

In European Societies, the Relationship between State and Citizen is Changing

René Clarijs, Professor of Social Work at Social Technology Department of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration in Saint-Petersburg; chief editor of the Dutch journal Youth Policy; (inter)national policy consultant working for, amongst others, the European Union and the Council of Europe; and visiting professor at the universities of Tallinn, Amsterdam and Kiev.

Abstract

The roles of the state and the market are decreasing and – because of many different reasons – the citizen will get a more important role. Based on the positioning triangle the article is going to explain this societal process happening now in many European countries. The traditional top-down policy of governments will be replaced by bottom-up movements of citizens such as light communities and new cooperatives. Not today and, probably, not tomorrow but in the medium-long term we will see a different society. This forthcoming transformation will have huge consequences for the position of social work that is more connected to the future societies. This article is a plea for the interest of social work, and shows that a different social work is a logical result of transforming societies.

Keywords

Social work, Public administration, Positioning triangle, Transformation, Public innovation

Европейское общество: отношения между государством и гражданином меняются

Рене Кларис, профессор социальной работы факультета социальных технологий Российской Академии народного хозяйства и государственной службы в Санкт-Петербурге; главный редактор голландского журнала молодежной политики; консультант национальной политики Европейского Союза и Совета Европы; приглашенный профессор в университетах Таллинна, Амстердама и Киева.

Аннотация

Роли государства и рынка уменьшаются и – в силу многих разных причин – гражданин получает более важную роль. В статье сделана попытка объяснить этот общественный процесс, который происходит сейчас во многих европейских странах. Традиционная политика правительства «сверху вниз» политика будет заменена на политику «снизу вверх», основанную на общественных движениях граждан. Не сегодня и, наверное, не завтра, но в среднесрочной или долгосрочной перспективе мы увидим другое общест-

во. Эта грядущая трансформация будет иметь огромные последствия для социальной работы, которая в большой степени связана с будущим общества. Данная статья показывает, что социальная работа в ее различных аспектах является логическим следствием трансформации общества.

Ключевые слова

Социальная работа, государственное управление, треугольник позиционирования, трансформация, общественные инновации

The interest of public administration

Social work is mostly always analysed by experts related to the content: social workers, pedagogues, psychologists and educational scientists (Clarijs, 2015; Clarijs, 2014). The work of these experts is necessary and very useful. However, to understand the (future) needs of social work it is also required to look for information what the future demands from social work. Offering social work to children and adults without having any clue concerning the needs of the future means that we educate citizens without a proper future. Therefore, we have to add an extra angle to the earlier mentioned expertises. Another perspective is needed to get a real grip on the development of social work: the analysis and view of public administration. Next to the experts related to the content of social work, especially policy makers and politicians need this kind of information. Adapting the social work structure to the constantly changing society needs insight of the societal developments. A public administration contribution can help to optimise social work.

Triangle of the society

Many academics use the image of a triangle in order to symbolise the society (e.g. Abrahamson, 1992; Moore, 1995; Mouwen, 2004). The three corners represent the state, the market and the citizen.

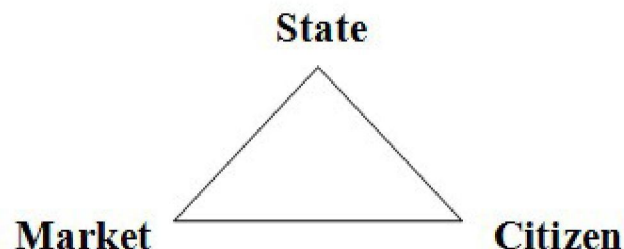


Figure 1. The positioning triangle of Mouwen (2004)

Not coincidentally, the three corners symbolise the three values of the French Revolution's motto: *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* [freedom, equality and brotherhood]. These three different items are still represented in the European societies. One can easily combine freedom with market, equality with state and brotherhood with citizen. The next step is also not complicated: one can connect the three major political movements with the three corners: market and liberalism, state with social democracy and citizen with Christian-democracy.

