Ethnocentrisms in Knowledge Production: The
Role of the Welfare Expert in the Social Services

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Abstract: This presentation analyses explores the interconnecting themes of knowledge, culture and change by examining the impact of the knowledge economy on the organization of welfare. It adopts as its specific focus the role of the welfare 'expert' in the social services. This is contextualised within the New Labour government's social exclusion policies, the global knowledge economy and concepts of cultural capital within knowledge production. This issue is important because of the contemporary debates about new classes of knowledge produces and claims made about the increased democratisation of knowledge (Giddens 1996). In making an evaluation it considers the impact of cultural capital and the knowledge economy on the organisational culture of the public social services. It then asks whether these developments enhance social inclusion policies and if not what barriers exist to reduce effective service provision for socially excluded service users by examining the situation of gypsy welfare recipients.

Introduction: Defining the Knowledge Economy

THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY is relevant to these three themes, knowledge, culture and change because the controversies that surround its development turn upon competing definitions of the nature of knowledge, the culture forms it gives rise to and the kinds of social change it stimulates. Various definitions of the knowledge economy include: a situation where knowledge assumes greater significance in the economy due to the increased realisation of its wealth generating potential (OECD 1996), to a situation where knowledge is exploited to generate new forms of competitive advantage which can be applied to all sectors of the economy (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999) or where powerful computers combine with well educated minds to create wealth (Brinkley 2006). Castells (1996) refers to a new knowledge economy that emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century, which had fundamentally distinctive features from previous modes of production. Firstly, it is an information economy because it is predicated on the flow of information which firms, businesses and even nation states need to apply effectively and efficiently in order to compete in a global market. It is a network economy because productivity and competition are generated in the context of global business networks and global, because due to the impact of IT, the internet facilitates access to a global market. Knowledge assumes greater significance due also to the ability to store, share and analyse knowledge through global communities and networks using IT technolo-

gies. Thus, there is no longer the problem of knowledge having a 'shelf-life' or becoming obsolete. Knowledge is now the ultimate economic renewable because the body of knowledge is not exhausted by usage. Often the value of knowledge is derived from sharing it with others or alternatively selling to others for material gain. The knowledge economy also facilitates the harnessing and more systematic exploitation of tacit knowledge- that is knowledge that is acquired on the job and resides with the individual as know-how and experience. Brinkley (2006) sees the knowledge economy driven primarily by technological advance and raising domestic prosperity increasing the demand for knowledge based services.

Democratisation and Reflexive Modernisation

Various sociologists such as Beck (1992), Giddens (1996) and Delanty (2000) identify the development of the knowledge economy and the rise of the 'risk society' as giving rise to a new situation known as 'reflexive modernisation' or in Giddens' case a reflexive, post-modern society. Beck's (1992) 'risk society' thesis is characterised by increased public awareness of the various types of risk that exist in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, such as the risk of unemployment, risk of being in a negative equity situation, risk of having insufficient health insurance and the risk of retiring with an inadequate pension to live on. This increased awareness of the precariousness of people's lives has been stimulated by the plethora of scientific and technological risks that have developed (which are uninsurable), a spate of ecological disasters like global

warming, man-made disasters (like Chernobyl and Bhopal) and concerns over GM foods. Due to the international profile of these risks thanks to the accessibility of the global internet: these things have prompted increased reflection on the state of the world and people's experiences within it.

In contrast to Beck (1992) and Delanty (2000) Giddens (1996) believes society has moved from a modern industrial society to a post-industrial, post-modern society, due to the impact of the knowledge economy, the IT revolution, globalisation and the rise of consumerism. This post-modern society is characterised in the lack of faith in scientific rationality to cure social problems, the lack of conviction in the inevitability of progress and disillusionment with meta-narrative theories that claim to be able to improve society. This society is also characterised by increased reflexivity. This increased self reflection has stimulated the development of expert systems of knowledge to meet people's ever increasing demand for and acquisition of knowledge, which they increasingly rely upon in order to, make sense of the world. The impact of postmodernism results in fragmentation of society as old forms of gender, class and ethnic divisions break down. This is due to the fact that that society is in a state of flux and reflexivity means that people can reflect on their multiple identities, self define and choose their identities rather than having them ascribed.

