

CEINAV: transnational and intercultural research on intervention across three forms of violence

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The concept of culture

- Collective: An orienting system of symbols, values, norms, perceptions and ways of thinking that are at least partially felt to be self-evident;
- Individual: an experience of “belonging” that is significant for the everyday life world as well as for personal identity.
- In CEINAV we are concerned with
 - The cultures of the four countries as they have been shaped by history, institutional structures and language and
 - The experience of “belonging “ to a majority or a minority or of having such belonging attributed.

CEINAV studied cultural encounters on four levels:

- Four countries whose traditions differ with regard to social life, language, social policy, norms and intellectual life,
- Three domains of intervention, within which violence is interpreted and the sense and purpose of intervention is understood,
- Different institutions and professions that play a part in intervention, their legal and normative framing,
- Encounters between professionals, trained to work with the majority, and ethnic or cultural minorities.

The concept of culture in CEINAV

- Social anthropology has studied cultures as stable and closed systems.
- The same view is often present in the literature on multiculturalism.
- This is no longer valid in Europe; wherever people come from
- Dynamic interaction is taking place constantly on all levels!
- At the same time, there is a vast potential for non- or misunderstandings; that is why we ask:
- How can intervention be grounded in listening and empathy and expand the agency of those who have been subjected to violence?

How we worked in CEINAV

- Five partners worked together closely, implementing the same qualitative empirical program in the four countries; for this it was indispensable to have
- Cooperation with 12 “associated partners” = Networks of practitioners (3 forms of violence x 4 countries)!
- And co-ordination was vital: We developed guidelines before each step of the work, making uniform planning possible ⇒ then many differences emerged ⇒ insights into the cultural context

Five streams and work phases

Stream 1: We wrote working papers to give us all a shared overview of

- The socio-cultural background of social inequalities, minorities, colonial- and immigration history and available data on interpersonal violence, and
- the legal-institutional context of intervention against violence in the four countries, as well as
- (a) key theories about structures of inequalities , and (b) ethical theories that could be relevant to CEINAV.

How cultures shape the rationales of professional practice

- **Stream 2:** What institutional norms, implicit assumptions, orienting frames and cultural representations influence responses to violence?
- **Method:** In multi-professional workshops (2 for each form of violence), using phased fictional case stories, we discussed the possibilities and difficulties of intervention, both in general and in a minority context.
- Analysis pulled out how the challenges of intervention were framed and what dilemmas the practitioners face.
- All teams met for a five-day working seminar to analyse the material.

The voices of those who experience intervention: Stories and ethical questions

- **Stream 3:** Ethical issues in cultural encounters: How does intervention respond to women and young people from minorities?
 - Hearing voices of the recipients of intervention: What helped, what did not help, what even made things worse?
 - How might these voices influence intervention practice?
- **Method:** Interviews with women and young people; comparing the results
 - between the four countries
 - across the different forms of violence

Hearing and seeing the lived experience of intervention: What can art and stories do?

- **Stream 4:** An experiment: Exploring how aesthetic expression can communicate the voices and agency of diverse women and children / youth.
- **Method:** Extract and re-tell stories from the interviews, invite interviewees to participatory art workshops and to talk about their art in creative dialogue with practitioners.
- Create 4 video clips on the art process (different in each country), produce a video based on statements by professionals and stories of women and young people

Space for storytelling, images, and art

- We have extracted short stories of experiencing help and support given or withheld, meeting needs or failing, and are publishing them in an anthology in the four languages of CEINAV (pre-print can be seen at this conference).
- Artist-researchers in each country led workshops in which women and youth (from the interviews) created art work.
- Professionals, even if they were sceptical before, have been deeply impressed by the stories and the art.
- Is this a way to communicate other perspectives and open up a more responsive approach to violence?

Developing ethical intervention

- **Stream 5:** From understanding how cultural context shapes intervention \Rightarrow to developing a transnational foundation for ethical intervention.
- **Method:** Building on a synthesis of the knowledge gained across 4 countries and 3 forms of violence, and drawing as well on pooling our knowledge from past work.
- Intervention systems and institutions must be constructed in ways that foster and support ethical practice,
- But we do not claim to set standards, but offer guidance towards respectful and responsible intervention,

Some comparative results

- Historical differences in when stable democracy was established:
 - England & Wales: evolved over centuries
 - Germany: 1949 (and 1989)
 - Portugal: 1974
 - Slovenia: 1991
- This has an impact on readiness to trust the state, feelings whether agencies should share information, how police powers are seen, reliability of legal frameworks, etc.

The past and the present

- England and Portugal were once major colonial powers, their goals and treatment of indigenous people differed;
- Germany's role as a colonial power in Asia and Afrika was brief and brutal; 1938 began the project of subjecting all of Europe to colonial subordination;
- Balkan history is one of subjection to the rule of varying powers; the break-up of Yugoslavia was driven by massively ethicized conflicts.

Consequence: It was utterly impossible for CEINAV to use the concept „minority“ so as to be in any way comparable.

Commonalities

- We were very successful in identifying same or similar professions involved in intervention and in devising realistic, phased case stories for multiprofessional workshops in all 4 countries.
- Evidently a European practice has emerged that defines who could or should take what kind of action when there are indications of violence against women or children.
- Yet the picture was more varied when we looked at **how** professionals should proceed, and **why**. Here different „intervention cultures“ seem to play a part..

Different systems

- In England and Germany child protection has unfolded over generations and been ,modernised' since 1945.
- In both countries naming violence against women and inventing qualified (NGO) intervention began in the 1970s.
- Portugal is still struggling with the ghosts of a dictatorship that both idealised the family and sealed it off as private.
- In Slovenia the ideal of state agencies that intervene for the welfare of all citizens still alive.
- Portugal and Slovenia do not yet have reliable structures to help and protect trafficked women.

Different intervention cultures I

- The primary approach to intervention against violence in Slovenia is criminal law. To intervene against the will of the woman tends to be seen in a positive light.
- Portuguese law makes a „victim status“ conferring rights and claims dependent on the victim reporting to the police. But the law on DV has changed 4 times since 1982, creating much uncertainty for professionals.
- In England & Wales the concept of public protection is dominant, and there seems to be a strong trend towards a philosophy of rapid, intensive intervention.

Intervention cultures II

- England & Wales: punitive sanctions for the perpetrator and risk assessment for the victim are at the center. Cuts in funding under an austerity regime have been forcing specialised services to limit their support.
- The German intervention system is primarily oriented to protection. Winning the trust of the victim / family in order to offer effective help is at the center, criminal prosecution is secondary, even when the law declares it primary, and all forms of violence in our study are rarely prosecuted. It is no accident that a key term in the UK is „women’s advocacy“ and in Germany ,women’s protection agencies“

Intervention cultures have consequences;

Some questions to discuss:

- What effects does it have when the state issues detailed guidelines or rules for intervention? And what are the consequences when the state regulates only generally and leaves procedure to practitioners?
- What happens then to professionalism and judgement ?
- Where does it leave human rights when help and safety are conditional on cooperating with prosecution? And what is the result when prosecution is set aside?
- How do we weigh the interests of society against those of the individual who was made vulnerable through inequality of power to begin with?

What we have learned in CEINAV

- Cultural differences between EU countries are subtle but omnipresent.
- In each country, the responses to forms of violence in the arenas of family and sexuality resemble each other.
- To lay down EU-wide norms for uniform laws, procedures and practices in addressing violence would be futile and the attempt would be counterproductive, *but*
- It is indeed possible and promising to identify ethical principles and their implications for professional practice, to guide intervention transnationally and across forms of violence.



Thank you for your attention!