The three corners represent different interests: to the state belongs general or public interest, self-interest is connected to market and group interest goes together with citizen. There is also a different way of organising each of the three corners: state always works with vertical relationships, citizen with horizontal and market operates with parallel relationships. Next to that, we can easily see the different kind of relations: state uses a top-down approach, citizen - bottom-up and the market has parallel relations.

The three different corners, represented by the three main political movements in Europe of liberalism (market), social democrats (state) and Christian-democrats (citizen), also steer in various ways: the state is using power as its most important instrument, the market is ruled by money and for the corner of citizen love is the main tool.

The values of the three corners differ too: for the state legal equality is the main item, as freedom of choice is for market and identity for citizens. The capability for the functioning of state, market and citizen also varies: for the state, it is the reason/sense, for the market - advantage and for citizen - passion.

The last remark in order to define these corners is the dominant power: in the corner of the state, it is voice (voting), in the market – exit (if you don't like it, you don't buy it) and in the corner of citizens – loyalty.

The descriptions are put in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptions of the three corners of the positioning triangle

	State	Market	Citizens
<i>Motto French Revolution</i>	Equality	Liberty	Brotherhood
<i>Political movements</i>	Social-democracy	Liberalism	Christian-democracy
<i>Interests</i>	General interest	Self-interest	Group interest
<i>Way of organising</i>	Top-down	Parallel	Bottom-up
<i>Steering principle</i>	Power	Money	Love
<i>Values</i>	Legal equality	Freedom of choice	Identity
<i>Functioning by</i>	Reason/sense	Advantage	Passion
<i>Dominant power</i>	Voice	Exit	Loyalty
<i>Relationships</i>	Vertical	Parallel	Horizontal
<i>If overemphasized</i>	Via socialism to communism to Stalinism	Via libertinism to anarchy	Via conservatism to corporatism to fascism

Activities, organisations and sectors can be placed in this positioning triangle. It is clear that the local, regional and national governments belong to the corner of state. But also the tax authorities, the police and the army are situated in that corner.

Companies like Philips, Manchester United, Mercedes-Benz, the Rolling Stones, Louis Vuitton, and the bakery and the pub at the end of the street belong to the market. This is the business side of the society.

Finally us, we are the citizen corner when we do not represent state or market professionally, as for instance a group of parents, organising voluntarily a playground for their children, people in the neighbourhood, setting up a choir, some friends, playing football every Saturday morning in the park. These kind of activities are not organised by the state and do not belong to the market.

As said before, all activities, organisations and sectors can be placed somewhere in this positioning triangle. However, they do not necessarily have a fixed place in the triangle. They can migrate over time and shift positions. This happens, for instance, when a group of football players are so good that they become professional players: then they change from the corner citizen to the corner market. This happens for instance when an initiative where citizens have set up an orphanage is taken over by the government: the organisation changes from citizen to state. This also occurs when the small electricity company that takes care for the local illumination is taken over by the national government (it belongs to the state then) and if later the company is sold to other electricity companies, it goes to the corner of market.

In the last decades, as a consequence of the welfare state in Western Europe, many organisations shifted from the corner of citizen towards the state (centralisation) or/and later to the corner of market (privatisation) (Donk, 2010).

In general, it depends on the activity or organisation in which corner such an activity or organisation is placed. We, probably, all agree that, for instance, it is better to issue passports by the government, and not by citizens themselves; to fix the taxes for all citizens can also better be done by the government. Let us be happy that the production of tomato soup, teasies or flip-flops is performed in the corner of market and not by the state. And when citizens organise a song contest for children in the community centre, it is good that this is not implemented and judged by state or market.

The three corners have their compelling points. Nevertheless, there must be a division: the various activities, organisations and sectors have to be spread over the three corners. Zijderveld (1999) states that overemphasis of one of these corners will lead to extremism. When too many activities and organisations are in one corner, the balance in the society is gone. When too many activities and organisations are in the corner of state, social democracy will lead through socialism to communism and Stalinism. When too many activities and organisations are in the corner of market, liberalism may lead from libertinage to anarchism. When too many activities and organisations are in the corner of citizen, conservatism can degenerate into reactionary corporatism and fascism. The conclusion is: there is no favourite dominant corner. It depends on the activity.