Giddens (1996) asserts that within the knowledge economy, expert systems have emerged to take on the role of the information society. At the same time knowledge is essential for everyday life, which places increasing demands on individuals for interpretation both in terms of shaping their own biographies and for the need to make sense of the social world, much of it, which can only be experienced by information. 'Knowledge' in Giddens work is similar to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital; it is a resource people can exploit by means of strategies to improve their income, status and life chances He also asserts that the impact of globalisation means that we are living in a post-industrial knowledge economy, where the power struggles will be over access to knowledge and wealth and these will replace class struggles.

Though these sociologists disagree on the extent of democratisation, they all concur that knowledge (due to the power of the global internet) is becoming more diffused in the public domain. For example, Delanty (2000) argues that democratisation has occurred through the way the internet has effectively destroyed the knowledge-monopoly of universities. He also points out that one significant impact of the risk society is that it succeeded in ending modernity's faith in the infallibility of science. Similarly, Beck (1992) suggests that the advent of the risk society not only destroyed scientific legitimation but also its paradigmatical dominance and subsequently the power of scientific elites. For Giddens (1996) increased democratisation has occurred through the resource potential of knowledge itself. Using his 'knowledge-as-a-resource' concept, he suggests that the knowledge economy has opened up the potential for a whole host of knowledge specialist and IT specialists to carve out a niche for themselves and improve their career prospects and life chances. Such opportunities transcend the structural barriers to social mobility presented by ethnic, gender and class divisions. For Castells (1996) such barriers are further eroded by global networks, which are more horizontal as opposed to hierarchical in structure.

History Repeats Itself

I would argue however, that these claims are illusory, because all that has happened is that within the knowledge economy the knowledge-power of the universities has shifted to a new group of knowledge producing elites in IT, business, research institutes, financial and welfare institutions. Delanty (2000) himself writing on the relationship between knowledge and power reminds us that the philosophy of the social sciences asks two pertinent questions: 'what is the relationship between knowledge and power?' And 'who decides what constitutes valid knowledge and what is it is to be used for?' In his exploration of these questions he identifies the discursive and highly politicised nature of knowledge including scientific knowledge despite positivism's claim to value-freedom and the pursuit of instrumental knowledge. He notes how late modernity and then trends towards post-modernism firmly ended the myth of scientific neutrality.

However within social science generally there has been a distinct failure to adequately address the discursive dimensions of positivist social science.

The history of this failure lies in part in the work of Habermas and in his thesis on *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1987). In this he sought to challenge the positivist model of science, which had set itself up as the sole paradigm and arbiter of claims to valid knowledge. He sought to show that contrary to positivist's claims, that science was merely one form of knowledge amongst a host and that any adequate theory of knowledge had to recognise a variety of knowledge forms. However the weakness in Habermas' work is the primacy he gave to the objectivity of scientific rationality, a methodological flaw which Scott (1995) criticises him heavily for:

> "He has resorted to a methodology in which the rational theoretical practice of science becomes

itself, the sole criterion for judging the truth and knowledge produced by science".

(Scott 1995:129)

Unfortunately in doing this Habermas (1987) failed to see that any endeavours to identify what constitutes valid knowledge are as much the product of discursive power struggles as any other form of discursive knowledge. This methodological flaw in Habermas' work meant that he failed to deconstruct the discursive dimensions of scientific rationality as well as scientific knowledge itself, and in failing to do this he provided a means for any knowledge to lay claim to objective rationality and hence to reassert positivism's claim to be the sole paradigm and arbiter of valid knowledge. This is what is happening with various knowledge elites within the contemporary knowledge economy.

