Community development and social pedagogy: traditions for understanding mobilization for collective self-development

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss the similarities and differences between the two traditions, community development and social pedagogy. I relate thinking within these traditions to empirical data from a newly started research project around mobilization for collective self-development. In this article, four differences between the traditions are discussed. The traditions vary in origins and geographical spread. They are at work in different welfare systems. As a fourth difference, you can describe community development as located within an educational field, while social pedagogy is to be found in social work. There are also similarities, and one is that, in both traditions, there is a tension between a radical and a conservative side, which gives interest to the question of who or what should be changed. By using these two traditions, some important aspects of the empirical examples have been made visible. These aspects are relevant for the further understanding of the examples.

I have been working with social pedagogical questions for the last ten years. It began with teaching assignments about ten years ago. I was to teach future social pedagogues about the phenomenon of social pedagogy. It soon became clear to me that social pedagogy was not something that could easily be described and this was a challenge to me to try to understand social pedagogy at a deeper level. Since then, I have attempted to shed light on what social pedagogy can mean, how it can be understood and what content and meaning can be assigned to it (Eriksson and Markström, 2000;

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Cedersund and Eriksson, 2005; Eriksson, 2006; Eriksson and Markström, 2009). In conjunction with a newly started research project concerning different adult pedagogy approaches, ‘Mobilization Pedagogy’, I have once again been given the opportunity to reflect on the social pedagogical tradition.

The new research project concerns what we call mobilization for collective self-development. The aim of this pedagogy is to achieve group mobilization that enables the group to become active citizens by working on the development of their own situation and the development of the local community (Larsson, 2006). Collective self-development is placed in the tradition of community development, but the question posed is whether the social pedagogical tradition can also constitute a conceptual framework for the project. Accordingly, I have studied differences and similarities between these traditions. My starting point has been my previous research on social pedagogy as well as other relevant research in social pedagogy or in the field of community development (Mayo, 1975; Eriksson and Markström, 2000; Gustavsson, Hermansson and Hämäläinen, 2003; van der Veen, 2003; Eriksson, Hermansson and Münger, 2004; Eriksson, 2006, 2008; Smith 2006; Craig, Popple and Shaw, 2008).

The purpose of this article is to discuss the relation between the traditions of community development and the tradition of social pedagogy, to look at similarities and differences. How are social pedagogy and community development described and understood in different research projects? What are the differences and what are the similarities? This article is primarily theoretical but I relate to a certain extent empirical data to these traditions to see how well they function as a conceptual framework in the project. The empirical data I use are taken from the latest research project. The first empirical example I discuss is a folk high school class in a marginalized suburban area in Sweden. The study group consists of migrant women living in the local area. The aim of the course is to provide increased knowledge of how the local environment and society function. After the course, the women should be ready to take responsibility for their actions and to participate in political life. Accordingly, the intention is that they will acquire the tools to become active citizens. The second empirical example is a local branch of an association for the disabled (mobility impaired people) named DHR (The Association of the Disabled). DHR is an association working hard to influence political decisions (www.dhr.se) – they call the work lobbying. DHR is an organization run by people with disabilities (Shakespeare, 1993; Beckett, 2006). They believe that they are their own best spokespersons and they should represent themselves in every situation and context. The approach of DHR is rooted in the social model of disability in which disabilities are seen as outcomes of interaction (Dewsbury et al., 2004). It is the societal barriers that exclude the disabled,
not individual limitations (Oliver, 1996). Society cannot provide services or ensure that the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account. DHR wants to change the system that produces disability, an effort that also exists in, for instance, the British disability movement (Shakespeare, 1993). In Sweden, as in the United Kingdom, direct actions are important parts of the associations.

In the local branch studied, the board is working on mobilizing its own members in a campaign, organized centrally, with the goal of increasing access to society for the disabled. In this community, there is no pedagogical leader, as in the case of the folk high school class.