Actually, in many European countries we cannot speak about a triangle anymore. More and more activities have moved from citizen to state and/or market. Scholars tell us that the triangle has changed into a two dimensional line state – market. The last few decades it seems that the role of the citizen has disappeared. In western societies, brotherhood is more and more forgotten; it seems that we prefer to concentrate on state and market (Wilken, 2012).

For that reason, Abrahamson (1992) created another triangle, where the society is dominated by the line state and market, and where the citizen has a minor position.

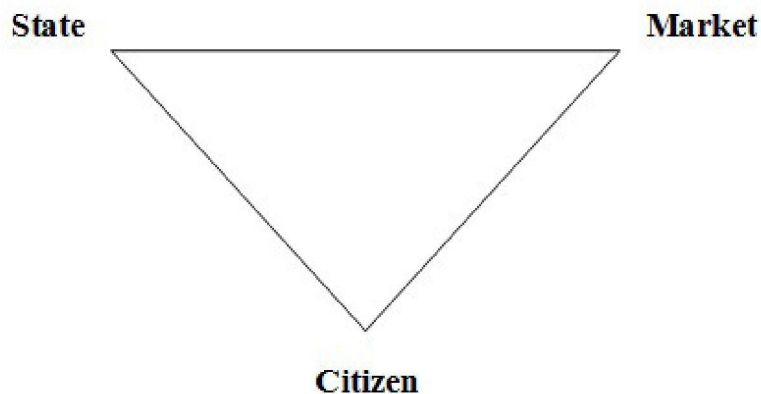


Figure 2. The positioning triangle of Abrahamson (1992)

An interesting question is: where can we situate social work in the positioning triangle? Or: where can we situate a social work organisation in the triangle? Or: will social work migrate in the triangle?

It may be clear that there is no definite answer. It depends on the country (Clarijs, 2015a). In the Netherlands, where social work is privately organised and, at the same time, nearly fully subsidised, social work can be positioned on the line citizen – market. In Russia for instance, it might be possible that social work belongs to the corner of state because of the laws, the curriculum, the financing, the inspectorate, et cetera (Clarijs, 2013).

Despite the different societal situations in the various countries, we can predict what will happen sooner or later in the European countries when we have a closer look at the three corners of the society triangle. For that reason, we focus now on the three separate corners.

State

After the Second World War, a welfare state – with a guaranteed security from birth to grave – has been made in many western countries. Since the nineteen-eighties, the welfare state has been a subject of debate and erosion (Idenburg, 1983; Doorn & Schuyt, 1979). Criticism is threefold: the welfare state is unmanageable, unaffordable and intolerable. With “unmanageable”, we refer to the continuously expanding bureaucracy and the centralism that are necessary for equal treatment of all citizens. With “unaffordable”, we allude to the growing costs at a fast rate of the welfare state. With “intolerable”, we are referring to the fact that the welfare state creates dependent citizens, and for that reason, encapsulates the development of the citizen. In addition, there is a more fundamental criticism of the welfare state: its (financial) compensations traditionally focus more on the consequences and too little on the causes (Klerck, 2006).

An increasing number of problems can no longer be solved by the welfare state. The participation state is named as its successor (Balkenende, 2009; Derickx et al., 2010; Verbeek & De Haan, 2011; Jager-Vreugdenhil, 2012), with a predominant focus on individual responsibility. The question is whether, following many centralisation processes, government with its dominant position in the triangle will be able to give enough space to the other parties (i.e. market and citizen) to allow for the transition from welfare to participation.

The introduction of New Public Management (NPM), which presented efficient entrepreneurship in the nineteen-eighties, has been quite influential in public service (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). This NPM trend may be seen in all western democracies and bureaucracies. The development has been and still is supported by international organisations such as the World Bank, IMF and OECD, which disseminated their ideas about the liberal market economy around the globe.

