

# SW

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Connecting theory and practice



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## Editorial

The thematic issue called *Histories of Social Work* is devoted to the diverse contexts of the development of social work and its specific aspects in different regions. I was delighted with the large number of contributions that continuously enhance the mosaic of social work development in different parts of Europe and beyond. Unfortunately, due to capacity constraints, it was not possible to include all the successful papers in this issue, for which I apologise to the authors. I did not anticipate such a wave of interest when commissioning the topic, as I still consider interest in the history of social work to be marginal in the Czech context. The number of accepted papers can be explained in various ways, some of the reasons being the additional time to write academic papers due to the ongoing pandemic or a higher level of interest in the history of social work outside the Czech Republic.

Based on the ongoing professional discourse, we can conclude that social work as an academic discipline and practical activity with scientific foundations has a rich and diverse history in European and non-European countries. Knowledge of the history of a particular field should form an integral part of the theoretical education of all professionals. History helps to understand the development of social care as a professional activity, can teach us, inspire us, offer us examples of best practices, and prevent us from putting effort into activities that were unsuccessful in the past. Knowledge of history gives prestige to

science, helps to establish professional self-identity, makes social work history visible in the media, or “just” maps the missing parts of the development.

The journal's present issue contains nine academic texts from the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Austria, and Slovakia, and a book review from Poland. Readers will be able to gain new and yet unpublished knowledge available only in local archives, which makes the issue unique regarding its content. It is clear from the published articles that social work in different countries has its own traditions and specifics, from which the diverse practice of social work is derived. Thus, we can talk about national models of social work practice and concepts. Along with the actual results of the analyses carried out, the authors also present various research tools with practical examples of how to obtain and process historical data. This is a significant endeavor for new researchers and students who have not yet explored the study of history. I also welcome essays that primarily steer away from presenting historical events but rather reflect on and discuss the importance of knowing history for the building of professional identity and prestige, as well as increasing the visibility of national social work traditions.

In the first article, authors Jutta Harrer-Amersdorffer and Robert Lehmann, in an article entitled *Gaming Social Work History — Increasing Motivation in an Unloved Field of Student's Professional Development*, address how to motivate social work students to study

the historical development of the profession. They use an exciting and unconventional tool, “Gamification,” in university teaching.

I consider the article *Social Work in the Terezín Ghetto as an Inspiration for the Present and the Future* to be a unique text. Czech authors Olga Klepáčková, Martina Černá, and Pavla Šlechtová offer a better understanding of social work practice in the Terezín ghetto that served as a transit camp and model ghetto for not only Czech but also thousands of Jews from other European countries in 1941–1945. Using historical research, they found that the experiences of prisoners involved in social work in the Terezín ghetto can be a valuable source of inspiration and knowledge for present-day social workers.

Next, we move to Austria. The article titled *Tracing Persecuted Social Workers During the 1930s in Vienna* by Irene Messinger shows that the history of Austria’s displaced female welfare workers has still to be told. The author of the article reconstructed their life stories through biographical research. She concluded that the period she studied had not been sufficiently discussed. At the same time, the results add a missing piece to the puzzle of Austrian professional social work history.

The aim of the article by the authors’ collective Jana Levická, Ladislav Vaska, and Jana Vrtová with the title *Historical Roots of Supervision in Social Work Framed by the Anglo-American Tradition* is to identify the origins and nature of supervision in social work and its gradual development in the context of professionalization following a historical analysis based on the Anglo-American tradition. The authors use content analysis of historical texts to show that supervision has developed alongside the social work profession. Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, supervision

was characterized by administrative and educational function, followed by supportive function.

This contribution is followed by an interesting example from Finland titled *Replacement of Religious Motives and Values by Secular Professionalism in Social Care*, in which authors Juha Hämäläinen, Piia Puurunen, Mari Suonio, and Raija Väisänen illustrate the history of social care as it transitioned from religious motives and values to non-religious secularism. Outcomes showed that Christian values have significantly influenced Finnish social care in the past but do not play an essential role in modern, research-based professionalism.

The article titled *Professional Knowledge Reconsidered: Using History of Ideas to Tackle the Uncertainty of Action in Social Work* by Vera Taube presents the history of ideas as a valuable perspective for social work science to advance the connectivity of the discipline’s knowledge base and improve its use for practice. The author concludes that the use of existing knowledge is limited to guide practice under uncertainty because it lacks an independent momentum for profession-oriented decision-making and that the history of ideas is identified as a valuable research perspective for social work research.

Author Pavla Kodymová in an article entitled *The Story of Two Social Workers, Marie Krakešová and Vlasta Brablčová, against the Background of the Creation of Educational Social Therapy (1943–1973)*, aims to depict the story of Educational Social Therapy as a method of individual social work, influenced by intersections of professional tracks of Marie Krakešová, the work author, and Vlasta Brablčová, her student. The presented outcomes, according to the author, will help social workers to boost

their professional identity while opening the way to further research into the application of the theory. The results open up another important topic for the history of Czech social work, which is to monitor the impact of Marie Krakešová's school on the practice of her students.

