Article

From Imperialism to Radical Hospitality: Propositions for Reconfiguring Social Work towards a Justice-To-Come

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Abstract

The focus of the article is on injustices towards South African families in postcolonial and neocolonial contexts, our understanding of which has been greatly enlarged by Nancy Fraser's conceptualisations of expropriation and imperialism and Jacques Derrida's notions of hostility and hospitality. We used Walter Benjamin's and Karen Barad's montage methods of fragmentary writing to diffractively read expropriation, imperialism, hostility and hospitality through one another in the context of injustices done to South African families. A diffractive methodology entails a close and attentive reading of concepts or pieces of text through one another, to arrive at new insights with regard to a particular issue. The new insights we arrive at in the article are five propositions for ethically engaging in a justice-to-come for social work – that of attentiveness, rendering each other capable, responsibility, response-ability and radical hospitality.

Keywords: hospitality; hostility; propositions; reconfiguring; social work; postcolonial; diffraction; injustices; montage methodology

UNISA university of south africa PRESS

Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development https://doi.org/10.25159/2415-5829/8889
https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/SWPR/index ISSN 2415-5829 (Online), ISSN 0520-0097 (Print)
Volume 34 | Number 1 | 2022 | #8889 | 17 pages

Introduction

For decades, social work has portrayed itself as a profession deeply committed to social and gender justice (Hölscher, Bozalek, and Gray 2020; Reich 2017). This commitment is conventionally considered the profession's contribution to society's progress towards becoming more equitable. The purpose of this article is to trouble this self-conception and to consider instead the extent to which social work's very structures are constituted by, and constitutive of, interpersonal and structural forms of violence. To this end, we examine the profession's implication in a colonial past, which continues to deeply affect its present and future practices. It is in this (post-)colonial context that some of what seems hospitable practices on the part of social work may be acts of hostility. Our point is that unless social work as a profession takes responsibility for this entanglement, its claims to contribute to social, economic, ecological or gender justice will remain hollow.

In this article, we examine the ways in which South Africa's colonial and apartheid history[1] continues to affect families. We consider some of the ways in which social work might take responsibility for how this past affects the present and the future. The kind of responsibility-taking we have in mind requires more than an academic argument; it requires a willingness to participate in a form of unsettling that is embodied, visceral and relational and leads to thinking otherwise (Halberstam 2020). To enact these processes, we have chosen a fracturing of what is normally a straight and unilinear narrative form of writing an article. We do so through experimenting with Walter Benjamin's montage methodology or fragmentary writing (Barad 2019), which resonates with Barad's (2007, 2017) own ideas of diffraction as a methodology. We use fragments of our own writings on Nancy Fraser's (2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2018; 2019) works on expropriation and extraction as a means and end of imperialism and Jacques Derrida's (1992, 2000a, 2000b) notions of hostility and hospitality (see also Barad 2019). We intersperse these bits of text with montage pieces from our empirical research, including student interviews and field notes of social work practice, pertaining to instances of injustice faced by South African families from past and present times. This is to enable a diffractive reading of expropriation, imperialism, hospitality and hostility through practices that implicate social work in South Africa in prevailing historical and geopolitical regimes of injustice. In this way, our montage shows, with a focus on families, social work's non-innocence in relation to South Africa's difficult colonial and apartheid past.

Some readers may experience this montage of texts as disturbing and this would be a desirable effect: A small but potentially helpful contribution to the profession becoming more, and differently, attentive to its entanglements and, consequently, more able to commit to a justice-to-come as an ongoing, never-to-be-completed, ethical practice

1 For an excellent history of South African social work, see Smith (2014). It is beyond the scope of this article to outline a general history of social work in South Africa.

(Derrida 1994). This, we regard at once to be a complication and enlargement of social work's traditional commitment to social and gender justice and therefore as their more viable alternative.

To pursue a justice-to-come as an ongoing and continuous ethical practice, we respond with a set of five propositions for social work, namely, attentiveness, rendering each other capable, responsibility, response-ability, and radical hospitality (Barad 2007, 2010, 2019; Despret 2013; Despret and Meuret 2016; Haraway 1988, 1997, 2008, 2016; Rose 2004). Propositions, rather than moral injunctions, are speculative, process-oriented thoughts in motion (Manning 2008), which give rise to experimentation and, rather than referencing individual virtues, flow from relationships and denote collective processes (Manning 2008, 2009, 2020; Massumi 2015; Springgay and Truman 2018; Whitehead 1978). Propositions therefore focus on practice, performance and activity. These propositions are what flashed up (Barad 2017) for us, in the writing, reading, and rereading to one another, from the montage fragments. Different propositions might flash up for the readers and may contribute to an ongoing conversation. Either way, we hope that our propositions might open up some new and different approaches by which social workers might contribute to an undoing of past, contemporary and future injustices in which the profession is entangled. As a result, there might be some rupturing of what has been, opening up some previously unthought-of spaces and times for social work to become what it "could be . . . but not yet is" (Sehgal 2014, 196).