One of the most important effects of the NPM philosophy is that managing and implementation are unlinked. The underlying basic argumentation is that in a rowing boat, there is only one cox, who is steering, and this person definitely does not row. The oarsmen are there to row, but they do not interfere with steering the boat. One of the most dramatic consequences of this NPM-policy is the result that steersmen are supposed to act like process managers, who do not interfere in the process. Steersmen are in charge of the “where and what”, while oarsmen are in charge of the “how”. According to Aardema (2010), no one is responsible for the whole by accepting the what-how dogma. The construction of this idea became extremely influential. Many key officials became “process architects”, led by NPM-ideas. They became managers and to them it was not important which process they had to manage. The steering people develop into process managers, who become less and less in touch with the content. Policy memory disappears. This creates a managerial state, which cuts short the policy freedom of professionals and the relative autonomy of civil servants, and is preoccupied with problems. The public sphere is denied. Everything seemed to be business. In this atmosphere Margaret Thatcher could say, “there is not such a thing as a society” (attacking the corner of citizen), and Ronald Reagan could explain to the American people that, “the government cannot solve the problem, but is the problem” (attacking the corner of state). They became the heroes of the enterprise culture. The NPM movement, started by Margreth Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and continued by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, created attention for the market and has shoved citizens aside (Sandel, 2012).

Market

From the nineteen-eighties, with NPM as a catalyst, in the western countries the market is introduced into the social playing field. Government, which should restrict itself to core

tasks, was playing only a marginal role; it only had to act in case of market failure. Although optimism prevails in the eighties, around 2000 the enthusiasm in favour of privatisation takes a turn. The point of departure changes from “yes, if” (government is successful in its work as market superintendent) to “no, unless”.

Privatisation in practice turns out to be difficult to match with public services. The market needs to be corrected in several places; it has no moral of its own, moreover, has a short memory. At an earlier stage, it had already signalled that government chose in favour of privatisation in the public sector without due consideration and preparation. The concept of the market does not suit public services. Balance of powers cannot be translated into supply and demand. The role of government as the keeper and inspector of public interests has to be acknowledged. A strong market needs a strong government as director, market superintendent, referee and patron of public interest.

It is a mistake when we mean that public services is a well-delimited product. Public services, like social work, is not a product, it is a process (Zijden, 2009). A great deal of bureaucracy procedures is needed to split up a process into products. Some scholars (e.g. Donk, 2010) state that public services are not even a product or a process, but a relationship. This is the main characteristic of social work: it is made by the client and the social worker together.

In the positioning triangle, the corner of state is not very successful for social work. For that reason, the societies escaped to the corner of market. The European politicians hoped that the market would organise the social order. But commercialisation was more disruptive than arranging for the social relations. Commercialisation in public services led to a growing inequality. This was not a solution either. Actually, none of the corners is the right corner. The best place for public services, especially social work, is in the centre of the positioning triangle, where the three powers state, market and citizen have a say together. It is striking that since the eighties, in the discussions concerning the organisation of the society, the corner of the citizen has got little attention. Most of the attention has gone to the market versus state. Therefore, I will pay special attention to the citizen.

Citizen

In the coming participation society, citizens are expected to participate. However, to involve citizens is not easy. Is the citizen willing to participate? Is the citizen competent to participate? Is the citizen willing to participate or will he/she leave within six months? Till how far the other stakeholders like the government and professionals are willing that citizens take part in all kinds of processes? Is the citizen involved during the whole process, from brainstorming till implementation, or will the specialists – as ultimate responsible persons - take over after a certain point?

Western citizens suffer from a participation paradox: many participate only minimally, but a few participate to the max (Goede, 2008). Moreover, there is a participation elite: active citizens are predominantly white, highly educated and older due to the competences required (Fraanje & Ten Napel, 2012). It is significant that, while obedient citizens are embraced, obstinate citizens are turned away. Politics prove to be intolerant towards citizens in opposition. This is unfortunate, because a real representative democracy needs some form of opposition to ensure democratic checks and balances (Gunsteren, 2008).

