more than income inequalities. The European Commission (2004) defined exclusion as:

> 'People are…living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living considered acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantage through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted'.

Another attempt to understand poverty's complexity and persistence was the 'capability approach' theorized by Sen (1983) to highlight individual decision-making at the personal level. As Hicks (2012:293) explains, the capability approach reconceptualises poverty as more than the absence of resources by focusing on 'what people are able to do and be, not what they have, or how they feel'. The capability approach emphasizes individual decision-making capacities and choice. Neglecting structural constraints including the lack of resources, non-belonging and social stigmatisation limits its overall impact in reconceptualising poverty.

(Re)Defining Poverty: Limitations of Absolute and Relative Concepts of Poverty

Relative poverty has become an ideological battleground about historically determined levels, jettisoned during survival responses which I call subsistence poverty. Subsistence poverty is qualitatively worse than relative poverty because even the pretence of state support for people to transcend absolute poverty is ignored for those who are bureaucratically excluded from receiving institutional solidarity through the welfare state. This position is exacerbated by austerity measures.

Contemporary hegemonic welfare discourses normalise poverty by emphasizing exclusion defined as looking after oneself (and one's family), and perpetuating divide and rule tactics on intergenerational and ethnic bases. For example, hegemonic ethnicised discourses portray (im)migrants as depriving 'native', settled populations of housing, jobs, education, and medical care. These caricatures belie reality. (Im)Migrants staff nurseries, older people's homes and hospitals; pick fruit; and repair houses, often at low rates of pay. Intergenerationally, baby-boomers are charged with consuming their children's heritage by living lavish lifestyles and expecting hard-pressed millennials to cover their 'gold-plated pensions'. This ignores baby-boomers' contributions to: their children's (and grandchildren's) education, housing purchases through the 'bank of mom and dad'; childcare; paying pensions for earlier generations; and taxation (Coslett, 2017). Inclusionary discourses can overturn divide and rule formulations through universal expressions of social solidarity that encompass everyone as suggested by the UDHR. Poverty activists can use Article 23 of the UDHR to eradicate poverty because it asserts that:

> 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for…health and wellbeing…including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood' (George, 2003:17).

Article 23 encompasses basic needs or subsistence poverty. George argues that it enables social workers to organise community residents to realize their rights and entitlements. By acting as agents, residents reject the object status accorded them in hegemonic welfare state discourses to become participatory relational subjects.

Redefining Poverty through Participatory Relational Space

Europeans expect welfare states to facilitate human rights, developing one's talents to the full, family life, and participation in society economically, politically, culturally and socially. Neoliberalism has shredded these expectations as people are encouraged to create supportive relationships among themselves. This reality requires a rethink of poverty to transcend monetarized definitions and include a critique of: neoliberal global capitalism; austerity in European economies; millions left without a stake in society or opportunity for betterment of their condition; and destruction of environmental capacity to provide for living things (Dominelli, 2012).

Socially excluded or marginalised unemployed workers, homeless people, and asylum-seekers forbidden employment opportunities, live below subsistence levels. Their realities render monetarised definitions of absolute, moderate or severe poverty immaterial because they fall well below 60 percent of median wages for relative poverty and exist in subsistence poverty; and European nation-states have reduced their responsibilities in meeting the needs of resident non-nationals. Although welfare states expend substantial resources, persistent relative poverty remains and large swathes of poor, ostracised Europeans are invisible within

them. Homeless people living on the streets, especially children; undocumented migrants in refugee camps; unemployed people on benefits; and those living in war-torn fragile states like the Ukraine live outside the money economy, surviving on uncertain incomes. Others leading precarious lives in the labour market rely on in-group social capital and relationships to survive both subsistence and existential poverty. Their narratives have prompted me to re-envisage poverty within participatory relational space and universal human rights.

I examine contemporary experiences of poverty among diverse excluded, marginalized and disenfranchised groups to reconceptualise poverty through their stories as *existential poverty*, i.e., emotionality of life. These narratives capture the sense of hopelessness and despair many currently living in Europe feel despite their resilience. This redefinition transcends monetaristic approaches to poverty, relative and absolute, by incorporating an analysis of domestic and public relational spaces in shaping identity, belonging, connectedness, relationships, diversity, emotionality, governance structures, control over daily life, participating in decision-making structures, certainty in an uncertain world, environmental justice, and global interdependency. Utilising these narratives and the concept of participatory relational space, I transcend Peter Townsend's classical analysis of poverty. Involvement in *participatory relational space* empowers poor people to develop their individual talents, exercise agency, belong to and participate fully in society and engage in decisions about its future direction. This reconceptualization of poverty necessitates both personal and structural social change to eliminate both subsistence and existential poverty.