Post-Qualitative Methodology: Fragmentary Writing and Diffractive Reading

The methodologies of fragmentary writing and diffractive reading fall outside the realm of conventional qualitative research methodology and can be broadly located within post-qualitative inquiry (see, for example, St. Pierre 2018, 2021). As St. Pierre (2021) notes, post-qualitative inquiry cannot be understood in the same intelligibility grid as qualitative research; it is something entirely different, in that reading and writing constitute methods of inquiry in and of themselves (St. Pierre 2018). Whereas a qualitative research study focuses on collecting and analysing data, a post-qualitative inquiry uses philosophical concepts and experimentation to create something new. St. Pierre (2021, 6) explains, "The goal of post qualitative inquiry is not to systematically repeat a pre-existing research process to produce a recognizable result but to experiment and create something new and different that might not be recognizable in existing structures of intelligibility." Diffraction, devised by Haraway (1997) and further developed by Barad (2007, 2017), is an experimental process of creating new insights through reading and writing. Moreover, it is a posthuman or feminist new materialist methodology, and therefore constitutes a way of doing post-qualitative inquiry. Diffraction is a process of interference, where different ideas are read through each other. Diffraction therefore attends to differences, and more specifically, differences that matter.

In this article, we employ such a post-qualitative approach. We use what Barad (2017) refers to as fragmentary writing to offer the possibility of reading pieces of writing diffractively, that is through each other. Our purpose is to unsettle and create a disjuncture in South African social work's self-understanding as being defined, in theory and practice, by its commitment to justice. Our purpose is also to create patternings of various aspects of injustices experienced by family members including the way in which, in some instances, social workers may be entangled in these. By reading Fraser's notions of extraction and expropriation, Derrida's notions of hostility and hospitality through one another and through our fragments of own empirical writing on South African families and children in need of protection, we hope that the reader will get a sense of Barad's and Benjamin's montage methodology which involves

> the breaking open of the continuum of history [as] a political act, a material de(con)struction of the continuum of history that is the condition of possibility for bringing the energetics of the past into the present and vice versa. (Barad 2017, 23)

Barad (2017) contends that such a methodology facilitates a diffractive mode of scholarship to enhance both readers' and writers' attentiveness and carefulness, to do greater justice to the fine details of texts than might otherwise be the case. Fragmentary writing and diffractive reading do not foreground one or the other theory or text, they do not produce arguments, they do not compare and contrast different pieces of text and, therefore, they do not use the one as a foil to either substantiate or counter the other, to guide the reader towards appreciating the writer's carefully crafted conclusion. In the case of this article, the diffractive methodology is an experimentation by the writers and their invitation to the readers, to try something novel, to come up with some new insights that matter for social work, in order to "lure it into a new becoming" and to "divert its" current and – we contend – also problematic, "trajectory" (Sehgal 2014, 196).

Following Walter Benjamin's montage method, Barad (2017, 22) proposes montage writing using small fragments of texts as an alternative to representationalism – a hallmark of qualitative research – to break with "the temporality of progress" (37). Montage writing brings together small pieces of theory, quotations, interpretations in new constellations, which are not causally linked. Montage writing does not rely on a straight or linear narrative or storyline, but on getting new insights through diffractively reading fragments of text through each other. Accordingly, Barad (2017, 37–38) describes the diffractive reading of the montage method in the following way:

> The material fragments are neither to be read as causally linked (in the sense of linear causality) nor merely analogous. Rather, they are to be picked up like crystals, and turned around and around allowing the light to diffract through them, seeing the overall pattern that is already inside each fragment but also watching entire constellations of insights flash up, if only momentarily.

