

Brazilian Social Work: profession and field of knowledge

Ana Elizabete Mota

Federal University at Pernambuco (UFPE)

Translated by Jeffrey Hoff

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Abstract: This article addresses Brazilian Social Work as a profession and field of knowledge, emphasizing its intellectual dimension and qualifying it as a particularity in the continental and global realms of Social Work. It points to evidence of this protagonist role, including, the nature of academic papers in Latin American and global events, and the increased number of citations of authors from the field of Social Work in the social and human sciences and the growing demand for graduate study in Social Work from other fields of knowledge. It develops the hypothesis that Social Work as a field of knowledge goes beyond the immediate imperatives of intervention, contributing to the construction of a critical mass, where its intellectual role in the formation of a theoretical and political culture by the Marxist left in Brazil offers a counter position to the dominant hegemony. This dimension maintains a unity with professional exercise, although it makes a distinction between the meaning of Social Work as a field of knowledge and as a profession.

Keywords: Social Work. Field of knowledge. Profession. Intervention.

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A particularity of Brazilian Social Work?

In recent years I have been reflecting on the possibility of considering Brazilian Social Work from two dimensions that are inherent to its constitution in this historic framework: as a profession and as a field of knowledge. It must be highlighted that this approach is not unprecedented, given that various scholars in the field have made reference to the issue by examining the academic production of Brazilian Social Work since the 1980s¹.

In addition to the finding that Social Work is a field of knowledge of the applied social sciences, recognized by regulatory and graduate research support agencies (CNPq, Capes and Finep)², and by the proven development of research and graduate studies in the field³, my approach to the issue – even it is still open to greater debate – goes beyond this parameter.

My starting point and motivation for reflecting on this issue is based on the observation of a few phenomenon, indicated below, which led me to identify, if not a particularity, but characteristics that I think are currently specific to Brazilian Social Work.

– The situation of continental and global Social Work, observed from the perspective of events promoted by a number of organizations including the International Federation of Social Workers (Federación Internacional de Trabajadores Sociales (FITS), by the Asociación Internacional de Escuelas de Trabajo Social [International Association of Social Work Schools] (Aiets) and by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), and by Associação Latino-Americana de Ensino e Pesquisa em Serviço Social [the Latin American Association for Research and Education in Social Work] (Alaeits). The increased Brazilian participation in the past ten years at these events has revealed an uncontested fact: the predominance of systematizations and reports of international experiences, influenced by the handling of “sectorial theories”, with a strong emphasis on practice, including therapeutic practice, vis-à-vis a significant volume of academic articles, based on scholarly studies conducted by Brazilian researchers. From a Brazilian perspective, this fact has not been qualified from a theoretical and historic point of view, and usually slips into a finding of the conservatism of global Social Work. From the perspective of other countries, this singularity, even if there are exceptions, is considered as an expression of the vanguardism and political nature of Brazilian Social Work, which is criticized with the argument that these studies do not address the undertaking of professional action. For one reason or another, they do not recognize the possibility that Brazilian Social Work, in addition to being a profession, has been becoming a field of knowledge. This is in contrast to the situation in other realities dominated by a concept of the profession that has a strongly (but not exclusively) interventionist-technical and at times therapeutic inspiration.

– Although we still have no quantitative survey of the situation, the interlocution and incorporation of the bibliography produced by intellectuals in the field of Social Work in the most recent studies in the social and human sciences in Brazil, and in work linked to government institutions, is well known, and has resulted in a growth in the number citations of authors from the field of Social Work. This has combined with an opening of scholarly journals to studies by social workers and the incorporation of intellectuals from the field of Social Work, as producers of a critical mass in the realm of social, popular and union movements, as in the cases in Brazil of the National Union of Teachers in Higher Education Institutions (Andes), the Landless Farmworkers Movement (MST), the Movement of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transgenders (LGBT), women’s movements and the Universidade Popular dos Movimentos Sociais (Escola Florestan Fernandes), in addition to the National Front against Healthcare Privatization, among others.⁴