**Theories about community**

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of theories concerning communities and the activities that take place in them have been developed. What these traditions have in common is that they are pedagogical efforts targeting the local community or groups that are often considered to be marginalized in some sense. They also involve local collective learning in order to mobilize. The traditions illustrate different processes, the purpose of which is to improve the lives of individuals or groups. These processes provide an opportunity for the different communities to learn, act and reflect.

Community can be viewed in different ways. In part, it can be viewed as a common value system containing elements such as solidarity, fellowship and trust (Walzer, 1998; Fraser, 2000) but community has also been described as a set of variables. The first variable could be based on a place, a geographical determination of the concept (Eriksson, 2007). Another way of viewing community is as something grounded in a common interest. People are linked together by factors other than geographical borders, e.g. a religious belief, or ethnic affiliation (Hoggert, 1997). Thinking in terms of communion is a third way. This leads to feelings of divided identity (Cohen, 1985) but could also involve a feeling of being connected to a group or a place. From a Swedish perspective, the idea of community is slightly problematic. There is no obvious translation of the concept as such and it is difficult to find a Swedish concept that covers the meanings given to community. Nor are the different traditions relating to community particularly common in Sweden although there are some that overlap community development. Examples, in addition to social pedagogy, are popular adult education and local development (Eriksson, 2004; Larsson, 2006).1

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1 By popular adult education, I mean the state subsidized non-formal adult education conducted by study associations and folk high schools.
In scientific literature, there are a number of traditions that are usually mentioned in connection with communities, apart from community development and social pedagogy. Some traditions are found to different extents in different countries, while others are more difficult to determine geographically. Community education, informal education, community organization, animation, socio-cultural work and popular education are examples of these traditions. These traditions have different origins, both conceptual and geographical, but exist in relation to each other (Smith, 2006; Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009). Several of the traditions can be traced back to both Dewey and Freire, and several of them include different dimensions, for instance, a conservative and a radical (van der Veen, 2003; Eriksson, 2006; Mayo, 2008). They have been formed in slightly different ways and have also been given different names. In the next section, I will discuss the two traditions, community development and social pedagogy, which are of interest in our research project. The aim is to uncover differences and similarities.

The tradition of social pedagogy

A tradition that could possibly correspond to community development in Sweden is social pedagogy. I have spent many years working with social pedagogy, mainly from a research perspective. I have been less involved in practical social pedagogical work. Social pedagogy is a concept that is difficult to describe in a clear-cut way since it has a number of different meanings (Eriksson and Markström, 2000; Eriksson, 2006; Kornbeck and Rosendal Jensen, 2009). A common view of social pedagogy today in Sweden is that it is an approach and a way of thinking in relation to social care and treatment of children and young people. According to this view, the tradition is tied to different institutions rather than to communities. It may seem notable that social pedagogy is described in some international literature as one of the theories tied to communities, while in Sweden it is instead associated with institutions and in particular with different types of institutions for treatment or fostering. This, however, shows the broad meaning given to social pedagogy today, from constituting a way of thinking in relation to children in an institution to describing a pedagogy in relation to mobilization of communities. This view tied to institutions and treatment can probably be seen as being derived from the history of social pedagogy in Sweden. Social pedagogy was first launched in Sweden as principally a method and a way of thinking for personnel working with children and young people in different institutions. The development has led to the realization that social pedagogical activities are closely tied to an individual-based perspective and to children/young
people and institutions. One example of this is when IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) defines social pedagogy as a method of social work. This, I argue, is strongly simplified and an ‘old’ way to understand social pedagogy (IFSW, 2001). Hämäläinen (2003) argues that an activity does not become social pedagogy because of the use of some specific methods, but because some methods are chosen as a consequence of a social pedagogical thinking. Social pedagogy has to be seen both as a practice and as a philosophical approach, with its own theoretical orientation to the world, an orientation with a humanistic, democratic basis. Concerning practical social pedagogical work in Sweden, social pedagogy is a social and pedagogical work with individuals and groups in need of support and help. The social pedagogues are working in many different arenas such as schools, institutions and prisons. Social pedagogues are often regarded to be closer to the clients, in an ideological aspect, than other social professionals and they often work less office-based (Eriksson, 2006; Kornbeck, 2009). It is also striking that Swedish or Danish research, which is related to social pedagogy in different ways, most often concerns children/young people and institutions (Münger, 2000; Markström, 2005). In this article, however, I want to focus on social pedagogy as a tradition concerning community.