The fragments below reveal moments of our own and of some of our students, experiences of South African children and families, to explore "various crystalline

structures that solidify, if only momentarily in the breaking of continuity" (Barad 2017, 22) where something flashes up for the reader. What flashed up for us, in these small moments of larger events, read through expropriation, imperialism, hostility and hospitality, were ideas for developing propositions of how to reconfigure social work's imaginaries. We elaborate on the latter after the montage fragments below.

Montage Fragments: Diffracting South African Social Work's Past through the Concepts of Expropriation, Imperialism, Hostility and Hospitality

Nancy Fraser's (2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018, 2019) recent work on exploitation, expropriation and imperialism, which stands in the tradition of Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, and of Black Marxism, makes visible the impact of imperialism and colonialism on historical and contemporary forms of domination and suffering experienced by South African families. Processes of exploitation and expropriation are integral to the capitalist system and its manner of transferring capital into the hands of the private owners of the means of production. In this regard, both lie at the core of imperialism, colonialism and the contemporary neoliberal ordering of the world. However, each denotes different aspects, with the former constituting part of capitalism's more frequently acknowledged and theorised "front-story", and the latter being the much less recognised "back-story" on which the former relies (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 29).

> What began in the late 1860s as a spontaneous and somewhat egalitarian effort of many to extract South Africa's mineral wealth, became over a period of less than 40 years a well-coordinated extractive economy that was concentrated in the hands of a small, politically powerful elite, funded by foreign capital. This created a huge demand for labour and was one of the key drivers of the progressive expansion of colonial boundaries in the 19th century, including the dispossession of Southern Africa's indigenous people and their forceful relocation to small, often unproductive 'locations': if indigenous people could be rendered indigent, they would need to sell their labour to survive . . . This move enabled the colonial government and mining companies to better control the movements of the colonised without having to attend much to their human needs (Hölscher 2016).

Traditionally, the term expropriation signifies the period of (pre-)industrial capitalism, when large-scale dispossession and displacement of people from the land and livelihoods that had sustained human life in pre-capitalist times, forced them to sell their labour to survive in the emerging industrial economies. While apt as far as it goes, the Marxist tradition of treating expropriation as belonging within a distinct period in the past has obfuscated the extent to which it has remained indispensable to capitalism across all its periods, including contemporary globalised, financial capitalism. Indeed, Jaeggi (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 44) points out that "capitalism has an ongoing

imperative to explore more and more terrain to expropriate. It has to look out for ever-new grounds not just of capital accumulation but of possible dispossession".

> In the Dutch slave-owning settlement at the Cape, there was explicit negation of family rights of the slaves. Unions of families were not recognised as legal marriages and they could not own homes or be heirs to property. The settlers imposed hut taxes, pass laws, established compounds for mine and farm labour . . . all of which were designed to split African families and compel the menfolk to work for the White people on the basis of single person wages. There was thus no acknowledgement that the men who were working on the mines were supporting people from their families that they had left behind (Family Profile 1) (Bozalek 2004).

According to Barad (2019), hospitality and colonialism are intimately entwined. Colonial powers settled on lands of indigenous peoples, confiscating their land and regarding it as acquired property. They criminalised indigenous populations and refugees for wanting to live on these lands. The concept of hospitality raises questions about who is a welcome guest and who is the host. Once the colonialists took control of the conquered land and had successfully subjugated its peoples, the former became hosts to the latter. Yet they could not never have offered unconditional hospitality to the indigenous populations, as this would have meant returning their land. Instead, the hospitality offered to the indigenous population was conditional on the colonialists' terms and operated largely through exclusions, determining who was welcome where and when. It was violently enacted in laws such as the Natives Land Act of 1913 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, which destroyed people's ties with their lands, one another, and their livelihoods. This violence-as-hospitality against those constructed as Black people and Other in the colonial and apartheid regimes, is an example of how residing in the construct of hospitality is always also a practice of hostility (Barad 2019). In South Africa's colonial and apartheid regimes, those who were categorised as Black people were only tolerated in White areas if they were needed for various forms of labour, including reproductive labour.

Derrida (1992) distinguishes between conditional and unconditional hospitality, equating conditional hospitality, which he refers to as the laws of hospitality, with the rules, set by the host, as to who and what is welcome. Unconditional hospitality, which Derrida refers to as the law of hospitality, is a spontaneous form, not linked to an invitation, but where the host opens up to any stranger without prescription of conditions or laws that need to be adhered to (Salmon 2020). Conditional hospitality cannot be considered ethical as it hinges on the enforcement of and exclusions by the master from a home, or nation, and on being denied sovereignty over self or home (Bragg 2019). For this reason conditional hospitality is inherently violent: the host is hostile to those being hosted. Unconditional hospitality, on the other hand, would be welcoming the stranger, whether human, non-human or more-than-human or as Derrida (2000a, 77) puts it, "whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female", with no reservations or

conditions, requiring an openness to the relationality of the temporality and the process of arrival (Derrida 2000a, 2000b).