In Europe, Arnstein's participation ladder (1969) is a much used and acknowledged tool to indicate the level of citizen participation. The five-step ladder distinguishes the stages of informing, consulting, counselling, co-producing and (co-)deciding. The higher up the ladder, the more the citizen is involved in decision-making processes. Next to that, the larger the citizen's influence, the smaller the role of the administration becomes. Recently, the Dutch Council for Public Administration presented an alternative model - the government participation ladder, which starts at the other end: let go, facilitate, stimulate, direct, regulate (Raad voor het openbaar bestuur, 2012). The highest (Arnstein) and the lowest step (Dutch Council

for Public Administration) of the participation ladder represents self-management / self-direction. That step is the most wished step for citizens and the society.

Participation seems to be happening primarily under the guardianship of government. In this way policy lets lie idle a huge reservoir of knowledge and experience. This leaves us facing a problem when we think about the success of the participation society as the successor of the welfare state. Veld (2010) states that participation, if it occurs, predominantly focuses on gathering information concerning the preferences of citizens instead of giving influence.

Putnam (2000; 1993) pointed out the importance of social capital, which does not materialise on its own. Social capital grows when used and diminishes when not used. Social cohesion in our societies is eroding and that, in turn, undermines the quality of the society, Putnam states. Perhaps we can look at it differently: present-day citizens are not so much averse to communities, but prefer a different model, of less constructed communities (the so-called “small groups”) in which the exclusiveness of the classic divisions is traded in for modern networks that are open and free of obligations. Small-scale, informal communities that are a modern source of social cohesion, present a welcome addition to vertical, formal initiatives, especially for young people. An objection to informal groups is that they often recruit their members from their own socio-economic class, and in this way do not favour the bridging that is called for (Goede, 2011).

Innovation

We live in a constantly fast-changing world. We change and we are changed. For that reason, it is more than important to consider innovation.

When we give thought to four dominant ways of innovation nowadays (Blue Ocean Strategy, co-creation, open innovation and crowdsourcing) we can conclude that open innovation, but particularly crowdsourcing, is an innovative approach that might benefit social work. The most influential innovation is based on the principle of crowdsourcing, where citizens decide the outcomes (owing to “wisdom of crowds”, see Surowiecki, 2005).

The fact that citizens take the lead in these new innovative techniques perfectly fits the positioning triangle of the future (Figure 3 – figure or schedule?).

Inferences

The market is not expected to do justice to the public character of public tasks, but neither can government – amongst others because of NPM – adequately anticipate new developments and needs of society. Therefore, the focus automatically shifts to citizens and their networks.

There is and will be a shift towards more democracy from below. The social work sector seems to be best placed in the heart of the triangle. If there is to be a balance in the positioning triangle, then the corner of the citizen will have to work hard to pull activities more from the line state – market towards the centre of the triangle.

In many European countries, social work is moving from the state corner to the market corner, and considering the end of the welfare state with its successor the participation society, the role of citizens will become extremely important in the coming years. Soon citizens will play a dominant role in social work and its organisations. This is quite an interesting challenge, but will not be implemented easily. As it was mentioned above, social work should effectively be positioned more to the centre of the triangle. The social enterprise – a new legal organisation in the public sphere that is allowed to make profit but has to spend this money in the interest of the target group – has structural connections simultaneously with all three corners. Possibly, a solution lies there.

In short

To summarize, the positioning triangle of Mouwen (2004) was used as a steppingstone to carry out the analysis of what is happening and will happen in our societies.

The first conclusion is that government on its own does not seem to be able to break through existing processes; it is too firmly rooted in its own past and its partners in the system, to be able to force a breakthrough. With increasing bureaucratism and civil servants who execute standing policy *sine ira et studio* it may also be concluded that individual civil servants cannot be expected to force a breakthrough here.