In the final historical article in this thematic issue, we move to Slovakia. The authors Andrej Mátel, Milan Schavel, and Jaroslava Pavelková devoted their text titled *Štefan Strieženec, Pioneer of Modern Slovak Social Work* to the analysis of the work and contribution of Štefan Strieženec for Slovak social work in its modern history, i.e., after 1989. Through his scientific, terminological, and educational activities, he fundamentally contributed to the formation of modern Slovak social work as an independent managed field and an independent education one.

Apart from the topic of history, the reader will also find a text by the author's collective Václav Walach, Petr Kupka, and Alica Brendzová, who in the article "*The Landlord Treads on Them, so Everything's Fine*": *Exploitation and Forced Mobility in*

*Substandard Private Rental Housing in Czechia* aim to explore the representation of the private landlords' practices that may contribute to housing insecurity and forced mobility in Czech segregated areas. Through the thematic analysis of 167 documents published mainly by the Agency of Social Inclusion, the authors conclude that social workers shall continue to embrace the issue of exploitative practices in private rental housing and use social work methods to reduce the power asymmetry in the tenant-landlord relationships, prevent eviction, and improve rental and housing conditions.

Finally, Mariusz Granosik reviews Paul Michael Garrett's book *Dissenting Social Work: Critical Theory, Resistance and Pandemic*. In the conclusion of his review, Granosik writes with enthusiasm – he finds the book very inspiring and recommends it to readers.

I hope that every reader will find "their" text that will bring them new insights.

**Marie Špiláková**  
*Editor of the issue*



# Gaming Social Work History – Increasing Motivation in an Unloved Field of Students’ Professional Development

Jutta Harrer-Amersdorffer, Robert Lehmann

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** The requirements regarding professional social work are constantly increasing. The development of a professional identity, which goes hand in hand with a comprehensive ability to reflect, is only one of the aspects mentioned in the international definition. To this end, the examination of the history of social work during the course of study appears to be meaningful and important for many reasons. **THEORETICAL BASE:** It is precisely this topic that proves to be particularly complex. Based on the increasing requirements on social work, another attempt is made through analyzing social work history in an overarching framework. **METHODS:** As important the topic seems to be for professional development, for students the analysis of the history of social work is yet often a necessary evil during undergraduate studies. **OUTCOMES:** Current study results clarify that students do not have a comprehensive professional identity. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** Using the concept of gamification for the imparting of knowledge about the history of social work could be a “game changer”.

## Keywords

social work history, Germany, professionalization, professional identity, gamification, university teaching

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## INTRODUCTION

The international definition as well as the German qualification framework for social work graduates assume a comprehensive understanding for the historical development of the profession and the history of society. This requirement has various reasons: on the one hand a broad understanding for this history helps to clarify and reflect the professional identity. On the other hand, it seems very useful to analyze different historical stages to get an understanding for different lifelines and biographical challenges with which the client might be faced.

Hence, the necessity of studying social work history is undisputed in Germany. As we all know, social work history is wedded to the history of society.

The topic is as valuable as it is complex. A simple historical reconstruction of the social conditions and the function and position of social work seems nearly impossible. A broad range of different theoretical ideas and approaches are influenced by the history of the profession. For a better subsumption, a categorical system aiming to combine various aspects seems to be helpful.

Based on this, the question emerges about how a professional approach in social work could be explained. Different empirical studies show which difficulties and challenges the current social work undergraduates face.

Hence, there are some recommendations to resolve these problems. As the traditional theories of learning already show, motivation is one of the most relevant aspects for success in learning. And as important social work history seems to be, we all could imagine that it still isn't the most motivational topic for social work undergraduates.

Gamification could be one instrument to generate motivation for difficult topics. During our whole life games have some special kind of attractiveness.

## PROFESSIONALIZATION AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL WORK HISTORY

The International Association of Social Workers (IASSW)/International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) 2014 Global definition of the social work profession states: *"Social work is a practice-based profession (...) Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address live challenges and enhance wellbeing (...) Social work is a practice profession and an academic discipline that (...) strives to alleviate poverty, liberate the vulnerable and oppressed, and promote social inclusion and social cohesion. It is driven by the need to challenge and change those structural conditions that contribute to marginalization, social exclusion and oppression"*. It also adds that *"The overarching principles of social work are respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice (...). The social work profession recognizes that human rights need to coexist alongside collective responsibility"*. (IFSW, IASSW, 2014)

The complexity and requirements that practitioners have to handle increase. The defined requirements are diverse, and the definition already shows that a broad spectrum of different knowledge is claimed.

Furthermore, the German qualification framework for social work describes the desired standard for social workers in the Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD levels. A central descriptor on every level is the understanding for the development and the different theoretical approaches of the profession. As a concretization for the Bachelor's degree, a broad and integrated knowledge for the general social scientific standards, the history of the profession and also the different theoretical lines is claimed (Schäfer, Bartosch, 2016:27).

By summarizing the recent theoretical and practical requirements, Petra Fuchs describes social work as the most sophisticated profession in the psycho-social field (Fuchs, 2021:2).

What we see is that professional social work is confronted with various challenges, and a high standard is demanded. During recent decades the understanding of professional social work has





been changing rather completely, and therefore also the methods and theoretical approaches have to be contextualized in a different way. For all these tasks, a broad comprehension about history of social work becomes necessary.