– In addition, there has been significant growth in the number of professionals from other fields seeking to conduct graduate study in Social Work⁵, at the master’s level and mainly at the doctoral level, motivated by a search for critical knowledge in the human and social sciences. This demand is not characterized by a desire to be qualified for the professional exercise of Social Work, but by a desire to establish interlocution with Social Work as a field of knowledge, because of a recognition of the qualification of professors in this field, as well as theoretical-methodological references and research lines of the Social Work programs.⁶

– There has also been a growing demand for professors in the field of Social Work to participate in examining committees for master’s dissertations and doctoral theses in related fields, which can be seen on the Lattes database. This is the result of recognition of researchers in the field and their growing participation in academic events and debates about issues such as the public budget, financialization, labor, social security, political organization, gender relations, and other topics of great importance for the understanding and criticism of trends and dynamics of contemporary society.

All of these observations led me to work with the hypothesis that Brazilian Social Work, by establishing itself as a field of knowledge, has intensified its intervention in reality through the construction of an intellectual culture, and of a critical methodological-theoretical perspective, redefining its intellectual and social representation, which had previously been characterized predominantly by professional exercise, in which the interventionist dimension had primacy over the intellectual and theoretical status of the profession.

I understand that this process, which is indicated by the previously mentioned situations, and other factors, reveals an expansion in the realm of action of the profession in society, which has come about from an active participation in the formation of a critical mass among scholars on the left, whose theoretical, ideological-political and intellectual dimensions are responsible for a critical body of knowledge that, in the face of the spread of post-modern thinking in the social sciences, presents itself as a vast field of political-theoretical and ideological resistance⁷.

By recognizing Social Work as a profession and field of knowledge, I am not advocating a technical division of professional work, between those who conduct research and those who conduct professional exercise linked to a wide variety of social practices. To the contrary, I am defending the existence of a unity between these dimensions, which does not mean they have a single identity, given that there is a distinction between the realm of scholarly production and operative-practical action.

These dimensions are related to and refer to objective reality, although there are distinctions: while the scholarly-theoretical production may not provide immediate responses to the demands of professional practice, inspired by the scholarly production, the professional action of social workers mobilizes other mediations and instrumentalizations that are inherent to the world of everyday life, to institutional actions and to the objective conditions under which social policies and projects are enacted. In this sense, there is no hierarchy or dichotomy, but the existence of distinct levels of the social intervention of Social Work.

If Social Work is restricted to the exclusive condition of a practice that conducts interventions and empiric systematizations focused on the objects of its action (as in the case of expressions of the social question), the trend towards its increased technical nature as Netto indicated (1996) would certainly be verified. On the other hand, to ignore the configuration of Social Work as a field of knowledge and its contribution in the realm of the ideologies and the formation of a critical culture in the camp of the anti-capitalist and socialist left in Brazil, is to reiterate an apparent opposition between the field of practice and the field of methodological-theoretical and political preparation, in an attempt to limit the intellectual production to that which has direct and immediate application to professional actions. This, in my understanding, would reveal a biased understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, under the argument of an identity or complementarity, removing from this, the relationship of unity. This unity that, being contradictory, is susceptible to denials and affirmations, as postulated by one of the foundations of dialectical materialism.

This is because theory can require the unveiling of the real, which transformed into a real that is analyzed, allows, through successive approximations, unveiling the apparency of a phenomenon by the grasping of categories⁸ that make reality intelligible, from a perspective of totality (social production and reproduction), with a historic and radically critical view (of the forms of being and living in society). And in this case, what is unique becomes particularized through an intellectual operation that links, through mediations, the general and universal laws that govern a given reality. From this perspective, the theoretical-methodological instrumentality – if we can define it this way – works to support the emancipatory struggle and not the reiteration of order, as Yolanda Guerra (1995) observed, upon working with this concept in Social Work.

This does not mean that the formulations and analyses that embrace references and readings from other critical perspectives that are not Marxist are not part of the body of work and the intellectual culture to which I refer. Nevertheless, for the hypothesis that I am working with, I highlight the role that scholarly production in Social Work has performed in the development of an ideological-political and theoretical culture in the field of the Marxist left.