Mannheim (1993) provided a critical approach to such knowledge claims by asserting that all knowledge including scientific knowledge was produced from a specific historic and cultural standpoint reflecting the interests of those producing the knowledge. Feminists such as Harding (1993) and McCarthy (1996) have consistently argued that both scientific and social scientific knowledge are the products of a masculine value system. Thus far from being objective and producing instrumental knowledge they are ideologically laden. McNay (1999) argues that reflexive modernisation and its claims for the democratisation of knowledge are false, because it is an exclusively masculinist concept as gender plays no part in the reflexive modernisation theories of Beck (1992) Giddens (1992) and Lash (1994). Adkin (2004) points out that Beck's sexism in his risk society thesis is manifested in his assumption that one of the most 'devastating consequences' or 'risks' in modern society is women's emancipation from the family. She also criticises Lash's analysis of reflexive modernisation because it ignores the agency of women and because it recognises women as 'reflexive losers' due to their under-representation in the male dominated cultural and public spheres, which according to reflexive modernists are the very contexts, which have the potential to free human agency from structural constraints.

Similarly, the neo-Marxists Lavalette and Ferguson (1999) are particularly critical of the identity politics concept within the postmodernist theories of social change. They argue that this concept ignores the material conditions of oppression, which remain (despite the reclassification of terms) and affect the amount of agency people have to self define. Moreover, the neo-Marxist Callinicos (1993) takes the critique of Giddens' (1992) ideas on post-modernism a stage further, by arguing that the knowledge economy does not represent a shift to a new economic order or a post-modern society (and hence is not a major social change) but rather these trends represent the latest stage of global capitalism. He notes that this is because the dynamic stimulating the IT revolution, the rise of global networks and changes in the use of knowledge- is still the same, the need for capital accumulation (profit) and this process of accumulation is accompanied by oppressive sets of social relations predicated on class, gender or ethnic divisions.

The Rise of the Welfare Expert

From its inception, the development of the welfare-expert role has always entailed a relationship of power with the welfare recipient. For example, Hughes (1998) refers to the 'organisational settlement' of the UK welfare state after 1948 and the professional model underpinning it. This was based upon the Weberian notion of professionalism – that is the concept of the objective, dispassionate welfare expert offering regulated, audited and predictable outputs in the form of welfare services. However, covert power dynamics were entailed in the relationship between the welfare 'expert' and the welfare recipient through what Hughes (1998) calls a 'passive and dependent role for citizens with special welfare needs' (1998, p123).This form of bureaucratic expertise has continued into the twenty-first century through the introduction into welfare organisations of a managerial culture, specialist ICT systems, new bureaucratic forms of assessment and a performance management culture.

There are however, conflicting views as to the liberating potential of the knowledge economy depending on the different views of the kinds of discourses underpinning it. Milner (2002) sees the knowledge economy improving welfare services by enhancing communication between the different welfare agencies with the integration of ICT systems. This democratising potential is also envisaged in the UK by the New Labour government with many of its welfare and social policy reforms in the form of 'e-government' and increased introduction of ICT in health, welfare and social services departments. Brinkley (2006) argues that one of the most significant contributions the knowledge economy makes is through its capacity to unlock the potential of those he terms 'knowledge workers'. He cites Kok (2004) who suggests that in future up to 30% of EU workers will be 'knowledge workers' who will be able to exploit the global competition between world class universities and top business and technology firms vying for their skills. However, the weakness of Brinkley's analysis here is the way he overestimates the power of the cultural capital of the knowledge worker and ignores the structural impact of the knowledge economy which has the potential to gen-

erate global unemployment, for those workers without the recognised skills and qualifications to be classed as knowledge workers. This is one negative aspect of globalisation, or global capitalism (depending upon one's perspective) that is often overlooked (Mishra, 1999).