Social work could be understood as an attempt to compensate the different needs in society. The profession is the answer of the public endeavor to care about individual humans. But the more complex a society gets the more complex are the resulting problems. Based on this the requirements on professional social work are increasing steadily. The profession becomes more and more sophisticated (Lambers, 2018:9).

The high demands of the profession are not only evident in the present but are also made clear in the various historical lines of development. It is very difficult to clearly define the object of social work. In addition, the complexity of terms and paraphrases makes a clear presentation of the history difficult. There is hardly any clear demarcation between the individual field of social work. Many offers of help are explicitly named and emphasize specific focal points of the forms of support. There is also the challenge that in the German professional debate, partly for historical reasons, synonymous terms are used, to which, however, different meanings are attributed depending on the content (Hering, Münchmeier, 2014:13 f.). The presentation of the history of social work is strongly subject to national circumstances. It can therefore be emphasized that the history of social work in Germany must above all also take into account the political and social particularities of German history. And even the national limitation brings challenges. In summary, therefore, we can speak of the "histories" of social work rather than of a unified history (ibid.).

On the surface, history of social work is a history about how individual help becomes professional care. But as previously reported, social work history can't be considered as a whole. To get an overview of the different lines in development, the issue must be split in different parts:

- History of theoretical ideas
- Research about empowerment and gender
- History of methods and techniques
- Social policies and international comparisons
- History of social work professions
- History and development of different fields of working
- History of bureaucratization and organizations
- etc. (Lambers, 2018:20)

This enumeration illustrates the complexity of the topic. Social work history isn't a linear issue, and the analysis of history is based on individual interests. Hence, specific benchmarks could be a political, economic, or ideational interest (ibid.:13).

There are also some different indicators which help to classify historical positions:

- The awareness of specific characteristics for life phases like childhood, youth, and adolescence.
- The awareness of special life situations like the life conditions for minorities, living in poverty, living with diseases and disabilities.

These different situations can be analyzed from different point of views. Possible perspectives are politically, social, religious, etc. (ibid.:21).

Helmut Lambers (2018) pleads for a historical analysis focusing on different types of dimensions. This idea goes back to the considerations of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. He distinguishes three different dimensions in the development of society: the dimension of time (1), the dimension of issues (2) and the dimension of social structure (3). With this approach it's possible to get a multi-perspective understanding of the different stages of social work history (Luhmann, 1975:137).

(1) The dimension of time is directed towards the development of aid under the perspective of time and the social function of help. At first Luhmann describes a simple form of getting and giving help in between different persons and groups. The support ensues reciprocally. To give



and also to get support if it is needed, is of ample admitted value. But this kind of help is only possible in a manageable and small-scale structure of society. The distresses aren't very complex, and all members of society have some knowledge of these situations. To help someone is a way to strengthen the relationship to this person and, as already written, in consequence to the reciprocity, it is a kind of self-subsistence (ibid.:23). A disadvantage is that the person who gets some aid in distress is indebted to the supporting and caring person. The consideration is ambiguous, which means that the beneficiary could be obliged to give a higher consideration if he or she gets a higher position in society (e. g. a political office). If the social structure gets more complex, more accurate approaches are needed (ibid.:26).

As a next step of development, the stage of more complex social structures is described. A specialized society needs a nuanced political structure for legal regulations. In this case the simple concept of getting and giving help if it's needed becomes obsolete. With differentiation of labor comes a lack of motivation to give benefits, because the specific kinds of work are no longer generalised, and hence the understanding of the situation is no longer required (ibid.:27). At first, giving benefits and spending help referred to a high moral standard and value. Yet economic and profit growth more and more determine social structures. Poverty is no longer understood as a distress but rather a destiny ordained by God with an educational factor. A professional and organized help system becomes necessary. During this period help and support became a part of the public sector. The conditions for getting support are accurately defined. Luhmann named this period as "advanced civilization" (ibid.). This period is from the Middle Ages until the classical period.

Modern society becomes more and more complex, and the specific needs and states of demand are very individual. One tool to analyze the modern and (post-)modern society can be the differentiation theory. Luhmann (1986:75–88) describes the acting of subsystems by the introduction of an individual binary code. This code clarifies in which cases a system starts acting. Therefore, the primary aim of every subsystem is self-preservation. Every subsystem acts autonomously and fulfils only one specific function in modern society. There are only two possibilities for subsystems: to get in action or not to get in action, which means another subsystem has to solve the problem. It is associated with a high specification in society, assuming that every subsystem develops its own structure of methods to solve internal topics (Luhmann, 1986:89 f.; Schimank, 2014:44).

(2) The dimension of issues focuses on the different stages of differentiation in society. The main topic of this dimension is social change. Following the previous remarks, this dimension clarifies the social differentiations from simple structural principals to a complex and functional system (Luhmann, 1975:136).

(3) The dimension of social structures describes the different communication strategies during the different historical episodes. This dimension highlights the creation of systems in society. Defining thoughts are the philosophy, the general political situation, the social handling of childhood, youth, and care (Lambers, 2018:24).

These three different perspectives allow building an analysis-framework for social work history. All the different dimensions influence the interventions and status of social work in an essential way. All these different aspects also show that social work depends on the development in society as a whole.