It should be emphasized, for example, that the productions aimed at the formulations of social policies have an undeniable importance for Social Work and help reveal the contradictions in a process that have and continue to mark its existence. However, it is necessary to indicate the relationship of this line of intellectual production with what Neves and Pronko (2008) touch upon when analyzing the guidelines of scientific production formulated by the state for higher education under the title of Science Technology and Innovation, a subject that I will address below. Critical dimensions are involved, but the criticisms concern the effectiveness of government policies, and

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for this reason they have an innovative character and are constitutive of the knowledge needed for the proposals of social policies in Brazil. Nevertheless, at times an analysis of the political meaning is neglected in support of efficiency and operability and thus constituting knowledge applied to professional and organizational action.

I maintain that the direction and content of the academic production qualifies different theoretical-methodological trends, reaffirming the presence of pluralism in Social Work; and I present the hypothesis that there are two main trends (recognizing that there are others) in the production of knowledge about Social Work: that related to innovation and the contribution to critical social theory with a Marxian inspiration.

The support and critical constructions of Social Work since the 1980s – considered here as tributaries of the Professional Ethical-Political Project – have undeniable influence on professional action. While they are not restricted to the horizon of direct and immediate intervention, they maintain a unified relationship with this action, by providing references to social projects that go beyond the realm of Social Work and of any other profession. By reconstructing the objects of intervention, which originated in professional demands, into objects of knowledge, it submits them to a critical examination from a perspective of totality.

This is because, even if contradictory, the determinations emanating from the mature bourgeois order – and here I will not go into the characteristics of the current dynamic of capitalism, referring the reader to the vast production about the theme⁹ – tend to demand the confrontation of the social contradictions capitalism produces (and are also the object of class struggles and confrontations), mobilizing professional constructions and proposals that generate a tension: not between theory and practice, but between critical theory and reiterative practice.

Thus, the objects of intervention are not inexorably objects of radical-critical knowledge, and can be – because of a practical need or institutional-political demands, that go beyond the options of the professional subjects (which does not exclude individual choices) – material for empiric systematizations.

In this sense, to recognize Social Work as both a profession and a field of knowledge is also to confront the discourse that disqualifies critical production about social macro-processes, labeling them as “academic production removed from the practical needs of professional practice.” I am defending the critical-intellectual function of social work that, while also coexisting with production aimed at the innovation of knowledge¹⁰, exercises other means of socialization of values and ideologies that are not connected with (although they are related) to the immediate demands of the practice.

In this context, research in general and graduate education have a decisive role, particularly the latter, because of its academic and non-professionalizing nature. For this reason it is necessary to preserve and radically challenge the initiatives that, under the aegis of responses to questions present in the daily professional activity, can regress in search of the applied, the effective, presenting itself as a means to prepare for “complex work”, according to the concept used by Neves and Pronko (2008) and Iamamoto (2007). Even if this is not a mechanical connection, the trend is determined by guidelines of the regulatory agencies and those that provide support to research and graduate study in Brazil, through a perspective that affirms the “Operational University” in the terms of Chauí (2003) and Vale (2012). In sum, this discussion has an organic relationship with the conditions and directions of the Brazilian university as the privileged locus for research and the production of knowledge.

In the realm of Social Work, considering the particularities of its historic development and the organizational capacity of its professional community, it is important to recognize the weight of its political resistance, expressed in the maintenance of a generalist formation, in a refusal to offer continuing education and distance courses, or to create master’s programs that focus on professional and not academic issues. These initiatives had a decisive role in the attainment of its intellectual status in contrast to what happened in Europe under the Bologna Process¹¹.

