

Snippets of professional memory of Chilean Social Work. Patricia Castañeda Meneses and Ana María Salamé Coulon. Cielo Sur Ediciones, Santiago, Chile, 2022. First Edition. ISBN 9789560919823.

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We wanted to include in the seventh issue of the journal a review of this book which, as its title indicates, is constructed from the “scraps”, bits and pieces of arguments, discourses and reflections that the authors have constructed over time. A time which, in retrospect, has allowed them to reflect from different aspects of their work on a period of disciplinary history and the history of the country itself.

From a biographical perspective, and following the contributions of Godard (1996), this book collects snippets of different stories:

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The political history of a country, marked by the events of the dictatorship, the transition period and the post-dictatorship, which this book sensitively captures through the notion of generational upheavals (Mannheim, 1993) and which allows us to illustrate the points of connection that unite different generations who were witnesses and protagonists of these events, recognised by the authors as a generational trauma that is restored and repaired through actions of memory such as those recounted in this book and resulting from the work of the authors over several years.

The history of the generations, of some of its most visible hallmarks, and also of the different matrices and approaches that have shaped Chilean Social Work over the last hundred years, since its creation. Perhaps with an emphasis on events from the second half of the last century to the present day, but which, nevertheless, allow us to observe trajectories, recognise changes and transformation processes over time.

The history of a discipline that is challenged by the serious human rights violations that occurred during this long period, and in the face of which it decides to act under an ethical and political imperative that leads it to reconfigure its forms of professional action (as agents of change). Deploying new repertoires and rescuing others that had



been discarded by previous processes, I would like to acknowledge in this compilation of works the vocation and explicit interest of Patricia Castañeda and Ana María Salamé to interact with the professional world, to write texts for multiple audiences, ranging from practising social workers to young first-year students.

The history of training in Social Work, of teaching in the different schools and of the reconfigurations that followed in search of a place that had been forcibly taken away. Hence the constant interpellation of the right to memory in order to be able to address professional trauma. This is, perhaps, the portrait we know best of the work of Castañeda and Salamé, given that both have been trainers of several generations of social workers, and in several of them we recognise the imprint of their imprint. Hence the indissoluble link between legacy and memory.

The history of women and paid work, including their processes of incorporation into the world of productive work and their reconciliation with reproductive spaces. The constant writing and production of knowledge in the academic work of the authors is another aspect of their work, a fact that can be seen in the prolific nature of their writings, which in this book takes on different facets: articles, book chapters and compilations. A separate mention should be made of the history of the university journals of Social Work, journals that the authors have also covered with their own publications, references and suggestions, giving an account of a profession that is taught and practised on a daily basis.

The territorial history of a country that is not reduced to a geopolitical view of the centre or the capital, but also takes place in the regions, the territories of southern Chile and the coast. It is a story that reminds us of the importance of decentralising knowledge, of journeys between physically different territories, and also of the possibilities of bringing distant realities closer together and contributing the specificities that are specific to each one. For me it is impossible not to think of Patricia Castañeda from the “main port”¹ and Ana María from the Wallmapu².

The story of an intellectual friendship, of knowing how to work with others, of building relationships that last over time, that allow us to recognise individual hallmarks, but also the value of collective work, of writing with two hands, of critical dialogue. Perhaps this is an element that may not be so evident to the most novice readers of these authors, and who I therefore invite to explore in a reading “between the lines” of this book.

¹ Port of Valparaíso

² Araucanía Region



The personal and singular history of its authors, who have bequeathed us a particular way of understanding/performing Social Work that allows us to think about the questions that this book raises. The relevance of professional memory and the construction of an intergenerational bond that allows us to repair the trauma caused, avoid its repetition or a metamorphosis into other forms of violence, whether through the annihilation of cultural identities, collectives or individuals.

In short, this book contributes to the discussion on the professional memory of Chilean Social Work. It includes critical elements on the professional reconfigurations and events that have impacted the history of the discipline. It offers the challenge of rethinking the practices of knowledge production, instruments and work logics for the dissemination of results, while at the same time offering an invitation to work collaboratively and with a long-term perspective.

Bibliographical references

Godard, F. (1996). The Uses of Life Histories in the Social Sciences. CIDS Notebooks, Series 2.

Mannheim, K. (1993). The problem of generations. REIS, 62, 276-322.

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