Prandy (2002) argues that the weakness of cultural capital models are that in their attempts to avoid structural determinism, they completely ignore the role of structure altogether. He points out that class is not simply a question of choice, or the result of reflexive modernisation or the outcome of identity politics, it is a product of an independent material reality, which has consequences for people's agency and choice.

Jacobs *et al* (2003) maintain that the development of new information technology manifest in the development performance indicators represents a new form of professional power, within welfare states, which reconfigures traditional power structures and mechanisms of control within organisations and disperses them from hierarchal structures to the professional relationship with welfare recipients. Similarly, Fitzpatrick (2003) identifies the impact of the new knowledge economy particularly ICT on social policy in the UK and how it has resulted in increased surveillance and tagging, and the increase of personal information being recorded on state controlled databases. In a different welfare context, Garrett (2005) examines the how ICT, the 'e-government agenda' and marketisation has increased surveillance and control with the introduction of ID cards and tagging in the UK Connexions Service. These power dynamics are reinforced in the role of the welfare professional and discourses as to their perceived expertise.

In relation to the ways these power dynamics secure control of welfare recipients, it is worth drawing upon the work of Foucault on various dimensions of power. Foucault, (1979) points to the ways that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there has been a 'blurring' of the welfare state's disciplinary, punishment and welfare operations. Through the blurring of operational imperatives under the guise of holism, there has been a tendency for welfare interventions (as Jordan 1996) terms it to 'distort' the lives of welfare recipients. Allen (2003) notes how this distortion has occurred in welfare provision for young people through the conflation of homelessness and unemployment within contemporary welfare discourses. This occurs by combining disciplinary power with sovereign power. Disciplinary power in this context is manifest in the ability to impose 'compulsory visibility' on the part of the welfare recipient. Thus, in order to qualify for housing benefit or accommodation they must be visible in their efforts to see work or to undergo training to make them

more employable. Similarly the sovereign power of the welfare expert is manifest in their power to withdraw or withhold services or benefits if recipients do not conform to these rules of what is considered appropriate behaviour.

Gypsies and the Knowledge Economy

Whether the knowledge economy represents a new form of reflexive modernity (as Beck 1992 and Delanty 2000 claim) or a post-modern society (as Castells 1996 and Giddens 1996 claim), there are abundant examples of gypsy social exclusion and marginalisation from the knowledge economy, welfare and political rights in Europe and elsewhere. The terms 'gypsies' and 'travellers' have become conflated within a host of UK public, media and welfare discourses (Richardson 2006) in order to legitimate the surveillance of large groups of citizens who lead a nomadic lifestyle and to justify the control of their use of space. For the purposes of this article, the term 'gypsies' refers to those UK citizens that local authorities have a duty to recognise as an ethnic minority under the Race Relations Act 1976 and whose needs they have a duty to assess and respond to. These citizens are distinct from New Age English Travellers or Travellers of any other ethnic minority that local authorities have no legislative duty towards unless they can prove they have been on the road for over five years.

Social and welfare policy has taken on ethnic dimensions and through a process of 'othering' gypsies have been ethnicised and their difference from the sedentary population has been emphasised as a means of legitimating their social exclusion. Lewis (1998) illustrates how the process of othering works on the part of powerful groups in society to legitimate and help secure the social exclusion of groups considered 'undesirable'. In Victorian England the process of othering was frequently used in relation to those defined as 'poor' or in relation to Irish citizens, using language, metaphors and juxtaposition, which served to highlight their difference from 'normal' English people and to amplify perceptions of their deviancy and difference:

> "What is important here is that this language is a language of *subordination* which acts to 'distance' particular groups of people defining (and segregating them) while simultaneously serving to legitimate their reformation or 'civilizing'
> (Lewis 1998: 59)