Participatory relational space is holistic and integrative. It encompasses *subsistence poverty* linked to inadequate incomes for purchasing life's necessities, historically determined as a decent quality of life; promotes the exercise of agency in personal daily life or domestic relational space; and addresses *existential poverty* or emotionality of life, namely, being treated with respect, dignity, acceptance and belonging in a particular space (virtual or real), shaping social, political and economic relationships and (re)creating and using social capital in political relational space. These two dimensions are not separate, but integrated within a poor person's experience. Although shaped by poverty, poor people's lives are simultaneously influenced by their agency and capacity to act individually and collectively to alter their situation. Within the participatory relational space framework, subsistence poverty and existential poverty are relational; transcend Townsend's relative and absolute poverty by including the human condition with its need for respect, dignity, belonging, self-fulfilment, agency and control. The participatory relational space framework endorses new claims by poor people. Their narratives are: becoming accepted by diverse members of society, as poor people become more engaged in participatory rrelational space, participating in decision-making at home and in public arenas – school, workplaces, faith-based institutions, governance structures, political space, and accessing social justice and alongside it, environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012). The narratives below highlight the experiential/existential dimensions of contemporary poverty.

Participatory Relational Space and Homelessness

Homeless people's precarious lives are usually invisible to their compatriots and policymakers. Homeless people endure relationship breakdown, mental ill health, unsafe physical environments and inadequate funds. Lacking homes and labour market involvement, they rely on others, mainly those living on the streets, for survival. In the absence of requisite services and degraded environments, in-group social capital and networks provide needed help. Friends help them 'sofa surf', i.e., a place to sleep for the

night. They also sleep in doorways, or on the streets. Homeless people are survivors, moved from place to place by the police, and live vulnerable and uncertain existences.

The European Federation of National Organisations Working with Homeless claims that homelessness is a serious social issue in all European countries except Finland. Cities like London, Dublin, Vienna, Copenhagen, Brussels, Warsaw, and Paris, are notorious on this count. In Athens, one in 70 persons is homeless. In London, those living in temporary accommodation have doubled since 2010 (Uribe and Robert, 2017). They are socially excluded, seldom participate in political institutions or political relational space, and rarely vote. This leaves their marginalised existence in the shadows. Their lives reflect exclusion from participatory relational spaces and welfare state indifference to their plight.

State-induced Subsistence Poverty for Working Poor People

Subsistence poverty considers the structural constraints that individuals confront, whether surpassing them or not. Failure leaves poor people feeling disempowered, especially when denied benefits, as occurs to those on 'zero hours contracts'. Joe explains:

Case Study: Joe, an Exploited Worker

Joe's employer cannot provide work for several months. Joe, on a 'zero hours contract' in the UK, remains available for work but is unpaid, as stipulated by his contract and condoned by state policies which deny him benefits. He has the capacities necessary to do the job, and wishes to work every day. This ambition remains unrealised because he relies on his employer to make available paid employment opportunities. He explains:

'Not only do I not get paid when I am not working, even if I sit around at [company] waiting to be asked to do some work. I cannot ask for a Job Seeker's Allowance because I am considered employed' (interviewee, zero hours contract).

Joe wastes hours which he cannot utilise by taking paid work elsewhere because a 'zero hours contract' prohibits it. This exacerbates poverty, needlessly consumes time and prevents him from developing his talents and fulfilling himself. The British state considers those on 'zero hours contracts' as employed, disallows claims to welfare benefits, even though such employees swell the ranks of the working poor, and ignores them. This becomes structural, state-induced subsistence poverty. Joe cannot change his situation alone; it requires collective action or involvement in participatory relational space to change state policies and employment practices.

Existential Poverty and Migration

Migration is politically complex, embedded within exclusionary discourses asserting that Europe has no room for (im)migrants. If asylum-seekers, they are made to feel particularly unwelcome, that they do not belong, and have their strangeness and lack of European identity emphasized. Asylum-seekers' applications are poorly processed by immigration officials; (im)migrants are subjected to hate crimes (Isaac, 2016).

Having declined for years, (im)migrant numbers are now rising. Since 2015, those seeking asylum, especially from Syria, have European immigration systems floundering. Their treatment is appalling; their suffering invisible. This migrant to the UK states:

> 'There is this backlog of all these people who have been in this country like I have for seven years, and I haven't heard anything from the Home Office yet, and these people are just stuck in the twilight zone. They can't move on' (Vickers, 2012).

Coercive forms of state control curtail their behaviour. However, they exercise agency within existential poverty as exemplified below:

> 'First time they try to catch me, they didn't get me. They cancelled all my support. I stay here one year with my boy, no support. I was all the time running to people to get to eat, get to sleep…They refuse (application) and then they get me and my children, two of them there, and put us in detention' (Vickers, 2012).