Apart from this attempt to systematize social work history, Helmut Lambers highlights some specific preconditions for professional acting in light of a historical understanding for the profession of social work:

- generating knowledge about the own biographical history
- generating knowledge from the historical reflection for the present
- acting with the acquired awareness in the present society
- getting in a professional relationship to the clients with a historical reflection and understanding (ibid.:16).



With the view of analyzing the historical concepts and contexts, it is important to say that there is no possibility to transfer solutions from the past to the present in a direct way. A reflexive reworking is necessary (ibid.:21). Hence, the question is if social work graduates are able to rise to these named challenges. Several studies about the recent standards of social work graduates show a rather converse picture.

## CURRENT STATE OF PROFESSIONALIZATION IN BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

In 2000, an empirical inquiry about the professional identity of social work graduates (with diploma) in Germany clarified that there is a categorical comprehension that social work is a profession without further scientific explanations. The outcomes of this inquiry lead to the conclusion that theory and practical methods in social work are determined by a diffuseness. It can be argued that a body of knowledge or specialized methods were never established. The topics and issues the students analyzed during social work studies were not, but rather the experiences in social work practice and also the communication with the other team members get formative instance. Based on this, a deeper ability of self-reflection and theoretical (retrospective) dependence does not exist. The interventions and methods are chosen through everyday thinking or former work experience. Degree courses conduct the individual fulfilment more than the deep understanding of the subject matter (Seeck, Ackermann, 2000:22–28).

The outcomes from an empirical inquiry to the topic of a professional habitus in social work from 2012 show some negative as well as some positive aspects. Some references for building a professional habitus during social work studies are given (Ebert, 2012:275–311).

Professional action is signalled by multidimensionality and ambiguity – a simple functional chain isn't possible. The problem fields in the daily life of clients are very complex and hard to understand. As already written, these starting situations also accentuate that the practitioners in social work need a broad knowledge about theories and methods. Professional acting also has to deal with uncertainty (ibid.:23).

Following some outcomes of the inquiry:

- some important stages of development for professional acting could be placed during social work studies
- the theoretical – and consequently the historical – background of the profession is an important part of social work studies, but the graduates' focus lies more on the practical side.
- theoretical and historical aspects are relevant only if there is a practical utility
- the sample has a preconception for the necessity of professional methods
- for the sample, the building of a professional relationship is the most relevant part of professional behavior (ibid.:311).

In connection with the first quoted inquiry, this study seems more positive concerning the view of the professional standard after graduation in social work. For building a professional habitus, the author of the second inquiry references a compliant understanding of the social work profession and a stringent line in argumentation for professionalization in university (ibid.:312). At first glance this didn't seem very complex – but historically, the landscape of theories and different lines of arguments in Germany are very diverse and broad. Finding common sense could be a key challenge.

To complete this very diffuse picture of the professionalization of social work graduates, another inquiry with undergraduates is shown. The focus of the following inquiry is on the different content during social work studies. It is an evaluation study of a bachelor's degree program in Middle Germany. The main research question was how far it is possible to build a professional identity in social work during the bachelor's degree program (Harmsen, 2014:2).

The outcomes are very different. On one hand, the students are very interested in the social work practice, but social work is understood rather as a craft than as a social-science profession.



Consequently, the scientific and the personal reflection of theoretical and historical analysis aren't very important for the students. Only the practical action and therefore some methods receive a high relevance. This outcome could be interpreted as the students' wish to get a traditional apprenticeship with an academic degree. The ambivalence in social work practice isn't reflected. The social work students didn't understand themselves as scientific learners (ibid.:91).

On the other hand, when closely reviewing the outcomes of the inquiry, it is possible to see some positive aspects. For example, in the theory-practice-transfer in social work, incipient stages of a professional understanding and identity could be exposed. If some intensive practical experiences take place during the studies, the students are enabled to inter-relate theory and practice. From the students' point of view, social work studies are mostly understood as a personal process of searching. Finding some orientation in the broad field of different lines of arguments and traditions is an intellectual challenge for all students. Reflecting the intensive experience with theoretical approaches could help the students to find some scientific borders (ibid.:92).

A central result of the inquiry is that students mostly reject theoretical approaches that have no practical use for them. The undergraduates think more in a school-based way than in a social-scientific context. Therefore, the necessity of independent studies and self-instruction is neglected (ibid.:106).

These results make clear that a pragmatic understanding prevails among the students. Some references on how to handle this situation are given in this inquiry. Firstly it is important to make the professional identity a subject of discussion during social work studies. The building of a social-scientific-based identity is deemed to be mostly completed after graduation. As the outcomes and references of the other inquiries show as well, it is important to give a clear orientation for theories and backgrounds of the different stages of social work profession (ibid.:20–125).

The main reason for referencing these three different inquiries about professionalization, and the standard in social work studies, is to clarify the gap between the high requirements for social work in the international definition as well as in the German qualification framework and the recent situation in different degree programs. The studies also demonstrate the importance of social work theories and historical backgrounds for building a professional habitus and a wide reflection of professional behavior.

With the different outcomes, some very interesting and practicable recommendations are given, i.e., the imparting of a professional theory during studies.