This use of language, metaphor and juxtaposition is employed in contemporary welfare discussions on gypsies. For instance Nando (2005) analyses the marginalisation of gypsies in Italy, through the negative social constructions of the 'nomad camps' and

the stereotypical images that are linked to the nomadic lifestyle within the Italian media and the state. The development of the construction of the 'gypsy problem' legitimates the confinement of gypsies to nomad camps and segregation from mainstream Italian society on the grounds that such camps are unhygienic, dirty, squalid, filled with thieves and vagabonds whom pose a threat to ordinary ,'decent' Italians. Similarly, in Spain both Gay y Blasco (2008) and Pasquilino (2008) identify the negative stereotyping and ethnicising of gypsy culture and lifestyles amongst the Spanish press. Sinhandl (2006) talks about the social exclusion of gypsies within the context of EU enlargement particularly in Eastern Europe where gypsy ethnic identity has been homogenised and amplified to legitimate their exclusion from welfare services and political participation. Ringold *et al* (2004) have identified European gypsies as the major poverty risk group of all ethnic minority groups in Europe. For example, in Bulgaria gypsies were ten times more likely to experience poverty than ethnic Bulgarians. In contrast, Vermeersch (2003) identifies how the ethnic categorisation of gypsies in the Czech and Slovak republics has been used to exclude gypsies from the political process but, equally, how gypsies are fighting back and developing their own political mobilisation and challenging racist stereotyping of their culture and nomadic lifestyle. However, such attempts on the part of the Czech and Slovak states to exclude gypsies from welfare, continues earlier attempts made by the communist government of Czechoslovakia in the 1970s. In this attempt the government thought that by relocating gypsies into modern housing that they could the movement of gypsies and hence 'liquidate the gypsy problem' (Glassheim, 2007).

These forms of exclusion are not simply confined to welfare, housing and social services. Pecek *et al* (2008) adopt interpretivist sociological concepts of labelling and the self fulfilling prophecy (Hargreaves *et al* 1975: Rogers 1982) to illustrate how teachers can create pupil failure within gypsy children through low expectations of their academic attainment and negative stereotyping gypsy culture. This is what Slovenian teachers did to gypsy migrants from the form Yugoslavia.

Common barriers faced by gypsies concern their exclusion and discrimination in schools (Bhopal 2006) the emphasis on punitive welfare services such as child protection and youth offending services (Cemlyn and Briskman (2000), inequalities in health and accessing health and mental health services (Acton *et al* 1998: Dion 2008) the negative constructions and control of their nomadic lifestyle and gypsy space (Niner 2005, Cowan and Lomax 2003), their exclusion from political and civic participation and

the extent of gypsy poverty (Demetriou, 2004; :Ringold *et al* 2004). These problems that gypsies face have also been researched in England, Wales and Scotland (Richardson 2006: Niner 2003: Holloway 2004: Netto 2004)

Within England Richardson (2006) examines specific state welfare discourses and how they are used to help secure the social control of gypsies either portraying them as a 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972) and a threat to 'normal' society or through various process of 'othering' Lewis(1998), which labels gypsies as 'other' 'different' or' alien' to 'normal' British culture. One specific discourse that is embodied in the negative stereotyping relates to the nomadic lifestyle, which is used to legitimate the control of gypsy space and nomadism. This is a complex process within welfare because Richardson argues that there are two contradictory discourses at work one - which emphasises equality and diversity within English society and the other which conceives of citizenship within the confines of a 'British identity':

> "The government is keen to promote concepts of citizenship and community within a 'British' identity and it cracks down on those it sees as anti-social. However a parallel discourse includes a diversity of culture and the need to address institutional racism in public institutions"
>
> (Richardson 2006: 81)