The trend towards a more individualistic perspective described here is of interest in view of the fact that Natorp, the father of social pedagogy, developed his social pedagogy as a critique of the individual-based pedagogy of that time (Eriksson and Markström, 2000; Mathiesen, 2008). Natorp regarded social pedagogy as a theory on fostering community. His starting point was that the individual and society were each other’s prerequisites. Human beings live in a complex relationship with human communities. Natorp argued that the individual cannot be regarded as a human being without this community. In this way, the individual and the community are each other’s prerequisites (Natorp, 1904). The community is seen as personifying what is rational and in this way has priority over the individual and her needs (Lorenz, 1996). Natorp thus emphasized community and argued that the goal of fostering was to construct community and to enhance the moral development during the whole lifetime (Eriksson and Markström, 2000). Natorp lived a long time ago and his ideas may seem outdated, but I would argue that it is in his social philosophical thinking that we find the basis for regarding social pedagogy as a theory around community.

Today, social pedagogy can be described as a tradition that has been developed and been given different foci in different countries. Varying kinds of activity have been called social pedagogy, and diverging theory constructs have been used to describe social pedagogy. The fact that
social pedagogy today has developed in different ways could partly be due
to different countries having adopted different theoretical foundations for
social pedagogical thinking and acting and partly that the prevailing devel-
opment of society could have influenced how social pedagogy is described
and understood in different countries (Eriksson, 2006). The way of under-
standing social pedagogy that is of greatest interest in the new research
project is the one that is based on community thinking, but where the ambi-
tion is mobilization. Taking community as one’s starting point, in contrast to
e.g. institution, does not necessarily mean striving to achieve mobilization.
The goal could, for instance, be adapting community. I would argue that
Natorp’s thinking forms the basis of a more fostering way of thinking.
However, this is not a universally accepted interpretation. Some researchers
prefer to describe Natorp’s thinking as more mobilizing (Mathiesen, 2000).
The mobilizing dimension can be described as radical in nature and the
goal of social pedagogy can be said to be the citizen’s liberation from
oppression, marginalization, etc. (Eriksson, 2006). This is a way of thinking
developed by, among others, Freire (1972). In a study where social pedago-
gical meanings were described by social pedagogy researchers in the
Nordic countries and Germany, these two dimensions as well as how
often they interact and are active parallel in social pedagogical thinking
and how they are reflected in social pedagogical activities are described.
A third dimension was also made visible in the study, namely, the demo-
cratic dimension (Eriksson, 2006). It comprised a sort of intermediate pos-
tion, and what was special about it was a desire to support the
individual in different ways so that he could acquire some form of citizen
education and readiness to tackle his situation himself. This dimension is
not collective, as is the mobilizing dimension, since it does not emphasize
the priority of community over the individual. In this dimension, the indi-
vidual is the actor, naturally not in any isolated sense. The individual is
formed in a dialogue with others but is still independent and acts on the
basis of his own needs and motives. It is a question of individual self-
development in contrast to the collective self-development. These three
dimensions can be seen as ideal types or ways of thinking about social
pedagogy. It seems rare for social pedagogical thinking and acting to take
place in this unadulterated way. Social pedagogical practical work or
social pedagogical thinking are most often eclectic in the sense that they
contain several different theories, methods, etc. The three dimensions are,
rather, three ways of thinking about social pedagogy where each dimension
contains collected meanings that are related to each other in different ways.
Each individual social pedagogue constructs his or her own framework.