How could the colonialists confiscate the land of people, relegate them to inhabitable regions and then play host to them, using social work to show its "hosti/pita/lity"? As Barad (2019, 534) asks, "Does not the very notion of hosting already entail some privileged relation to not only place, but to a specific place where one welcomes guests? What, then, constitutes an ethical and just relation of hospitality?"

> My father was working as a slave in this farm. He was doing all the work, he was the garden boy[2], he was ploughing big fields alone, milking cows in the morning and in the evening, and he had to spend the whole day in the field looking after the cattle, sheep, goats etc. At the age of 15, I was working as a domestic worker and that was very painful because the work was very hard for me, and what frustrated me worse was that I was never asked by my father's employers to work instead I was forced and I was told if I didn't want to work I had to leave that farm. What about my help at home for my sisters? Who was going to look after them? (Female rural African student, Family Profile 63) (Bozalek 2004).

Economically, expropriation entails an unsparing and merciless "confiscation . . . of labour . . . land, animals, tools, mineral and energy deposits . . . of human beings, their sexual and reproductive capacities, their children and bodily organs" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 40). Politically, expropriation is enabled by "hierarchical power relations and status differentials, which distinguish rights-bearing [even if exploitable] individuals and citizens from . . . dependent [and thus, expropriable] members of subordinate groups" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 41). The latter are "rendered defenceless" by being "stripped of political protection" and have included, over time, "slaves, colonised subjects, 'natives', debt peons, 'illegals', and convicted felons" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 41).

Given capitalism's leaning towards imperialism, European colonisation of most of the non-European world and the important role that racist ideologies played in justifying and operationalising imperial expansion, colonial conquest and rule, it is probably unsurprisingly that to date, expropriability hinges greatly on "race", and that it "is overwhelmingly racialized populations who lack political protection . . . and who are constituted as inherently expropriable" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 41). It is the descendants of the colonised, subjugated, enslaved and racialised peoples of the world who remain "fair game for expropriation – again and again" (Fraser and Jaeggi 2018, 42).

> She [the student's mother] wrote that because of the influx control in the city she is unable to invite us to stay with her and it is very difficult even [during] school holidays.

2 The student is here employing the derogatory term "garden boy" which employers used for the men who did domestic work for them.

> She made it clear in one of her letters that the only time we can see each other is during December holidays and during the other serious times like funerals. Early in 1964 when I was five years old and my younger sister was four years the family got a telegram from one of our neighbours in Cape Town who was staying with my mother that my mother is seriously ill. A few weeks after that she passed away. This was one of the tragedies in my life. (Family Profile 118) (Bozalek 2004)

Fraser (2017) defines imperialism as the disadvantaging of certain geographical contexts through the privileging of other geographical contexts. Indeed, the contemporary capitalist system still benefits from the power inequalities, first established during colonisation, through its continued appropriation of resources from the Global South to the Global North. More specifically, Fraser (2017) identifies four dimensions where the so-called "underdevelopment" or disadvantage of one geographical area feeds into the "development" or privilege of another. The first three are imperialism's economic, political and ecological dimensions. The fourth, which is of particular interest to this article, is the social reproductive dimension.

> My family originated and stayed in District Six. The whole family lived in one house. In fact, there were two families in one house. My grandmother and her children and my great grandmother and her children. My grandparents moved to Athlone[3] in 1967. They moved because there was a house available and because of the Group Areas Act which was being implemented since 1950. The migration had a detrimental effect. My mother could no longer become involved in all the community activities and sports. My grandparents lost contact with some of their friends and distant relatives. My mother's aunt divorced her husband as a direct result from moving out of District Six into Heideveld. Her husband had lost his job, lost contact with his friends and relatives. He became an alcoholic as there were no facilities available to him to help him vent his frustrations and no support group to help him to come to terms with his loss. My cousin's father is a vagrant now, who refuses to accept help. (Family Profile 27) (Bozalek 2004)

Here, underpaid – or entirely unwaged – caregiving activities are used to look after those who are privileged enough to extract this carework, while denying that this extraction exists. The expropriation of care work always happens at the expense of others further down the care chain, where one finds an increasing deficit of care. And, following the logic elucidated above, this care chain is generally raced, gendered and classed. Importantly, the four dimensions of imperialism are intertwined, and none of them can be understood in isolation from the others.