Such responses plunge asylum-seekers into further poverty and social exclusion, personal capabilities, resilience and desire for autonomy, notwithstanding. Existential poverty, like subsistence poverty is structural. Despite personal coping strategies to survive, individuals cannot overcome structural limitations to their predicament, including state indifference and absent resources.

Trafficking illustrates another dire migration scenario. The following vignette divulges the impossibility of living in the nether world created by inhuman responses to poor people's need for money, satisfying relationships, self-realisation and development.

Case Study: Trafficking of Sylvan

Sylvan lived in a poor household in Thailand. When 13, she was kidnapped, beaten and sold to a paedophile ring. Along with other adolescents, she was brought to Britain by overland routes fraught with danger and subjected to rape, beatings, a near drowning, starvation, illness, loneliness and isolation. Her family, unaware of where she was, mourned her loss. The kidnappers had initially received a premium price because Sylvan was a virgin. Raped of her virginity, she was sold to traffickers who demanded she repay her costs with interest by working as a prostitute. This would take Sylvan years.

Sylvan escaped after 3 years and sought police help. Deported to Thailand, the traffickers found her, beat her viciously and brought her back to the UK. It was many more years before Sylvan was rescued during a police raid on the premises where the traffickers had imprisoned her.

Sylvan's situation demonstrates subsistence and existential poverty and state indifference. Living in degraded physical environments, she neither belongs, nor is accepted in the UK. Her emotional needs and rights as a child to develop within safe family spaces have been ignored. Her identity as an abused child highlights her exclusion from participatory relational space as adults determine her appalling quality of life. Contemporary state responses have

proved incapable of responding to her with dignity, respect and care due a young person. Sylvan's individual acts of agency cannot overcome adult control of her life or structural subsistence and existential poverty.

These two case studies depict the importance of collective action and institutional solidarity. Welfare states can support these by safeguarding people's human rights, providing services to meet needs including emotional ones, and enabling each person to realise their talents fully. Payment for services can be recouped through policies and treaties that endorse a person's human rights to realise their basic needs even outside their country of birth. Nation-states can counter workers' exploitation by legislating for waged-labour contracts that affirm employee protection and dignity.

Proletarianised Social Workers and Existential Poverty

Social workers address poor people's problems as state servants and community mobilizers. Those employed in European welfare states experience impoverished professional working environments through lost workers' rights, privatized services, market-discipline and managerial prerogative. These measures exemplify curtailed participation in political relational space as proletarianised, alienated and demoralised practitioners that (re)produce their status as precarian workers (Moore, 2017). Precariousness represents exclusion from participatory relational spaces, highlighting existential poverty among professionals, namely reduced professional autonomy and decision-making caused by new managerialist practices.

My research on social workers' participation in political relational space and reactions to managerialist changes in their labour processes is bleak, given reduced potential for autonomous professional action and spaces for dissent. Social workers are exploited through performance management systems, computer-enforced constraints on recording cases, arbitrary budget allocations as funds available over-ride needs-based assessments, and limited service provision. A social worker articulates these changes:

> 'I feel that managerialism and market forces within a supposedly mixed economy of welfare are destroying social work practice. Increasingly, the organisation is driven towards creating an expensive, callous bureaucracy which prides itself on delivering resource-led policies as prime measures of effectiveness and efficiency. Not content with deskilling a professional workforce, the organisation appears to have effectively distanced itself from accountability/responsibility towards social workers' (Dominelli, 2004:29).

As 80 percent of service users are poor, such constraints constitute serious violations of the nation-state's duty of care. Exacerbated by austerity cuts, this process highlights contingency planning in responding to need. A practitioner claims:

> 'Council provide services to those deemed to be 'critical or substantial'….It depends on how a person has been assessed in terms of eligibility for services….if a person is moderate or low…our carers or private carers might actually not be providing a package of care to them' (BIOPICCC, professional interviewed).

Services for poor people target the most needy and are residualised, plunging everyone else into state-induced poverty.

Despite European welfare states' commitment to national poverty reduction measures, safety nets symbolising institutional solidarity through which no person falls are inadequate. A hundred years after Rowntree's and Booth's work, social scientists are less sanguine about the capacity of research to engender policies that will eliminate poverty. Social workers' narratives reveal that welfare state changes including benefit reductions through tighter eligibility requirements, loss of universal benefits following the fiscal crisis, lack of citizenship guarantees on needs-led benefits and curtailed welfare rights have resulted in state-induced subsistence and existential poverty in affluent Europe.