A closer look at the mobilizing part of social pedagogy reveals that it is a
question of liberation of the citizen who thus becomes aware of his and the

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group’s situation and thus becomes ‘liberated’ from oppression and segregation. The basic idea is that there are human and material resources in communities that can be developed under special circumstances. Today, there are phenomena that restrict people’s freedom of action and experience-based world (Ronnby, 1995). It is interesting to note that a teacher or a social pedagogue, who will initiate the mobilization process, is often assumed to be present. Action is central in this dimension. Both the social pedagogue and the citizen are acting beings. It is an intentional action and all those involved are expected to become actors (Eriksson, 2006). The methods used are more directed towards changes in the local society or society as a whole than changes in the individual. This way of thinking implies that it is shortcomings in society and in its structures that give rise to the individual person’s problems and need of support (see e.g. Ronnby, 1982). I would argue that there is a built-in contradiction in this reasoning. The shortcomings are placed in social structures and processes but the social pedagogue’s resources are directed primarily towards the local group. The goal is to mobilize it rather than to change society. The group, or the individual, is what should be changed, at least initially. This mobilizing dimension of social pedagogy can be perceived as ‘ideal’. It is a way of thinking about social pedagogy that fits in with certain people’s perceptions of how social pedagogy should be but not necessarily is (Eriksson, 2006). Like other pedagogical orientations, this one can be described as being normative. Despite this, there are a lot of practical activities going on, with the goal of collective mobilization, perhaps mainly in vulnerable suburban areas (Eriksson, 2008). I have tried to point to a number of contradictions in the social pedagogical tradition. Social pedagogy can be understood in different ways and is thus broad and rich in content. The tradition contains an individual perspective where the individual is emphasized as an actor in his own right, with his own responsibility and opportunities, but the tradition also contains a collective perspective. In my empirical examples, however, the focus is on the collective. In one of the examples, that of the folk high school class, it is a collective that is ‘exposed’ to outside influence by a pedagogue. In the second case, a group works to achieve mobilization of its own members by means of self-organization. An interesting question is whether this can be regarded as social pedagogy. Does not social pedagogy presuppose that there is an outsider who wants to convey something to an individual or a group of people? I will return to this later.

Social pedagogy can exist in relation to different communities and different institutions, as I have discussed earlier. In the example of the association for the disabled, the group can clearly be discussed on the basis of a community concept. The group has common needs and experiences, and its
members, to some extent, share an identity as disabled. But this is only partly true. What the group shares is an identity based on the experiences of the label of disability. The group denies that they share an identity in other contexts. They argue that their identity as disabled has been imposed on them by others (Beckett, 2006).

When it comes to the folk high school class, on the other hand, it could be relevant to discuss the boundaries between institution and community. One way of reasoning is to regard the women as a community with a common experience (emigrated to Sweden), with housing in common (all live in the local community) and with problems in common (segregation, discrimination, bad economy, poor knowledge of Swedish). Even if the folk high school is aware of individual differences and the group’s heterogeneity, it chooses to regard the group as a community. A possible interpretation is to regard the activity that takes place as an activity within an institution where there is a pedagogue/staff member who tries to achieve certain things with a group consisting of a number of individuals who have only one thing in common – they have been accepted and are studying the same course.

Yet another contradiction is that social pedagogical ambitions could concern both adaptation to and mobilization for a social change. Adaptation often has negative overtones, while mobilization has positive overtones. However, this division does not seem to be as self-evident today. Mobilization can also be a question of a top-down perspective where someone wants to guide somebody else in a certain direction. The pedagogue has the right answers. Mobilization can only take the form intended by the pedagogue. The question of adaptation to and mobilization for social change also brings to the fore the question of what is to be changed. Is it society or is it the community? In the association for the disabled, it is obviously society that is to be changed, while in the folk high school example, what is to be changed is less obvious; there is the intention of changing both society and the group.