> My family on my mother's side was greatly affected by the Group Areas Act. Because they lived near the white area, they were forced to move out of their houses. They had to sell their properties so that the authorities could demolish their houses. Although my family had court cases about it because this was a property that was theirs from

3 Athlone, Heideveld, Manenberg and later Mitchells Plain were townships on the Cape Flats which were created to house "Coloured" families forcibly removed from their homes by the Group Areas Act.

> generation to generation, they could do nothing about it. (Family Profile 23) (Bozalek 2004)

> On the way to the beach, we used to travel past a group of families, who seemed to be living on a vacant plot next to one of the main roads. The children were begging but, it would seem, under the supervision of some older children and adults. There were no sanitary facilities, no adequate shelter, nothing. Each time we drove past, I asked myself how much heat from the burning sun and how much toxins from traffic pollution a child could inhale without succumbing to it, and if they were to succumb, how long that might take. My son asked me once how Father Christmas would find them, seeing that there was no proper address. I thought it would be a good idea if a social worker would find them in the meantime. (Hölscher, unpublished field notes, fictionalised)

Social work's history is entangled with capitalism, processes of expropriation and exploitation and imperialist expansion (Sewpaul and Hölscher 2004, Hoosain 2013). In this regard, the question arises regarding the extent to, and ways in which, concepts of conditional hospitality and the hostility it entails are traceable in contemporary South African social work practices. Indeed, the authors' own practices and witness over the past 25 years suggest that despite good intentions, social work is not an unconditionally hospitable host trying to redress or ameliorate the harms done to families through the ongoing effects of the vicissitudes of colonialism and capitalism. Rather, social work itself is complicit in performing violence against colonised peoples, in response to the social ills that inevitably arise and are passed down generational lines. Once people's connections with their lands are severed, social ties with one another are frayed and the economic foundations of their existence destroyed.

> My mother is untraceable. I was brought to South Africa in 2005 by my father, who applied for an asylum seeker permit for both of us when we arrived, but then he never renewed it. Many people cared about me. One family took me in. Another family arranged for my schooling and another for medical treatment. But I was told that once I reached adulthood, I might be deported, so the family I was with decided to adopt me. However, nobody seemed very keen to assist. A private social worker told us that the government doesn't like foreign teenagers to be adopted by South Africans. The Department of Social Development seemed to want to slow down my case at every turn, including trying to derail the Children's Court inquiry that was held a couple of years later to finalise my adoption. Then, the Department of Home Affairs resisted all my new father's attempts to get me a South African ID. In the end, it was thanks to our pro bono lawyers, who did not stop helping us, that there was a happy ending to my story. (Hölscher, unpublished interview record, fictionalised)

Where there is nothing left to extract; when particular humans, the land on which they used to cohabit with all manner of beings, and the livelihoods that previously had sustained them, have been completely and entirely expropriated, then they are at risk of becoming permanently superfluous (see Bernstein 2010; Denning 2010). With such people's welfare no longer of interest to capital and of diminishing interest to the state (Bauman 2004), the ultimate outcome of expropriation is death (Mbembe 2019). These

continuities of economic, social, political, cultural and ecological injustices – and their interaction across place and time – are what Fraser's distinctly anti-capitalist critique helps to illuminate. They are signified in the writing fragments and social workers are well advised to consider them when trying to understand the lives of those they proclaim to help.

> There was this child sleeping rough outside of the building. He (or was it a she?) was so emaciated that it seemed impossible to determine either gender or age. One morning, upon stepping over this child yet again, we decided to report the case to the nearby child welfare office. After some time, a person introduced themselves as the intake worker and asked us many questions. Did we have a name? No. Age? No. An address? Yes, sometimes the pavement in front of the house. Any other information? No. But, we said, the child was sleeping at the moment, so if a social worker came out immediately, there was a good chance of finding them. The social worker said, 'okay' and returned to their office. (Hölscher, unpublished field notes, fictionalised)

Yet, social work's entanglement in regimes of expropriation, exploitation, conditional hospitality and hostility is not a matter of apportioning blame; instead it is a question of what to recognise and how to respond. At stake is therefore not just the inactions of social workers – the unconditional hospitality withheld; it is also the profession's legally sanctioned actions, for example, the removal of children to children's homes. For the latter action may protect, often does protect, but it also dispossesses and displaces children into conditions where it is dubious that their fates will be any better than in the homes they were residing in.