It is worth emphasizing that this trend is on a collision course with what the Brazilian state has proposed for the role of scientific production today. Inspired by the work of Neves and Pronko (2008), I understand that the institutional recognition of Social Work as a field of knowledge was not the exclusive result of its intellectual and professional-academic merit, but, as the authors affirm, is also the result of universal determinations (which are extensive to other professions and areas), related to the capitalist dynamic and its inflections on the field of education. Its mark was the role of the state as an inducer of research and professional education to support the exercise of “complex work”¹², initiated in the 1960s and redimensioned in the 1990s, at which time scientific research and graduate studies were impelled to adopt – even if not completely and with focuses of resistance – some of the parameters and guidelines of the counter-reform of higher education¹³, establishing ties and connections between the demands for the productivity of capital and its administration, which can be extended to the formulation of public policies and the education of intellectuals with organic ties to its project.

As Neves and Pronko (2007, p. 27) affirm, this is a turn in the direction of “education for complex work”, assigning to education the purpose of “preparing specialists who can increase the productivity of work under their administration and simultaneously, the education of organic intellectuals of capitalist sociability.”

Upon discussing the guidelines for higher education related to the human and social sciences, Neves and Pronko (2008, p. 180, citing the MCT) analyze the proposal prepared by the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and endorsed by the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, about the role of Brazilian intellectual production, expressing their criticism of that formulation:

[...] the human and social sciences are being called on to also produce useful and applicable knowledge, contributing 'to the formulation, analysis, promotion and evaluation of public and social policies aimed at solving the large problems of contemporary society', including those linked to science and technology. In sum, beyond dispensing with any critical approximation to a reality represented by its appearance, the function of the social sciences appears to be limited, from the perspective of this policy, to [providing] the legitimization of policies for the development of social and cultural capital needed for social cohesion.

These guidelines orient the policies of the agencies that regulate and support research and graduate studies. The principles and parameters for evaluation that currently guide these agencies emphasize knowledge that provides practical responses to the challenges of Brazilian reality: social inclusion, the war on drugs and violence, urban studies, healthcare reform, social security, social welfare administration, gender policies and others.

In light of these affirmations, it is worth recognizing the existence of tensions and contradictions between the public dimension of research and its transformation into a entrepreneurship; between the requirements for technical instrumentality and the struggle of intellectuals to maintain autonomy in the production of knowledge, which includes Social Work, reiterating its professional and intellectual rebelliousness.

Without ignoring the operative practical challenges of the profession, and reaffirming my perspective about its condition as a field of knowledge, I think that this dimension, which is present in Brazilian Social Work, gives it a particular role in the ideological and theoretical resistance to intellectual conservatism in Brazil in the first decade of the new century, in light of the post-modern ideologies and the regression and effort to erase the critical-materialist and dialectical reasoning in the human and social sciences¹⁴.

An invitation to debate as a form of conclusion

There is already a consensus in the Social Work literature about the contradictory nature of Social Work and that it involves a socially determined profession within a socio-technical division of labor, whose professional subject undertakes his or her activities through insertion in the world of salaried labor, subordinated to capitalist labor relations.

It is also known that the determinations for the rise of this profession originated in the needs that emerge with the development of monopoly capitalism, particularly the ideological-political and institutional-practical framework, mobilized to implement mechanisms that focus on confronting the social question, through the action of the state and private institutions, via social policies, projects of social intervention and social movements.

By recognizing the social determination of the profession, the literature in the field treats its interventionist nature as a "specialty"¹⁵ of Social Work, finding that its historic development has allowed the construction of relative methodological-theoretical, ethical and political-technical autonomy, mediated by the accreditation of the state, through university education and legal mechanisms for professional regulation (laws governing the profession, its code of ethics, and professional councils), through professional-political associations, which grant public recognition to the profession.

In the synthesis offered by Yamamoto (2007, p. 239), Social Work

[...] is not institutionalized as a special science in the framework of the division of labor. This specialization of labor does not arise with the principle function of producing knowledge that articulates a 'peculiar' field of knowledge [...] even if it is officially inscribed in the field of the 'applied social sciences'. The fact that Social Work constitutes a profession inherently brings a demand for action in society, which does not exclude the possibility and need for it to dedicate itself to investigation and research in the broad field of the social sciences and social theory [...].