The tradition of community development

The tradition of community development is not easy to describe. Here, too, there are many different ways of describing and understanding (Mayo, 2008). According to Mayo, no less than ninety-four definitions were identified in the 1960s. I have, however, tried to focus on what is of interest to my study. The idea of community development grew to a large extent out of the activities of colonial administrators. They tried to develop basic educational and social welfare programmes in the British colonies (Mayo, 1975). One goal was to increase the rate of industrial and economic development.
Through community development, work they wanted to raise public support for government action. They wanted the different local communities to actively participate and if the communities did not take the initiative, the colonial administrators could employ different methods designed to stimulate the communities’ own activities.

Initially, community development consisted of focusing on social and economic development by fostering groups with the goal of bringing about local cooperation and a situation of self-help. Outside experts and methods were also used on a large scale (Midgley et al., 1986). This is something that still characterizes community development, according to some researchers (Cook, 1993). The initiatives come from outside and the ‘work’ is done by paid experts (see e.g. Vasoo, 2008). Others claim that community development can also take place without outside help (van der Veen, 2003). In the 1960s, the community development tradition more became a way to deal with problems such as poverty and racial discrimination, for example in the United Kingdom and United States.

Community development today is sometimes described as linked to social work, sometimes to adult education and sometimes to town planning (du Sautoy, 2008). In some research, as an example, community development is described as a core component of social work knowledge and practice (Mendes, 2009). Community development consists of both philosophical approaches and different programmes of action. In addition, it changes over time (Mayo, 2008). In contrast to the social work perspective, some researchers view community development as most often associated with learning and placed in an educational field (Smith, 2006), and it is mostly this dimension of community development that I focus in this article. There is a distinct educational aspect of community development. Learning in community development can take different forms and have different foci. van der Veen (2003) describes community development as a form of citizen education and as such, it has three forms:

- education as training;
- education as consciousness raising;
- education as service delivery (van der Veen, 2003).

In my study, it is education for consciousness raising and education as training that are of interest. According to van der Veen, the practice of consciousness raising can be something that, for example, takes place in a course or a discussion group. He sees this as an important form of citizen education within the framework of the tradition of community development. This form starts with learning and the goal is an active act. There are several organizers of such autonomous consciousness-raising arrangements. They could be different organizations in society, adult education
organizers as well as e.g. churches in the local community. Education as training can constitute an interesting theoretical starting point when discussing the example of the association for the disabled. Here, it is a question of persons, who are marginalized, in some sense organizing themselves.

van der Veen (2003) argues that this begins with the formation of a group that wants to change a special policy or establish a special service. This type of citizen education is action-oriented. The action comes first and then learning. He says that this is possible with either an external leader or an indigenous leader. In my example, we have an indigenous leader.

In the community development tradition, there is, as in the social pedagogical tradition, both a conservative – adapting and fostering – and a mobilizing more radical form (Eriksson and Markström, 2000; van der Veen, 2003). Other related concepts to describe this dichotomy are top-down–bottom-up and consensus–conflict (Mayo, 2008). In the conservative dimension in community development, the community is seen as something threatened, which must be restored or reconstructed. Different methods and techniques have been developed within the community development tradition in order to support this reconstruction process. In the United States, for example, local community councils were established where representatives of local authorities as well as local leaders of non-profit organizations collaborated in the field of social services. One method used in their work was the community survey, which meant that the local authorities initiated local inventories of social problems. The idea was that these inventories would then be used as a basis of different actions or interventions. However, this way of working resulted in exposed groups being made victims and even ending up in dependency situations. I associate the way of thinking and the practical activities in the conservative dimension to the situation in the suburbs where the participants in the courses studied live. Different projects were launched in these areas, mainly by the state and the municipalities. There are good intentions behind the projects and interventions but situations often arise where the residents become victims and are blamed in different ways (Lahdi Edmark, 2004; Brown, 2007; Eriksson, 2007, 2008). Earlier studies have shown that pedagogues and other actors in the different suburbs have ideas about the threatened community that has to be restored (Eriksson, 2008). An underlying idea in the conservative dimension is that consensus is possible and desirable (Eriksson, 2004, 2007, 2008). In the social, pedagogically adapted dimension, it is most often a question of integrating a person (or group) in a community of which he is no longer a member. The community in itself contains something good and desirable (Eriksson, 2004).