> He was an awfully abusive husband. One evening, allegedly while drunk, he held one of her children by the foot over the pit toilet; at least that is what she told me. When I attended the children's court inquiry with her and the children, the magistrate asked me if I did not agree that she herself was a victim of violence. I agreed. He asked me if, in removing her children from her care, I was victimising her further. I agreed with that, too. He asked me why then I was proceeding with this intervention. I said that this was the price I was willing to pay for the sake of the children's safety. (Hölscher, unpublished field notes, fictionalised)

At stake is not merely the much-considered "doomed if you do, doomed if you don't" scenario in child protection and family welfare practices, it is social work's imbrication with South Africa's violent past and the way this past continues to haunt even the most well-intentioned practices. Whether committed as part of colonial subjugation and conquest, as part of apartheid governance and control or in the name of child protection and family welfare, the practices of removing children from their families without attending to the needs for protection and care of others deserve to be seen as a form of violence that has caused unspeakable harm to indigenous communities. Whereas social work practices in the name of benevolence and defines itself by its commitment to justice, regarding it within the context of colonial and apartheid violence points to its lack of innocence, where injustices of the past, present and future are always entangled (Barad 2010, 2019). Treating social work's claims of benevolence as akin to conditional

hospitality and noting with Derrida that inherent in such claims are also hostile attitudes and practices, we argue, in response, for enacting a justice-to-come (Barad 2019; Derrida 1992). This entails a continuing ethical practice and acknowledgement of how the past continues to haunt our present and future. Our five propositions, presented below, are what flashed up for us in the montage above, as possible contributions towards a social work reconfigured in this Derridean and Baradian sense.

Propositions for Reconfiguring Social Work

Joan Tronto (2003) stresses the importance of remembering past injustices (and the moral and political dangers of forgetting the past) to understand the present and as a ground from which to view the future. The effects of colonisation and their later formalisation through apartheid legislation and their ongoing impacts on the present and future of people's lives in South Africa have had long-term debilitating effects, which are still inscribed in lives, livelihoods and bodies. With such politico-ethico-onto-epistemological insights, social work practitioners and educators need to provide an alternative vocabulary to aid efforts to respond to such issues as the breakdown of trust, gangsterism, alcoholism and violence in relation to their historical roots rather than by means of singling out apparently dysfunctional families or individuals as that which requires intervening (see Hoosain 2013).

So, bearing in mind our montage pieces of Fraser, Derrida and Barad, the students' interviews and our own ruminations from our experiences in the field, how could social work contribute better to a justice-to-come? The five propositions below might make a start on articulating ethical sensibilities worth considering. The idea of making propositions emanates from the work of Alfred North Whitehead (1978) and has been taken up more latterly by authors such as Erin Manning (2008, 2009, 2020), Brian Massumi (2015) and Springgay and Truman (2018). Rather than stipulating ethical principles or formulating codes for practice, propositions are speculative, process-oriented thoughts-in-motion which give rise to experimentation, proposing what might happen. They work both as enabling constraints and constraining enablements and can generally be considered collective processes (rather than properties of individuals), flowing from relationships between times, spaces, humans, non-humans and more-than-humans (Massumi 2015). The focus is therefore on sensibilities for practice, performance and activity, bringing about what was not quite there before.

Be Attentive

Social work as a profession will need to cultivate ways of paying attention to the way in which the past continues to bleed into the present and future; that is, how what has been done historically to children, women and their family members continues to play out in the present and the future. This proposition is supported by Despret and Meuret's (2016, 26) contention that "a true politics of attention does not confine itself simply to

taking another into account – it demands more". A political ecology of attention leads us to understand and acknowledge the way in which social work needs to expand the scope of its obligations – how we become obligated far beyond living humans to and by other beings, situations and historical trajectories. What has happened in the colonial and apartheid past therefore continues to obligate social work in its present and future practices. This type of attentiveness could lead social work to think otherwise, with regard to vital, lived gestures and alternative inflections of inhabiting the world (Despret and Meuret 2016; Massumi 2014). This could lead to new kinds of practice, which come into being through entanglements with complex past/present/future political, ecological and economic conditions.