The development of research in the field of Social Work found the socio-political support necessary for its development, particularly since the 1980s, with the rise of the movement that had the "intention to break" from the field (NETTO, 2005) of traditional Social Work. The historic foundation of this process is found in Brazil's "post-64" period, the emergence of social movements, the struggle against the dictatorship, and in the intellectual field, the development of graduate studies in Social Work in Brazil. This movement in the field even operated a shift away from structural-functionalism in the direction of the critical-historic lines of Social Work (IAMAMOTO, 2007, p. 212).

In this sense, the profession gradually began to respond on the planes of professional practices, research and professional education to the mediated and immediate demands that it faced, grasping new and rich mediations when handling objects of intervention and coming to give them the status of objects of knowledge, which contributed to its insertion in the human and social sciences, beyond the applied social sciences. In this sense, Netto (2006, p. 12, emphasis mine) advances in the direction of my affirmation:

Social Work is a profession – a specialization of collective labor, within the framework of the socio-technical division of labor – with a recognized legal status (Law 8.669, of June 30, 1993); as a profession, it is not a science, nor does it have its own theory; but the fact that it is a profession does not impede its agents from conducting studies, investigations, and research etc., or that they produce knowledge of a theoretical nature, which can be incorporated to the social and human sciences. Thus, ‘as a profession, Social Work can establish itself, and it has established itself in recent years, as a field for the production of knowledge [...].’

I repeat: this dimension does not suppress or eliminate a unified relationship with professional intervention. This is because that by transforming the objects of intervention (found at the capillarity of the real movement) into objects of knowledge, together they maintain from an ontological and socio-historic perspective or, even because in the field of theoretical-methodological and political production, the knowledge produced by Social Work and which comes to be incorporated and worked with in other fields of knowledge – from the social sciences to social and cultural movements – does not become legitimate and acquires validity through the immediate and direct “application” to social and professional practices.¹⁶

The nucleus of this unity is sustained by the guidelines of the Professional Ethical-Political Project, either through professional exercise, or through the intellectual role that the profession exercises in light of its objects of knowledge and intervention. I refer to the social relations and their objective expressions in mature bourgeois society, as is the case of the determinations, manifestations, ideologies and practices for confronting the social question in Brazil, the reason for which I see the possibility for a “suspension” of this critical knowledge in relation to the demands of everyday action, without promoting any separation from reality, although redimensioning the means through which the relations between Social Work and reality are materialized. I am proposing other mediations, including those pertaining to the work of the social worker in the terms in which they are addressed by Yamamoto (2007, p. 414-415) when he problematizes “the tension between the professional ethical-political project and the salaried status.”

The work of Yamamoto (2007, p. 214.), by analyzing professional exercise from the perspective of the professional subject submitted to the conditions of salaried work in capitalist society, is especially pertinent, mainly when it addresses the work of the social worker and offers theory about the particularities of work under capital (the unity between concrete and abstract work), to correctly conclude that there are

[...] tensions between the direction that the social worker intends to imprint on his concrete work – affirming his teleological and creative dimension – in keeping with the collective and historically based professional project; and the limitations inherent to alienated labor that are embodied in the salaried form of professional activity.

Nevertheless, from my point of view, this rich body of theorization is absolutely pertinent for dealing with Social Work, as the author does, from the perspective of the work of social workers, that is, of professional exercise and of their condition as salaried workers. Nevertheless, I do not agree in the same way when it appears that the concept of the profession is equated to that of professional exercise. I understand the profession as an institutional field of knowledge that validates, legitimates and prepares the professional subject for the exercise of intellectual and practical functions. And I understand professional exercise as the activity of the professional subject, socially and legally regulated, dedicated to the implementation of actions and initiatives in the realm of collective work, of an unproductive nature. Therefore, both are determined by the social and technical division of labor.

In this light, Yamamoto (2007, p. 216) criticizes analyses that neglect

[...] the relations by means of which the realization of the professional activity takes place, considering only the quality [referring to concrete labor] of labor, running the risk that the explanation will fall into an a-historical analysis, even if within a Marxist tradition [...].