A new dimension was developed in the 1960s as a reaction against the conservative dimension in community development. It was a more
radical dimension that contained ideas about self-organization among the marginalized in society as a contrast to previous ways of organizing built up by official representatives (see e.g. Mayo, 2008). There is an ambition to create a ‘better’ society that can take a clearer stand on human rights, etc. There was an increasing awareness of, for instance, equalities. In this dimension, there is talk about segregation in contrast to integration, which had previously been the goal. The groups now take matters into their own hands. There are foci on social conflict instead of cooperation and consensus (cf. Turunen, 2004; Mayo, 2008). Famous representatives of this perspective were e.g. Martin Luther King and Saul Alinsky. It is community development work that, via a process, mobilizes participants to initiate conflicts of different types with the aim of having their demands met. This radical orientation is often described as being political (van der Veen, 2003) and has also been present in Sweden. Working with local development in the form of e.g. social work was regarded, particularly in the 1970s, as radical work with built-in social criticism containing strong elements of class struggle and class analysis (Denvall, 1995; Turunen, 2004). Some researchers have characterized this work as social pedagogy (see e.g. Ronny, 1982; Wahlberg, 1997).

Now, in the twenty-first century, we have returned to a more conservative dimension based on cooperation instead of conflict (van der Veen, 2003). van der Veen sees this as more non-political than the radical dimension. It has even been claimed that it is now a question of more management-oriented discourses and clear bureaucratic EU terminology. Another example that illustrates the change is that community development has been used to facilitate an increase in self-help among different groups. This has been a way to transfer responsibility from the public sector to the voluntary. Community development has, in this way of thinking, promoted the interests of those in power (Mayo, 2008). Developments in society influence the way of thinking and acting within traditions such as community development and social pedagogy (Eriksson, 2006; Smith, 2006).

The community development tradition also contains a number of contradictions. In the tradition, participation, initiative and self-help in the local community are emphasized at the same time, as the tradition seems to presuppose an external expert who initiates the process but also helps to implement it. The empirical example of the folk high school class clearly illustrates this contradiction. Participation, a bottom-up perspective and own initiatives are advocated but the process is continuously ‘controlled’ and monitored by the pedagogue. However, this is a mild form of control, what is sometimes called funnelling (Rothman in van der Veen, 2003). The pedagogue offers the participants in the course several alternative ways of thinking, solving problems and conducting themselves but
still channels their thinking in a specific direction by emphasizing certain
goals. There is no external leader in the association for the disabled.
Instead, its members search for methods and strategies in the community
that they can use, in other words, self-organization.

There is also a contradiction between the conservative dimension and the
radical dimension. Although the dimensions are described in chronological
order, they can also be present parallel with each other. The effects of these
dimensions can be completely different. In the conservative dimension, it is
a question of adapting, integrating and restoring to a previous state.
A change takes place but it is the community that is changed. We could
perhaps describe the situation in the folk high school class in this way.
The radical dimension involves changing social structures, which is some-
thing the association for the disabled is trying to bring about. What emerges
is that both community development and social pedagogy are sensitive to
trends in the development of society and that they change to a smaller or
larger degree when society changes and new challenges and demands
arise. For example, the thinking in both community development and
social pedagogy was far more radical in the 1960s and 1970s than it is
today (van der Veen, 2003; Eriksson, 2006; Mayo, 2008).

