

**SOCIAL INTERVENTION FACING MULTIPLE
PRECARIOUSNESS
(6TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF AIFRIS¹,
PORTO, 7-10 JULY 2015)**

I o n I o n e s c u *

The 6th International Congress of AIFRIS was held in Porto (Portugal), during 7-10 July 2015 and its theme was multiplication of precariousness and appropriate social interventions (SOCIAL INTERVENTION FACING MULTIPLE PRECARIOUSNESS: WHAT IS THE POWER OF ACTION FOR RENEWAL OF PRACTICES?). The paradigms of *innovation* and *technological progress* prevails today the neoliberal ideology, require "more economical growth", "more consumption" in an internationalized market, regulated by supranational bodies. Businesses, companies must constantly adapt to the new demands on efficiency, flexibility and mobility, which involves increasing structural unemployment. The situation of the unemployed, vulnerable people becomes dramatic given the conditions in which the nation-states cut public spending - including those for social policy. This socio-political and economic environment affects social relationships and is a fertile ground for the growth of poverty and extremism.

AIFRIS contains keywords as: *association, international, training, research, social intervention* and includes among its "social workers" caught in ... the vise of these transformations. They are at the forefront and have the first contact with the situation of those who suffer the consequences of societal changes. They need to understand better what is at stake, to help those in multiple precarious situations, "to deal with it", given that they are asked to „be more effective, efficient”, with less money ... Their tasks are multiplied, their pace of work is accelerated, while being evaluated in a more instrumental way, more standardized ...

¹ International Association for Training, Research and Social Intervention

* Prof.dr. la Departamentul de Sociologie și Asistență socială a Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași. Fotografiiile sunt făcute de autorul acestui articol.

The building where the AIFRIS Congress took place



The AIFRIS Congress from Porto examined also the social challenges and interventions related to the context of multiplying precariousness and constraints for the vulnerable, which are at risk. About 500 participants from over 17 countries submitted 300 communications, in 95 workshops, 15 forums and focus groups work sessions.

In a compelling context, we need new job skills, concluded those participating in the congress. New practices of social workers often become "creative acts", "cunning", "deviously", a true "art of dealing with" in conditions to the bureaucratic drift associated to changes and financial constraints. In the current socio-economic and political context it appears necessary the "collective vocation" of the empowerment initiatives of vulnerable groups, the activation of social relations, solidarity and citizenship. Rather than reducing it to fulfilling simple tasks or compliance requirements, the social intervention should now mean new forms of support, new reflective practices at the workplace, in places of training and research to meet current and future challenges.

At the 6th International Congress of AIFRIS in Porto, social professionals, social workers, sociologists, trainers, researchers and students in the area were asked again who they are, what is with their role and purpose. Someone remembered the title of a book by Lionel Terray - "conquerors of the worthless" (an expression taken as defining by climbers) - and professionals social, social workers, trainers, researchers in the field said they are also like "conquerors" every day heroes sometimes from the shadows, sometimes from the "underground", anytime, everywhere, being (also) besides the most fragile people in society. Professionals of social, social workers, educators, researchers from Portugal, Switzerland, Canada, France, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Tunisia, Congo, Brazil, Luxembourg, Algeria, Chile, Ivory Coast, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Poland, Romania etc. debated at Porto in *harmony* (so rare in a scattered world...) as a true

scientific community that creates, develops, strengthens itself. The Congress in Porto was an opportunity to develop networks of those involved in the construction of scientific social intervention, in terms of economic transformation and political rise to the inequalities and "dissolution" social glue, in terms of defiant individualization and psychologizing social problems, in order to find some innovation paths, affirmation of the potential for change and democratization of social intervention.

During the Porto Congress



The social thought and the sociological theory have produced important reflections on the relationship between the process of individualization, socialization and institutional framework. These reflections represented at Porto a starting point for addressing the issue of precariousness and insecurity of jobs, of social isolation and their effects on safety, freedom and identity of the people (since governments are cutting public spending, freezing pensions, introducing new taxes ...).

In Portugal, one of the participants was specifying with communication, that even the fact of helping families with children has suffered, which induced negative effects on the rate - already so low - of births. In this country, unemployment is also one of the important causes of poverty (only 31% of unemployed receive a grant, most living in poverty ...). The disappearance of jobs is affecting workers at risk of social exclusion (because those who are dismissed cannot find new jobs). Reducing public expenditure had dramatic consequences on the quality and quantity of essential public services (education, health, social security, justice, etc.), further contributing to increased social inequalities. Raising taxes stroke also the middle class, fact that has deepened inequalities (a majority - over 90% of the population - is becoming poorer and a minority - less than 10% of

the population – is becoming richer) in an economy dominated by economic and financial groups who demand austerity ... of other social groups, not to them...

What is there to do? Social intervention is not effective without articulating the contribution of different actors. Although the practical effects are the best way to "take stock" of its consequences, today we need a "complete social intervention", "integrated" at different levels (through basic partnerships, intermediate and private) in various sizes, according to the principle of "active subsidiarity". Social action and structural actions are complementary: without the first, it is not possible to meet the needs and expectations of people, without the other it is not possible to properly act on the causes of social problems.

It is necessary to work also with ourselves - fragile beings in the "era of generalized barbarism," said Didier Vrancken at the congress. "It is desired" to form active people, "actors" - both officials and those involved in family life, at jobs, etc. "It is considered" that "the weak individual" is able to transform a traumatic experience in new "strengths" and new skills. In this type of current society, if a poor person, if a precarious family, if a long-term unemployed, an unskilled person, a social assistance beneficiary, an immigrant, a poor elderly person, a young person etc. succeed, their life trajectories are known by relatives, parents, friends, children who are turning on their own images and no longer appear as "barbarians" (in the etymological sense of the term), and neither the society as a ... "tired of so much solidarity" .

The Seventh World Congress of AIFRIS will be held in Canada, in Montreal, in 2017 and the theme will be *new solidarity and changing social intervention*. The link between action, training and research will be reaffirmed, beneficial to understanding social transformation and social intervention. It will be another opportunity to take note of the variety, diversity of opinions and social heterogeneity of social interventions.

The author of this presence at Porto