This appears to me to be questionable because, in this sense the condition of professional subject would be subsumed to other dimensions of the profession, as I am affirming. Note that, upon analyzing some of the production of Social Work in the book *Serviço Social em tempo de capital fetiche* [Social Work in Time of

Capitalist Fetish], Iamamoto recognizes the distinction between profession and exercise, although he does not go more deeply into the issue, he mentions that:

The omission of this line of analysis is not synonymous with ignorance of it, but of a choice for other theoretical perspectives [...]. It is found closely related to the fact that [...] the theses about Social Work are predominantly focused 'on the profession' and less 'on its exercise' (IAMAMOTO, 2007, p. 332, emphasis mine).

This consideration is reinforced when Iamamoto (2007, p. 283) conducts a critical reading of Netto's thesis about the "syncretism and undifferentiated practice of Social Work"¹⁷. Thus, in dialog with Netto, Iamamoto revives his formulation about the "ideological-political nature of the profession" and makes the following observation about this concept:

[...] not incorporating the category 'work' into the analysis in a transversal form as it is expressed in capitalist society (which supposes attributing historicity to the ontological dimension), even if the work of the social worker is mentioned on countless occasions in the texts mentioned.

The author refers to Netto's formulation about the *ideological-political dimension of the profession* (1996) which, in my understanding, is in keeping with the thinking of Lukács, specifically in the formulation mentioned by Costa (2011, p. 112), in which he treats the social function of professions in the realm of social reproduction:

This comes to light in the very division of labor [...]. When this permanent social need to regulate the problems that arise in the reproduction of life are reproduced simultaneously to the reproduction process, this type of activity becomes socially necessary, which is expressed in the fact that singular individuals or entire groups can make it a specific occupation from which they live (LUKÁCS *apud* COSTA, 2011, p. 112).

About this perspective, Costa (2011, p. 162) affirms – reiterating Lukács' perspective – that Social Work is an

[...] ideological complex that shifts from limited ideology to pure ideology. In this sense, it does not have a specific function delimited exclusively in the field of immediate daily conflicts, it both conducts activities [...] while producing knowledge of a political, philosophical and scientific nature that can come to think beyond the simple.

According to this conceptualization, Costa recognizes the determination of the profession in the realm of the social division of labor and the condition of salaried labor of those who "can make of it a specific occupation on which they live" (LUKÁCS *apud* COSTA, 2011, p. 112). Nevertheless, from my perspective, it does not indicate the mediations that particularize the exercise of this function in relation to Social Work, given that the concept used would have a heuristic value for all the social professionals with a similar perspective, while it is fitting to analyze the singularities and particularities of Social Work in the realm of social reproduction.

Far from wanting to conduct a Gramscian interpretation of Lukács' thought, I would like to highlight the existence of another theoretical-perspective about the categories of "reproduction and ideology"¹⁸ in light of Gramscian thinking about the social contradictions inherent to the relationship between the material base and superstructures, which supports the possibilities for the constitution and or denial of the hegemony of the dominant classes, through the class struggle.

From this perspective, Social Work has an ideological-political function – both practical and intellectual – it is a mediator of the process of social production and reproduction, via the construction of methodologies, practices and the elaboration of proposals to confront the consequences of poverty and inequality, by a mandate from the dominant classes, although not exclusively, as has been theorized in the classic work *Relações sociais e Serviço Social no Brasil* [Social Relations and Social Work in Brazil] (IAMAMOTO; CARVALHO, 2008) and works both in the field of social policies as well those concern with the affirmation of rights, and the intellectual, ideological political and technical instrumentalization of the processes of resistance and struggle of the subaltern classes.

These final considerations stimulate me to return to the thesis of the pedagogical function of Social Work (ABREU, 2002), with the challenge of historicizing and identifying the mediations of this function¹⁹ in the current historical process, which, in my understanding, does not derive, exclusively, from the professional exercise of social workers, as Marina Abreu seems to suggest, although this is the foundation from which it emerges.