Differences and similarities

As has been described in this article, there are both differences and simi-
larities between community development and social pedagogy. In the fol-
lowing, I will discuss some of these, beginning with the differences.

The first difference concerns the origins of the traditions. Social pedagogy
can be seen as constructed on the basis of a special way of thinking and not
on the basis of practical activities (Hämäläinen, 2003). It was social philoso-
phers such as Natorp who formulated their ideas without referring to any
empirical ‘reality’. In the case of the community development tradition, it
was exactly the opposite; it had its roots in practical activities (Cook,
1993; Craig, Popple and Shaw, 2008). Today, there are theories developed
around community development as well as practical social pedagogical
activities. But it can be questioned whether the historical background is
the reason why it is so much easier today to find pedagogical studies
based on a community development perspective than it is to find social
pedagogical studies based on pedagogy.

Another significant difference between the two traditions is their geo-
ographical distribution. Social pedagogy seems to be mainly a Continental
North European tradition, while community development is Anglo Saxon
(Kornbeck, 2002). This could, in part, be a consequence of the historical
background. The situation, however, is changing slowly. In particular, we
can see how parts of the social pedagogical thinking are spreading to the United Kingdom (Cameron, 2004; Kornbeck, 2009; Petri and Cameron, 2009) and the United States (Eriksson, 2006). It is, however, difficult to say anything definite about the opposite, that is, community development spreading to Sweden. The concept of community development is unusual in Sweden. On the other hand, local development, which is a phenomenon sometimes linked to community development, is talked about, worked with and studied (Eriksson, 2008). Much of the thinking in community development as it is carried out today can also be found in local development, for example, the focus on the local community.

There is a third difference, which is closely linked to the welfare state, in the triad of market, state and civil society. To some degree, the two traditions are at work in different welfare systems. The equivalents to community development in Sweden can be found both in the public sphere and in civil society. The situation as regards popular adult education and local development could be described in this way. If we take as our starting point the social pedagogical tradition in Sweden in terms of its practical activities, we can see that that is mainly to be found in the public sphere. In Sweden, the welfare state dominates in what is called core areas, namely, school, medical care and the social field (Lundström and Svedberg, 1998). Between 1930 and 1960, the state took over service-producing and voluntarily run social activities. Up until 1970, it could be said that the public sector had a monopoly over social activities (Lundström and Svedberg, 1998). Today, the situation is somewhat different, as both the market and civil society have begun to increase their share of the social field. In countries where the community development tradition is strong, there is most often a different relationship between the voluntary organizations and the state. In the United States, for example, various welfare programmes have been channelled to a large extent via voluntary organizations. This third difference thus concerns where the traditions, and the practical work associated with them, were situated in the welfare state. Community development workers are mainly to be found in activities in civil society, different voluntary organizations, churches, etc., while social pedagogues, at least in Sweden, are mostly employed in the public sector. This, in turn, could lead to different conditions and different activities (Eriksson and Markström, 2009).