She observes how these leads to conflicting and contradictory social policy initiatives from section 225 of the Housing Act 2004 which places a duty on local authorities to address gypsy housing needs and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's (ODPM) Gypsy-Traveller Strategy 2006 which requires local authorities to have in place strategies to address the accommodation, educational and health needs of gypsy-travellers. However these initiatives are at variance with the host of coercive legislation designed to control gypsy space. In conceptualising the state's treatment of gypsies Richardson uses Foucault's (1961) concept of the 'gaze' in order to illustrate how gypsies are social constructed within welfare policy. She notes that this 'gaze' is not simply passive surveillance but the active and subjective interpretation of gypsy cultures, lifestyles and norms, which are often seen as at variance with and inferior to, the sedentary mainstream culture of society. She notes however, though there are two main themes of various discourses, there are multiple discourses due to the fact that there are multiple networks of welfare control and power that gypsies are subjected to (Rose 1999).Within these discourses the themes vary from emphasising diversity and equality in relation to gypsies, to a process of 'othering' through the negat-

ive stereotyping of gypsies as a deviant, threatening and homogenous ethnic minority.

Of course discourses on their own are insufficient to secure the social control of any group labelled as 'deviant'. Thus, in a similar vein to Richardson (2006) Cowan and Lomax (2003) employ the concept of 'managerial dispersal' to illustrate the power of the welfare expert in the social control of gypsies as welfare recipients. They refer to the surveillance and policing practices of welfare agencies, which have extended into a host of enquiries and assessments made by welfare professionals (Cowan and Lomax 2003, p 284). The concept of managerial dispersal is useful for understanding how state power increases into civil society. Under the guise of claiming to have dispersed power from central government to local government and to service providers and users, in reality it has increased the power of central government. Though this control is neither total nor uncontested it has still resulted in the encroachment of central government power into civil society through whole new systems of accountability and performance management. This is not simply confined to social services but has extended to a host of welfare organisations in education housing, the NHS and the unemployment benefit system. Though these contradictory and contested processes often meet with resistance by welfare staff, their trade unions and service users, there is a general trend towards central government control through the influence exercised by the various inspections bodies and the Audit Commission and their ideas on what constitutes 'best practice' (Lewis 1998, p. 352)

Foucault's (1979) concept of disciplinary power using the notion of compulsory visibility helps to illustrate the ways in which power is exercised with gypsies and through the ways welfare agencies seek to impose sanctions, in order to curtail their nomadic lifestyle. This power and control takes the form of a loss of welfare benefits, access to housing waiting lists, and loss of access to a GP, or a school placement, if gypsies do not remain in one location for a sufficient time as deemed appropriate by welfare experts to qualify for these things. Disciplinary power has been exercised by welfare officials in the UK through several pieces of social policy: firstly, through the curtailment of unauthorised gypsy encampments under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Secondly, by removal of gypsies off the land they own under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Thirdly, due to the introduction of Local Authority Circular 02/2005 which gives guidance on Temporary Stop Notices allowed for in Part 4 of the Act. These rules have been tightened up to prevent virtually any temporary stopping of gypsy communities. Fourthly, through introduction of the Public Order Act 1994, which, removed the duty from local authorities to provide, sites.

Cemlyn (2000a) and Bhopal (2006) in two separate studies highlight the lack of social services and educational provision for gypsy children whom face harassment and discrimination in schools. The failure to address these problems is compounded by the lack of professional engagement with gypsy families in terms of identifying their needs and the lack of professional understanding of gypsy culture. Cemlyn and Briskman (2002) identify that the lack of supportive welfare services are, paradoxically accompanied by intrusive forms of state intervention manifested in child protection services or youth offending services in order to control the 'anti-social behaviour' of gypsy families or gypsy juveniles. In these contexts very few attempts have been made to explain or engage gypsies in understanding how the juvenile justice, welfare, benefits or social service systems work and what rights they have in these different welfare contexts. Seen in this light there is very little cultural capital that gypsies can draw upon to enhance their agency. Cemlyn and Briskman (2002) note how such an approach has the potential to lead to oppressive practice on the part of the welfare 'expert' and the failure to recognise the strengths and potential gypsy families offer.