The arising question is how students can get motivated to get deeper in the very complex subject matter of the historical-theoretical theories and based on this to the broad field of different profession theories in Germany.

## **GAMIFICATION AS A MOTIVATING APPROACH**

During the last decade, gamification has drawn the attention of a broad field of professionals. Academics, researchers, practitioners of different fields and also industrial professionals are equally interested in this interdisciplinary approach. There is no consistent definition for the concept of gamification, but in a simple way, gamification is defined as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts (Deterding et al., 2011).

The approach serves to generate motivation and enjoyment and thus enables easy access to complex subject areas (Costello, 2020:2).

Gamification appears to be particularly innovative and promising for two reasons:

First, this approach relies on a playful and interactive development of new learning content and thus differs from a material transfer that is unilaterally based on the teacher. Here, the students' motivation to learn is the central starting point for the design of a course (Kapp, 2012).

Second, a game-based approach ties into the realities of many students' lives: Not just children, but increasingly young adults spend much of their free time playing games (McGonigal, 2012).



Miscellaneous study results suggest that a use of gamification elements positively influences learning and study success: in a review study, Dicheva, Dichev, Agre, and Angelova (2015) evaluated 34 studies on the use of gamification in education in terms of their effectiveness and the game elements used. Twenty-six of the studies evaluated the effectiveness of gamification use; 18 studies reported positive effects, seven reported mixed effects, and only one reported negative effects. The positive effects included increased student activity, improved attendance, higher pass rates on course exams, and reduced variance in academic performance.

Another meta-study by Hamari, Koivisto, and Sarsa (2014) examined 24 gamification studies from different contexts in terms of the effectiveness achieved. Again, the majority of the papers evaluated reported mostly positive results, especially in the area of motivation. However, only in two of the studies were all effects positive. Most studies reported both positive and negative effects of using gamification. This illustrates that gamification elements have different effects depending on the combination of elements and the context of use.

As the preceding remarks show, dealing with the historical and theoretical foundations of the profession seems to be a major inhibition for social work students. Finding a stimulating and joyful approach to these issues would facilitate the creation of a professional identity, which can be derived from these issues. At this point the concept of gamification offers an effective solution. Learning and motivation theories can be singled out as the central scientific foundations of the approach.

A simple definition of learning is given for the sake of clarity: *“Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior brought about by practice or experience. However, (a) learning as a process should be identified and distinguished from the behavioral results or the products of that process; (b) learning does not necessarily produce a change in behavior – the behavior may remain relatively unchanged while there is a change in the effectiveness of the stimuli eliciting it; (c) ambiguous words, such as practice and experience, are replaced by words that more clearly represent what happens during learning. The following is suggested as an improved definition: Learning is the process by which a relatively stable modification in stimulus-response relations is developed as a consequence of functional environmental interaction via the sense”* (Lachman, 1996:478).

The definition clarifies that learning refers to processing information and changing behavior. Learning success is strongly dependent on the motivation of the learner. Gaming elements can help to generate motivation (Costello, 2020:3).

To understand the motivating effect of gamification, motivation must be theoretically understood. Most concepts of gamification are based on the self-determination theory according to Deci and Ryan (2012). In the approach, motivation feeds on the psychological needs of “competence,” “autonomy,” and “relatedness.” The more an activity contributes to the satisfaction of these needs, the higher the motivation to engage in it. Good games take advantage of this fact by giving players a sense of competence through an appropriate level of difficulty. Motivation is further generated through decision-making autonomy and often a social game setting. While games can be designed quite freely to take advantage of these mechanisms, in gamification, the game-based approach must still contain the actual task from the non-game context. Therefore, in gamification of learning events, it is important to choose the game design elements in order to support the motivational components on one hand, but still contain the desired learning effect on the other (Wellington, 2015).

A game concept must fulfil certain criteria. Four fundamental features can be highlighted:

- Clearly defined **goals** that clarify the meaning and purpose of the game
- Consistently defined **rules** that show limits and possibilities of the game
- A **feedback system** that provides players with continuous feedback on their current level of progress while respecting rules
- The **free will** of participation in the game – the decision of participation is up to the player (Matallaoui et al., 2017:6).



The context sensitivity of the game elements therefore currently limits the feasibility of a successful gamification solution (Voit, 2015). Eckhardt, Siemon, and Robra-Bissantz (2015) showed the impact of such context dependencies using the example of higher education: In the evaluation of a gamified course, it became clear that a framework narrative story can be used to motivate students. However, this should have a real connection to the course content, since a plot that is too strongly oriented to the fantasy worlds of computer games only actually appeals to some of the students.

In gamification literature, such crucial contextual factors, which have a decisive influence on the success of a gamification solution, either remain unmentioned or are only marginally addressed (e.g., Reeves, Read, 2009; Radoff, 2011; Kumar, Herger, 2013; Burke, 2014). Werbach and Hunter (2012), for example, suggest that a leaderboard can have either a motivating or demotivating effect, depending on the area of use and the users. Although there are now numerous proposals for methodological gamification that argue for a context and user analysis preceding the selection of game elements (Dignan, 2011; Burke, 2014; Wendel, 2014; Stieglitz, 2015), they do not provide specific recommendations for action on how analysis results can be used prescriptively in the selection and combination of game elements. As a result, designing an effective gamification solution is currently highly dependent on empirical experience and intuition (Butler, 2015).