Anti-Poverty Measures Perpetuate Monetarised Concepts of Poverty

National and international anti-poverty measures further monetarise poverty. Several policies oblige European countries to tackle poverty both within the nation-state and beyond. Relevant international strategies include: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Social Protection Floor (SPF) and allocating 0.07 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as international aid. Responses have been slow. In 2015, the OECD revealed that only Sweden (1.4 percent), Norway (1.05 percent), Luxembourg (0.95 percent), Denmark (0.85 percent), the Netherlands (0.75 percent) and the UK (0.70 percent) met this target. Internationalised concerns monetarise and externalise poverty by focusing state attention overseas while neglecting poor people within their internal borders.

The MDGs including MDG 1 seeking to 'eradicate extreme poverty and hunger' among women and children within 15 years (2000-2015) were largely unfulfilled (Fehling et al., 2013). Among 17 SDGs, SDG 1 wishes to 'end poverty in all its forms everywhere' between 2015 and 2030(Deacon, 2016). Achieving these commendable initiatives is doubtful given the persistence of poverty, and its monetarisation. Monetarisation encourages cost-cutting initiatives in neoliberal regimes and neglects the emotionality of poverty, especially its existential aspects linked to acceptance and agency within society (Dominelli, 2014). Moreover, SDGs, like the MDGs, lack sanctions to compel countries to meet national poverty alleviation aspirations. Nor do they tackle structural inequalities linked to neoliberalism.

Poverty reduction objectives notwithstanding, the SDGs' capacity to end poverty globally is uncertain. For this to occur overseas and in Europe, the structural bases of poverty must be tackled alongside the strengthening of personal capacities. However, neoliberal nation-state emphases on: relative poverty; socio-economic models of development that treat people as means to the end of producing profits; and exclusionary governance structures that are dominant globally, exclude this possibility. This reality is indicated internally in the West by homeless people, those on benefits, unemployed people, precarian workers and migrants; and externally by absolute poverty in the Global South. Highly technocratic states do not warehouse unemployed claimants or provide social security support. Instead, they entreat them to look after themselves (Bauman, 2004). Contemporary neoliberal states absolve themselves of the duty to care for their citizens through ideological sleights of hand involving self-care, individual choice, autonomy and responsibility (Held and McGrew, 2007).

Professional interventions can assist poverty eradication if practitioners use international tools to realise this goal. These instruments include the UDHR, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and various UN protocols endorsing equality. Social workers, responsible for enhancing poor people's well-being, lobbying policymakers to change policy directions,

and mobilizing residents to achieve their goals, have important roles to play. However, as a precarious workforce subjected to bureaucratic neoliberal managerialism, their potential is curtailed through the deprivation of professional autonomy and resources to meet needs. Eradicating subsistence and existential poverty globally requires nation-states to support professionalism, promote appropriate policies and interventions that tackle structural inequalities and enhance individual capacity in participatory relational space.

Conclusions

Poverty is a major human-made disaster that encompasses many people globally and impacts upon every country (Dominelli, 2012). It is imperative that poverty is eliminated once and for all. Understanding the phenomenon to be addressed requires reconceptualising the term to capture both subsistence and existential poverty. Questioning the monetarization of poverty has brought new groups into the poverty fold. Crucial among these are: countless college graduates facing blighted futures in countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the UK; the unrealizable hopes of homeless, unemployed, young people; older people labelled burdens; looked after children in the care system; petty offenders excluded from society having completed prison sentences; and asylum-seekers and refugees seeking new lives. Their predicament has material, emotional, intellectual and other dimensions that require urgent attention. Their exclusion from participatory relational space demands a redefinition of poverty to cover its subsistence and existential forms.

As long as poverty persists, the world is losing the talents of people whose hopes, aspirations, dreams and talents are wasted because they lack opportunities, face structural constraints that are beyond their individual capacity to redress, encounter stigma, and hatred – especially if they belong to a minority ethnic group, are disabled, or have a devalued difference that offends the sensibilities of the dominant majority group. Having identified the constraints, social workers ought to mobilise for structural changes that will eliminate poverty and worker immiseration caused by bureaucratic nation-state policies globally. I conclude by quoting from Ken Loach's (2016) film, *I, Daniel Blake* demanding dignity, respect, compassion and solidarity based on citizenship and human rights for all:

> 'I am not a client, a customer, nor a service user. I am not a shirker, a scrounger, a beggar nor a thief.
> I am not a national insurance number, nor a blip on a screen. I paid my dues, never a penny short, and proud to do so.
> I don't tug the forelock but look my neighbour in the eye. I don't accept or seek charity.
> My name is Daniel Blake, I am a man, not a dog. As such I demand my rights. I demand you treat me with respect.
> I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen, nothing more, nothing less'.

Poverty will be eradicated when everyone engages in empowering, participatory relational space as active citizens with rights.

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