> "The failure to see the strengths in minority lifestyles and cultures means that the abilities of extended families to support each other is largely unacknowledged by social work agencies and gypsy lifestyles and child rearing practices may be seen as deficient"
> (Cemlyn and Briskman 2002: 57)

The manipulation of 'welfare expert' role within welfare could be regarded as a form of the monopolistic knowledge that Merton (1972) refers to when he describes the development of Insider Doctrines and is a perspective which can be used to evaluate critically the claims made about the democratisation of the knowledge economy. Extreme Insider Doctrines he argues lay claim to monopolistic knowledge, which outsiders cannot access. Put simply, monopolistic knowledge refers to the view that you have to be a group member to understand the group's knowledge. For Merton this represents a classic case of ethnocentrism within the production of knowledge:

> "Clearly, the social epistemological doctrine of the Insider links up with what Sumner (1907, p.13) long ago defined as ethnocentrism: the technical name for [the] view of things in which one's own group is at the centre of everything,

and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it".

(Merton 1972:17)

Gypsy Agency

Richardson (2006) points out that power is not one dimensional but lies in a relationship in which it ebbs back and forwards between welfare recipients and welfare experts in different contexts. The relationship between welfare expert and gypsy welfare recipient is therefore contradictory and Marxist dialectics as exemplified in the work of Rees (1998) are useful for explaining the contradictory and unpredictable nature between structural constraints and gypsy agency and to understand the challenges they have asserted against professional power. Rees' interpretation of the dialectic refers to the social, political, economic and ideological spheres existing in the same space (society) but in conflict and contradiction to one another. Such contradictions build up to crisis resulting in social change (where one sphere then another has temporary predominance); however, the direction of social change is unpredictable. It is these contradictions, which result at different times in structural constraints and then human agency dominating in any given context. Acton *et al* (1998) explore the rise of the Gypsy Women's Movement in the 1990s and how representatives from this movement used the knowledge economy in the form of the internet to mobilise against welfare expert power, by setting up regional networks and then when they were strong enough, to lobby the International Gypsy Forum to raise the profile of gypsy health inequalities with professionals and to force a paradigmatic shift in health and welfare thinking about gypsy lifestyles and to plan health services for gypsy families. In addition, this lobbying process also led to the development of improved health educational materials on sexual health and the introduction of cervical and prostrate cancer screening services for gypsy families. Similarly both in the UK High Court and the EU Court of human rights gypsies have instigated legal proceedings to have their human rights recognised and their rights to build encampments (Chapman v.

the United Kingdom). With Eastern Europe particularly in Poland, Macedonia and Romania Gypsy groups are beginning to form political and civil rights groups to pressure governments in those countries to introduce legislation on to address gypsies employment, housing and welfare needs and to outlaw discrimination of gypsies (Barany, 2000). The significance of these forms of agency is that gypsies have been able to obtain recognition of their legal, human and welfare rights without having to give up their nomadic culture. This is despite the very strong state efforts to foster their adoption of a 'gorger' or non-gypsy lifestyle and settle in one place.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate the limitations of reflexive modernisation and postmodernist claims for the increased democratisation of knowledge within the knowledge economy. In doing so it has shown how the professional discourses of the welfare expert role have exploited the discursive dimensions of positivist science to legitimate their professional power in the form of scientifically based knowledge and expertise and to use ICT systems to consolidate their disciplinary power. This re-conceptualisation of the knowledge economy as giving rise to new forms of professional power rather than a democratising entity has stimulated a renewed interest in social policy research and the impact of new IT technologies on the lives welfare recipients. It is interesting to note that much of the research within social policy, and social work identifies the resonance between the work of late twentieth century writers like Foucault (1973) and Merton (1972) and the research by Garrett (2005), Fitzpatrick (2003) among other concerning the attempts by the welfare state to re-configure its organisational systems (this time using ICT technology) to reinforce existing forms of social control. Further research is needed to examine how the state can continue to balance its social control dimensions with the various social inclusion initiatives it has developed to address the needs of a diverse range of marginalised service users.

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