Incorporating motivation and self-determination theory, gaming elements can enhance our experience of autonomy, relatedness, competence and individual meaning. But the use of single gaming elements could be very fragile. The project EMPAMOS, which is part of the Nuremberg Institute of Technology and the German games archive, deals with precisely these questions (Voit, Lehmann, 2020:26f.).

The goal of the EMPAMOS project was to identify game design elements used in board games and to understand their interconnections. This was to obtain a deeper understanding of successful patterns in board games. Machine learning techniques were used to analyze thousands of game manuals from the German game archive. As a result, 106 game elements that occur in board games have been identified to date. Typical examples are “chance” or “victory conditions”. In addition, the relationships existing between the elements in board games were investigated. The resulting database was transferred into an overall game design concept that can be used to search for precisely tailored gamification solutions for specific motivational problems (Hofmann et al., 2020). The individual game design elements are represented in this concept, and it is possible to apply them precisely to the motivational problem at hand. Currently, a comprehensive training concept is being developed at the Nuremberg Institute of Technology from this approach. Based on this, it should be possible for users from different domains to specifically use the motivating power of games for motivational problems.

## GAME-BASED APPROACH TO UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Experience with the topic has also been gained in the field of university teaching. This is of particular interest regarding the topic of this article. In the following, we will explain what knowledge is already available in the area of gamification in detail.

Traditional university teaching, such as lecturing, focuses primarily on some kind of frontal teaching. In seminars and smaller group works it's possible to change up the methods a bit more and create more space for individual debate and discussion. It's necessary to provide the opportunity for interaction and individual engagement with the teaching content (Siemon, Eckardt, 2017:155). A paradigm shift is taking place in higher education teaching. More and more emphasis is being placed on student engagement, while classical frontal teaching is receding to the background. Students should be given the opportunity to deal with individual topics intensively and in a self-determined manner. The focus is on critical thinking, learning problem-solving strategies, and promoting cooperation. These methods are collectively described as “deeper learning methods”. These strategies are also intended to stimulate learning outside the higher education context. It





also can be stated that university teaching is shifting increasingly to digital platforms. Regardless of the situation during the global pandemic, there are numerous virtual platforms and offers that can be used by the students themselves. Examples include language courses, experience abroad and special trainee programmes (Fischer et al., 2017:117f.).

Basically, it can be pointed out that in addition to the example of analogue gamification solutions given in the article, there are also numerous research projects and approaches to gamification in the virtual or digital space. Gamification can serve not only in university teaching, but as a stimulus for dealing with unloved topics. Serious games, i.e., games that have a serious practical added value for the users, can ease the inhibition threshold to accepting help, especially for children and young people as clients of social work. As the following explanations will make clear, it is therefore not a question of “whether” gamification plays a role in social work and especially in university teaching, but “how” it can be used in a meaningful and purposeful way (Schorer, Lehmann, 2015:184).

However, it must be made clear that the introduction of game-based elements doesn't have a positive effect on learning and learning settings per se. On the contrary, the nonreflective and unselected use of the elements can even lead to more distraction and confusion. To ensure meaningful use, game-based learning applications must follow specific pedagogical principles. The focus is on the learning objectives from which student activities can be derived. These can be enriched and promoted through the use of individual gaming elements. Gaming, like learning, cannot be prescribed, rather only conditions can be created that invite them to be used. Game-based imparting methods based on the *four freedoms of play*:

- *freedom to fail*: It must be possible to make mistakes during the gaming process. This leads to the possibility of rethinking and improving one's own strategies. However, if failure is linked to course assessment, it is more likely to be understood as a personal defeat than as an occasion for improvement.
- *freedom to experiment*: In the play process, there must be the possibility to try out individual solution strategies. This is also an adequate way to solve professional problems. In many professional areas there is no ready-made solution, but different strategies have to be tried out and be reflected upon.
- *freedom to assume different identities*: Games enable people to look at problems from different perspectives and encourage them to take different positions. This can also be the key in university teaching. If this aspect is taken into account in the construction of business games or the use of single game-based elements, empathy and the ability to work in a goal-oriented team are promoted.
- *freedom to effort*: In game situations, the control is with the individual. They can decide for themselves when to take a break and what new content to work on at what time. In this way, the individual's concentration and motivation span can be taken into account (Osterweil, 2007, in Fischer et al., 2017:116).

## GAMIFICATION IN THE PRACTICE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING

There are many different practical examples of the use of gamification in university teaching. Complex technique solutions do not have to be used, but small game-based elements can also facilitate the access to a chosen topic. This is illustrated by the following example. Besides a theoretical introduction, students of the Nuremberg Institute of Technology were asked to visit the Museum of Industrial Culture in Nuremberg in their introduction to the history of social work. Among other things, the museum is dedicated to depicting living and working conditions from around the year 1900. Furthermore, the exhibition also provides an insight to the development of industry and the associated conditions for society.

The motivational problem is that students do not visit this museum on their own. A joint field trip usually resulted in students quickly losing interest and moving on to other topics.