The digression that I conducted, dialoging with Yamamoto (2007), Netto (1996), Costa (2011) and Abreu (2002) had a defined proposal: to emphasize that Brazilian Social Work has historically constructed a professional culture based on professional exercise, in the realm of the expanded process of social reproduction, but its ideological-political functions are not limited to this. Thus, the real and concrete constraints on professional work (related to its insertion in the world of labor under capital, in its dimension of concrete labor and abstract labor) undeniably influence the professional subject, placing pressure on the processes of intervention. But they do not respond to the totality of the dimensions that compose the professional culture of Brazilian Social Work. In this sense, considering these final thoughts and relating them to the hypothesis that I defend – of Social Work as a profession and field of knowledge – I conclude that in the face of objective conditions created by the development of research and graduate studies and under the influx of the Professional Ethical-Political Project, Social Work has expanded its intellectual function, constructing a critical mass of knowledge, as a tributary to the formation of a culture promoted by the Marxist left in Brazil as an alternative to the dominant hegemony, and does so without losing sight of its unity with professional exercise, but expressing a distinction between the meaning of Social Work as a field of knowledge and a profession aimed at direct intervention in reality.

Perhaps this process reveals the emergence of a new sociopolitical and theoretical-instrumental competency of Brazilian Social Work, more than a decade after the lucid projections of professor José Paulo Netto (1996, p.109), when he affirmed that: “the new competencies relate directly, but not exclusively, to research, production of knowledge and to alternatives to its instrumentalization – and in the case of Social Work, this is to say knowledge about the social reality.”

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Notes

- 1 I highlight the texts of Netto (1996, 2006), Iamamoto (2007), Silva and Carvalho (2005, 2007), Simionatto (2005) and Sposati (2007) for specific references to this theme. Therefore, this issue is recurrent in academic studies in the field of Social Work.
- 2 Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico [National Council for Scientific and Technological Development], Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [The Higher Education Personnel Coordinating and Improvement Agency], Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos [Project and Research Finance Agency], respectively.
- 3 There are 30 academic master's programs, and 14 doctoral programs in Social Work in Brazil.
- 4 The propositions of this essay deserve a more indepth look and an empiric demonstration of all these observations. However, the conditions under which I have produced this paper have not allowed me to do so. I remain in debt to the readers, which I hope to fulfill briefly.
- 5 Although this is not a phenomenon typical of the 2000s, its expansion goes beyond the issue of interdisciplinarity.