The introduction of New Public Management established the market economy into the public sector. Market economy turned out to be a good servant but a bad master. The market, as was concluded, is insufficiently capable of reducing complexity to the level where social work can improve the execution of their work. Market needs a government in its role as director, market superintendent, referee and defender of public interest.

I discussed the role of the third corner citizen, using the notion of participation. On the (government) participation ladder, the citizen is still a long way from the role that he/she is expected to play in shifting from a welfare state to a participation society. Although government calls for self-government by citizens, this turns out to be hard to realise in practice. Current participation projects perpetuate government dominance: the citizen participates in the government's processes. However, citizens nowadays do show more independence from participation projects and cooperation with government. This happens predominantly in informal groups and lightly structured communities. Using social media, young people nowadays again behave differently and show pick-and-mix behaviour; informalisation causes a shift towards democracy from below.

Participation will place the state in a different position. This puts pressure on the positioning triangle. In light of future developments, the following turned-over triangle seems to become a reality. Citizen moves to the top of the positioning triangle, where market and state support and facilitate them.

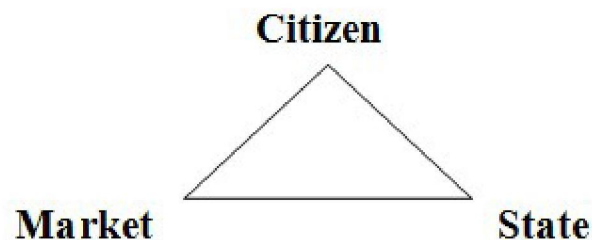


Figure 3. The positioning triangle of the future

Consequences for social work

In a society, with more heterarchical instead of hierarchical relationships, with settling and adapting, with the lack of power to decide and the division of power to obstruct shared between all stakeholders, social work will develop into a different sector.

There will be changing relationships towards the state and the market. The social workers have to deal with the new position of parents and their children. Citizens will take over – or at least will heavily influence – the structure and organisation of social work; see the increasing number of social cooperatives in Europe, implemented by citizens themselves. The experts will be less experts, the government will be less government, the inspectorate will loose power, the market will be less dominant, and the funding will change. It will not come as a surprise that in a sector, characterised by accumulation policies over the decades, many stakeholders – each with their own traditions, logic and policies – will have a place at the table to discuss and decide social work.

Citizens will increasingly take the lead in public services. It is not to be expected that these social processes will leave social work untouched. This means something new has to be

thought up, because present forms of participation are not satisfying. There is still a long way to go towards self-management.

It would not be very effective to continue in the same policymaking direction. New ways of innovation view citizens playing a major role, while government and professionals are in the background, facilitating and motivating. Policy innovations need to be explored to find those, which will tackle the shortcomings of social work, move with the process towards a participation society, meet social capital, and establish a policy where informal groups have a place, where government exercises restraint and encouragement through civil servants that allow space instead of demanding the expert role.

In Europe, the time is there for smart people power instead of super state power. The new future where the corner of the citizen will become more important than anything else will give social work a strong(er) position. Because of this future, also the content of social work has to and will change. Social work needs to pay attention to the citizen of the future, to prepare children and young people for their future role in the society. They will have more duties and there will be more opportunities for them in the next decade than ever. In order to get social work from the line state – market towards the centre of the triangle the corner of citizen will have to pull hard. This is only possible when individuals take their responsibility, and probably it is the same as with democracy: this is not self-evident – this has to be taught.

We would make a big mistake when we would ignore the trends of the future. Maybe I am allowed to quote the French philosopher René Descartes: l'indifférence est le plus bas degré de liberté (indifference is the lowest level of freedom). The appeal to the sector of social work in Europe is clear: be prepared for the basic different role in the coming years. Not only its funding, but also its organisations and especially its content will (have to) change firmly.

The 20th century was to and for the people, whereas the 21st century will be with and by the people. We are looking forward to a transforming and challenging future. Because of the fact that the world is like a village more and more (see the earlier mentioned NPM-developments), it might happen that this European movement concerning social work might influence the Russian social work in the future too. One can never be prepared too early.

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