Using the EMPAMOS method, several game design elements were identified which could be used to solve this motivational problem:

Low student motivation during museum tours can be understood as low levels of autonomy and competence. Therefore, the gamification solution should allow self-determination and allow students to experience themselves as competent.

With this premise as a foundation, the results of the EMPAMOS project were used to develop a gamification solution. As a blueprint for the gamification solution, a combination of the following game design elements proved useful:

A solitary game form was chosen to allow completely independent processing of the game. Since no competition is possible in this way, a measure of success is also needed, and thus an easy-to-use method of measuring and visualizing student success had to be built into the concept. Several other game design elements were used in the development, which are not further relevant here.

In order to combine these elements in a sensible design, the solitary game form was first implemented such that each student could freely choose when to visit the museum. During the visit, a crossword puzzle is to be completed, which could only be solved in the museum, as it relates to details of the exhibits. Thus, there is the clear measure of success in the form of the completed crossword puzzle. Students have to “collect” the correct answers and see how far they are by the number of boxes they have filled in. This keeps the technical requirements minimal and the game fit technologically in the historical context of the task. In addition, all students who correctly completed the crossword were promised a small treat.

This gamified form of visiting the museum has been used in several semesters. To date, no evaluation is available, but some experience reports of students are available. It was found that a large number of students engaged significantly deeper with the content of the museum than before. They reported to have stayed in the museum for several hours and to have spent a lot of time with the exhibits, sometimes returning only to solve the puzzle entirely. In this aspect, this gamification solution can be seen as a success. However, it also becomes clear this solution was not yet perfect. While autonomy and competence were clearly improved, relatedness obviously decreased. Many students made arrangements to visit the museum and worked on the crossword puzzle as a team. In the future, this option will be suggested to the students in advance, so that the third source of motivation is also addressed.

The practical research in the Bachelor's programme also provides an occasion for the use of gamification. The focus of the service-learning seminar was the examination of chat-based counselling services. The students were to be given the opportunity to explore their own counselling skills under the changed framework conditions of the counselling setting. The seminar participants found themselves in the role of counsellors. The basics of successful counselling were already worked out and reflected on with the students in advance.

To maintain ethical principles, students from different semesters were invited to take on the role of social work clients for this research project. The role play had the aim of examining both the counsellor's side while changing approaches to counselling and the effects of counselling on the client, as well as to reflect on the effects of counselling on possible clients (e.g., waiting times for a response from the counsellor in asynchronous chat counselling). At the same time, the role play provided an opportunity for reflection. Complex case studies could be discussed within the framework of the seminar, and the communication behaviour between counsellor and client provided an opportunity for theoretical discussion of the models of social work.

These rather small-scale approaches provide insight into the diverse possibilities for using gamification in social work teaching. Especially since social work is characterised by complexity and ambiguity, this teaching approach offers the possibility to generate motivation and engagement among students.



## CONCLUSION

For the development of a professional identity in social work, the examination of the history of the profession is indispensable. This topic is very difficult to grasp. There is not a single, central line of development in the history of social work, but the profession is exposed to numerous external influences and conditions. In order to be able to understand the reality of the clients' life and also to be better able to classify one's own professional history, this topic must nevertheless be discussed in the course of studies. Many students are unable to meet the high grades and only attach importance to the theoretical approaches relevant to practice. This bolsters the danger that issues are no longer comprehensively reflected and thought through.

Gamification can provide a way to motivate students to engage with complex topics such as social work history and its impact on the present. However, this approach is also controversial. The blanket application to game-based elements and ready-made gamification solutions must be rejected for many reasons. Also, the success of the measures is strongly dependent on the respective fit to the student group and their motivational ability.

It must be made clear that gamification cannot be a comprehensive solution to all complex problems in social work studies. A total conversion of the study programme in the sense of gamification would neither be expedient nor desirable. Gamification is not a complete solution. The approach can be helpful, especially with regard to difficult topics, such as the historical examination of the profession and the resulting theoretical lines of argumentation.

Gamification can be described as an initial spark rather than a complete solution.

Nevertheless, the practical example given also shows that creative and open solutions with a game-based core idea can create motivation among students for complex topics. Therein lies hope in this approach being able to encourage students to engage more deeply in complex issues and thus adding value to development of a professional identity.

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# Social Work in the Terezin Ghetto as an Inspiration for the Present and the Future

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** This paper offers a better understanding of social work practice in the Terezin ghetto, which served in 1941–1945 as a transit camp and model ghetto for not only Czech but also thousands of Jews from other European countries. **THEORETICAL BASE:** Historical sources documented a specific role and operation of the Terezin ghetto. These factors distinguished Terezin from all other Jewish European ghettos and allowed a unique social care system. **METHODS:** We conducted historical research using content analysis to provide a historical overview of the topic. **OUTCOMES:** The text provides a comprehensive view of the topic not yet described in the context of social work. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** The experience of prisoners involved in social work in the Terezin ghetto may be a valuable source of inspiration and knowledge to current social workers. Gaining better insight into this period can also encourage their interest in social work history and further historical research.

## Keywords

care department, holocaust, Jews, social work, Terezin ghetto

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## INTRODUCTION

*"Terezin was a place of resilience and art in defiance of death"* (Vulliamy, 2010).