- 6 In a survey conducted on the Capes data base for the period from 2007-2009, in the item program proposals, I found the following percentages of candidates and entrance of applicants from other fields in the Graduate Programs in Social Work, among those that provide information on datacapes: the Federal University at Pernambuco (UFPE), 52% of the candidates are from other fields and 47.82% from Social Work; at the Federal University at Maranhão (UFMA), which has a graduate program in public policy, I found that 90% of the entering students did their undergraduate work in other fields and 10% in Social Work; at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) 21.88% are from other fields and 78.12% from Social Work; at PUC-RJ, 70% of the entering students have bachelor's in Social Work and 30% from other fields; at the Federal University at Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), 42% of the candidates were from other fields and 58% from Social Work.
- 7 About post-modern thinking, see the *Posfácio* by José Paulo Netto (2010) to the second edition of *O estruturalismo e a miséria da razão*.
- 8 I refer to Marx's (2011) formulation in the *Introduction*: "categories express forms of being, determinations of existence, frequently only singular aspects of this given society, of this subject, and for which reason, society 'also from a scientific perspective', in no way only begins where the discourse is about it as such".
- 9 Among the significant studies I highlight those of David Harvey (2004, 2011), François Chesnais (1996, 2005, 2012), Mike Davis (2006) and Göran Therborn (2012), Carcanholo (2012). About the Brazilian reality, I highlight the work of Virgínia Fontes (2010), Oliveira, Braga and Rizek (2010), Corecon/Sindecon (2010), Alfredo Wagner Berno de Almeida *et al.* (2010), André Silva Martins (2009) and others.
- 10 The analysis of Neves and Pronko (2008, p. 180) qualifies my understanding of "innovation" based on a detailed critical reading of the ST&I proposal related to the social sciences, to affirm and quote the Ministry of Science and Technology (MCT) about the issue: "the main task of the social and human sciences in this context will be to develop and evaluate strategies for social inclusion, understood as a process capable of allowing the most poor to share the economic, social, political and cultural benefits produced, [...] allowing conditions more suitable to the promotion of a more decent life based on citizenship for the whole Brazilian population."
- 11 The Bologna Process created the European Space for Higher Education. In an interview conducted in February 2012, a recognized Portuguese intellectual criticized its consequences, affirming that the "Bologna Process suffered from the domination of new World Bank policies and wound up being influenced by the logic that knowledge should be relevant to the needs of the market, influencing education and allowing companies to exercise a stronger role within the university". Accessible at: <<http://revistaensinosuperior.uol.com.br/imprime.asp?codigo=12878>>.
- 12 The category "complex labor" has its origins in Marx's formulations in the first volume of *Capital*, in relation to the concept "simple labor". According to the reading of these authors, with which I agree, "while simple labor is characterized by its undifferentiated nature, that is, divestment of his labor force, that, as Marx said, 'all common men, without special education, have in their organism [...]', complex labor, to the contrary, is characterized by being of a specialized nature, requiring, for this, greater sacrifice of time for the education of he who will conduct it. This concept refers to the processes and socio-technical division of labor, such as the mediation of concrete labor and abstract labor" (NEVES; PRONKO, 2007, p. 22).
- 13 This theme was the object of a lecture by professor Ângela Amaral at the National Workshop of Abepss: *65 years of struggles, conquests and challenges*, in Rio de Janeiro, in November 2010, the original paper for which I had access.
- 14 Once again, I refer to Netto (2010) and add the recently released book of Goran Therborn (2012), for a more in-depth look at the regressive trends in the realm of the human and social sciences.
- 15 About the specialty of the professions see Paulo Eduardo Angelin (2010) who addresses the theme through the perspective of the sociology of professions.
- 16 The volume of books and doctoral theses by authors in the field of Social Work that circulate in the bibliographies of journals, at conferences and lectures, in addition to books, book chapters and articles in periodicals in other fields supports my argument, while they treat it through themes that are related to professional exercise, and for the most part are based on experience in the profession, although "the route back" leaves the orbit of professional activity, leading them to analyses, projections and thinking that goes beyond this specific field of knowledge and practice.
- 17 For a detailed analysis see the book mentioned, pages 264 -283.
- 18 The Gramscian concept of ideology is quite broad and expresses "the highest meaning of a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, law, economic activity, in all the manifestations of individual and collective life" (GRAMSCI, 1978, p. 16), which cement and unify the entire historic block. The ideologies, as conceptions of the world, correspond in the Gramscian analysis to philosophical elaborations in different degrees of abstraction, ranging from the spontaneous elaborations implicit in the real activity of each one, found in common language, in popular religion, in the system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, a way of seeing and acting, which are outlined in what is generally called folklore, the

philosophical elaborations logically affirmed as intellectual facts, that go beyond common sense, whose construction can only be effectuated in the framework of the history of philosophy (ABREU, 2002).

- 19 Although Abreu's treatment of the category of the modern intellectual, in the Gramscian definition, to give foundation to the role of the professional subject, can be questioned, I agree with her affirmation that Social Work has a pedagogical function.

Ana Elizabete Mota

bmeta@elogica.com.br

Post-doctoral studies in Economic Sociology, Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (UTL)

Post-doctoral studies in Social Work, Federal University at Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)

Doctorate in Social Work, Pontific Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC/SP)

Senior Professor in the Department of Social Work, Federal University at Pernambuco (UFPE)

Address

Departamento de Serviço Social – UFPE

Av. dos Economistas s/n

Campus da UFPE

Cidade Universitária

Recife – Pernambuco – Brasil

CEP: 52120-130