Render Each Other Capable

Social work needs to ask what practices or ways of being we might engage in to render each other capable in the light of our haunted past/present/futures? Rendering one another capable eschews the subject/object binary between social worker and client, which traditionally structures the relationship (Despret 2013). Openness to being rendered capable may create new ways of being, necessary for configuring new ways of doing social work. This means being constantly attuned to the Other and the context within social work is practiced to respond adequately to, and allow a response from, the Other. Rather than individual emotion, the emphasis is therefore on transindividual dynamics to capture the inventive potential of particular situations and unfolding events (Massumi 2014).

Become Responsible

Barad (2010, 264) notes that

> To address the past (and future) . . . is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit . . ., for the entangled relationalities of inheritance that 'we' are, to acknowledge and be responsive to the non-contemporaneity of the present, to put oneself at risk, to risk oneself . . ., to open oneself up to indeterminacy in moving towards what is to come.

Becoming responsible for the future therefore means accountability for the past and present by facing our inheritance. It is also being accountable to what matters and what has been excluded from mattering and for how we are implicated in the material arrangements of the world in space and time (Barad 2007). Responsibility is a kind of doing that does not assume a givenness in advance but takes into account entangled relations with the other. As Barad (2010, 265–266) explains, "Only in this ongoing responsibility to the entangled other, without dismissal . . . is there a possibility of a justice-to-come."

The point is not just that social work as a profession is often unaware of what it has been complicit in, but that there is an entanglement of here and there, and past, present and

future in multiple and entangled relationships. Responsibility is therefore not something which individual practitioners simply choose to take; instead, it is a collective enactment, which precedes consciousness, and an action, which involves a rupturing and thinking otherwise about what has been and is yet to come. And we need to remember that the effects of past actions can never be fully amended, so there can never be full redemption for social work's past. But there must be an accounting for it as we continue to make connections and commit to what matters (Barad 2010). In this process social work can reconfigure itself.

Practice and Enable Response-Ability

The term response-ability denotes one's own ability to respond and making it possible for the other to respond. This requires an embodied empathy (Despret 2013) where it is necessary to accommodate difference and recognising what matters in different situations for different beings and how "bodies are articulating, and become articulated, in the asking and in its responses" (Despret 2013, 70). This sensibility would mean for social workers to actively make it possible for all participants in social work practice, including service users to be able to respond. Importantly, Despret (2013, 70) contends that empathy is not about "feeling what the other feels" but about "making the body available for the response of another being". Social workers wishing to practice response-ability and enabling response-ability must therefore be attuned creatively to embodied ways of communicating – becoming with, making with, acting with and thinking with, the other.

Practice Radical Hospitality

Justice-to-come is an infinite, embodied, ethical and political pursuit and calls for social workers to enable radical possibilities for living and being otherwise (Barad 2019). To this end, Barad (2019, 544) issues an invitation to practice radical, rather than conditional, hospitality, that is

> an opening up to all that is possible in the thickness of the Now in rejecting practices of a-voidance, taking responsibility for injustices, activating and aligning with forces of justice, and welcoming the other in an undoing of the colonizing notion of selfhood rather than as a marker of not us, not me.

Conclusion

In this article we have attempted to show how the effects of South Africa's colonial and apartheid past continue to verberate into the present and future. Indigenous populations, their kin as men, women, children, their land, houses, animals were expropriated and exploited by the settlers who colonised the country, forms of which continue to date. Although promoting itself as a profession that is defined by social justice, social work has been slow to recognise its complicity in the forms of violence to which this past has given rise and which delimits who may benefit from services and assistance and who

may be excluded, even to the point of death. As is evident in the writing fragments about conditions of family life experienced by social work students and their family members, and Hölscher's unpublished field notes about social workers' non/intervention, the conditional hospitality that social work extends to its client populations may instead be considered acts of hostility, that is, "always already a matter of . . . injustice" (Barad 2017, 535). To think of ways in which social work as a profession may respond to the historical conditions in which it is entangled and work toward a justice-to-come, we have made five propositions, namely, being attentive, rendering each other capable, accepting responsibility, practicing and enabling response-ability, and a genuine embracing of difference by means of radical hospitality. These are not meant to be judgements of the profession, but suggestions about what might potentialise an ethical stance of aligning with forces of justice and care, without knowing in advance what may be produced by them.

Acknowledgements

This work is based on the research supported by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (Grant Number: 120845). We want to express our sincere gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their comments in response to an earlier draft.

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