If we look at the concrete activities, there are additional differences that are of importance when it comes to how the different traditions are described. Community development is sometimes described as located in an educational field (Smith, 2006). In community development literature, there is almost always a pedagogical aspect and education of, in and for the community is discussed. Social pedagogy, on the other hand, is to be
found in social work, at least in a Swedish understanding of the tradition (Eriksson, 2006). Our research project concerning mobilization pedagogy is a pedagogical project, which will be a challenge when we relate the social pedagogical tradition to empirical examples, based on pedagogical thinking. I argue, however, that there is a way of thinking about this that justifies relating social pedagogy to a pedagogical adult way of thinking, which involves looking back in time. For many years in Sweden, social work, treatment and education were the responsibility of completely different institutions. Popular adult education, for example, was intended for the culturally diligent elite (in Swedish, skötsamhetselit). Among the people participating in different forms of popular adult education, it was unusual to find a person with social problems, or at least it was unusual for people to talk about it. As a result, the group social pedagogy was involved with was completely separate from the group participating in adult education. At the beginning of the 1970s, a drastic transformation of adult education took place, not least of popular adult education. An increasing number of persons with social problems began to apply to the popular adult education institutions such as folk high schools. The unemployed, drug addicts, criminals, etc. voluntarily applied to study an educational programme, but they were also more or less forced to apply by various authorities. This has resulted in the boundary between social pedagogy and adult education more or less disappearing and that the description of social pedagogy as something only found in the social field is no longer valid. The pedagogical starting point also means that most often one professional pedagogue is involved. This is often, but far from always, the case in social pedagogy. Social pedagogy also exists as a theoretical, philosophical way of thinking without any direct practical implications. There is a theoretical social pedagogical discourse that is not linked to practical activities (Eriksson, 2006).

Another central difference is that individual social pedagogical work is possible, while community development is always oriented towards a community as a starting point (Batten, 2008). Of course, the work can, in the long run, have implications for the individual group member.

If we now turn our attention to the similarities, we could say that both traditions offer a broad and holistic understanding of education, learning and development (Hämäläinen, 2003; Cameron, 2004; Mayo, 2008). One starting point seems to be that there is a group of people who, for different reasons, are excluded or do not get their specific needs satisfied and thus need support to be able to play an active part in their own and the group’s life. In both traditions, there is a tension between a radical and a conservative side, which could give topical interest to the question of who or what should be changed. Is it a question of the individual or the
group changing their way of thinking and acting in order to become an integrated part of society or is it a question of the societal communities broadening their boundaries so that everybody can be included (Madsen, 2005)? Or must the whole social structure be changed to enable marginalized groups to live an active life and also influence the group’s situation? There is, however, a belief that pedagogical contributions could lead to change. In this work, several methods are used, i.e. an eclectic approach. What these traditions also have in common is that they offer a way of thinking where the importance of the collective is often seen as dominating at the expense of the individual. However, this is more strongly expressed in community development than in social pedagogy.

Conclusion

There are large differences, but also similarities between these traditions. There are differences regarding their origins and geographical distribution. How they are represented in different countries’ welfare systems also varies. However, there are also differences that originate more from the practical activities, how they are carried out and how it is possible to think about them. Community development has a pronounced pedagogical aspect, while social pedagogy belongs more in traditions such as social work. The debate in Sweden today is, however, shifting towards an increasingly clear pedagogical understanding of social pedagogy. The pedagogical elements are emphasized in education and research, and social pedagogy has long been an element of popular adult education at the same time as social pedagogy has begun to spread outside Northern Europe, although in its capacity as a tradition with an individual-based treatment content (Petri and Cameron, 2009). In this article, however, the mobilizing part of social pedagogy has been emphasized and it does not have at all the same connection to social work and treatment. It could be said that today, the boundaries are more diffuse and difficult to draw. It is a question of the boundaries between popular adult education and social pedagogy. A good example of this is the folk high school class where drawing the boundaries between social aspects and pedagogy is neither possible nor perhaps desirable. But it is also a question of, for example, the boundaries between civil society and the public sector. Today, it is difficult to find activities that are ‘unadulterated’ (see e.g. Kenny, 2002). The example of the association for the disabled could at first sight seem to belong to civil society. The association in itself is excellent, but when it receives municipal grants, it is more difficult to place the activity in only one specific field. A question one could ask is how can an activity be conceptualized when the boundaries are so blurred?
In this article, I have tried using the way of thinking found in different community development traditions and in the social pedagogical tradition in order to shed light on the empirical examples in our research project. This proved to be possible and even fruitful. In this way, the differences in some of the aspects of the two examples have been made clear. I argue that these two traditions together can constitute a conceptual framework for understanding, but also improving, individual examples in adult pedagogy activities.

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