They suddenly found themselves in a place that could hardly be likened to the world they knew before. It was a place and circumstances we can barely imagine today, and not only because of the time distance. However, in many ways, they faced the same questions and struggles as current social workers: How to take care of numerous frightened, traumatized people and help them adapt to the new reality? What to concentrate on when the needs of the vulnerable far exceed the available resources? How to help effectively when everyday life is uncertain and unpredictable? How to fight for the wellbeing of others despite their own suffering? How to bring hope and will to live to those who have lost everything meaningful in their lives? Social work in the Terezin Ghetto during World War II represents only a short, almost overlooked period in the context of the entire history of this field. Nevertheless, the incomplete four years far surpass their time, and their legacy remains a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration up to this day.

The very first encounter with this topic encouraged us to do further research. Today's awareness of this period in Czech social work history is generally minimal, based mainly on excerpts from the memories of former prisoners. Our goal was to focus on in-depth understanding. The war confronted social workers – representatives of a young and underestimated field – with unthinkable challenges. Society, having no previous experience of this kind, was not prepared for such tragic circumstances. Some social workers found themselves among the prisoners of the Terezin Ghetto because of their Jewish origin. Many of them were outstanding credit to the profession with their human and professional example. They left us unique testimony that *"Some of the most exciting social work is written as history"* (Danto, 2008:3). Their story also confirms that *"History of social work is a source of experience and knowledge which enables the present generation to get to know historical successes or to understand occurring problems"* (Špiláčková, 2012:31). Representatives of other fields, mostly medical and educational, and laymen also took part in Terezin's social work. To bring this little-known, yet exceptional, chapter of the Czech and European social work history closer to others was our primary motivation for writing this paper. It offers more than just a glimpse into the past. The experience of prisoners involved in social work in Terezin, many of whom did not survive the war, may bring encouragement and inspiration to current social workers.

How exactly was social work performed in the ghetto? In what forms did it apply in this environment on the boundary between life and death? The paper uses the historical research method and focus on these questions while setting the topic in its broader context. It describes an account of the ghetto operation and the functioning of its self-administration, including a more detailed description of the social care department and the aspects that influenced the ghetto's social work. The text also introduces the main areas of social work with disadvantaged prisoners and outlines specific forms of their support. However, the paper is not just a summary of formal historical facts. Above all, it introduces the story of our predecessors, which should not be forgotten.

## THEORETICAL BASE

Social work performance in the Terezin ghetto in 1941–1945 was neither a coincidence nor the result of pre-planned procedures. Many factors influenced it, and considering the overall historical and cultural context was fundamental. Reflection of this fact constituted an essential prerequisite for comprehensive conceptual work in the elaboration of this topic. The theoretical basis was rooted in the characteristics of the ghetto, the way it was operated with its Jewish self-administration, and its role in Nazi propaganda. Terezin, a model ghetto that served as a deception tool, was an abnormality among other Nazi ghettos. This uniqueness enabled the emergence of





an unparalleled health and social care system, impossible in any other ghetto. *“Life in Terezin offers many interesting insights. To the historian, to the sociologist, it is a limitless well of experiences and achievements”* (Redlich, in Friedman, 1992:63). The theoretical framework necessary to study social work performance in Terezin was also based on the history of Czech social work, Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, and the Terezin city.

## METHODS

The paper is focused on describing this not well-known period of social work history. We did not want to perceive this historical event only as an ended chapter from the past but to concentrate on its significance for the current practice as a source of valuable experience, inspiration, and professional identity empowerment. Historical research was carried out by a direct method using textual hermeneutics combined with content analysis. We chose the method to gain a deep understanding of the topic, including particular circumstances and their role in the overall context, and use the potential of many primary resources available. After a preliminary definition of the topic, we first reviewed whether and to what extent it had been researched so far. Subsequently, we specified the research goal (to find out in what form social work was performed in the Terezin ghetto in 1941–1945) and precisely defined research questions (what were the main areas of social work in the ghetto; who and how performed these activities; to which prisoners their interventions were directed). The following research steps' sequence respected the general phases of historical research: identifying primary, secondary, and other sources of information, their detailed study, and interpretation. In the analysis, we paid particular attention to the overall context of given facts (the so-called The Five “W”s). We also visited the Terezin Memorial research room. Triangulation was used to validate results (comparison of primary with secondary sources, comparison of sources of different nature, and translation of primary non-Czech sources and their comparison with Czech secondary sources).

## RESULTS

### Czech social work before the beginning of World War II

At the time of the beginning of the Nazi occupation in March 1939 and the subsequent establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Czech social workers had been making considerable efforts to develop and professionalize their field for almost 20 years. Czech social work was associated with a firmly rooted tradition of charity and volunteer work, and as an independent profession was recognized only in 1920. However, the field continued to be the target of controversy over its usefulness, social status, or adequate funding. The main issues of the interwar period also included defining the work scope of professional and volunteer workers. Social workers, including the first graduates of the Higher School of Social Care founded in 1918, faced the distrust of both the professional and lay public in the model of social work as an independent field. In 1920 the first professional, non-political association of social workers was founded, and from the mid-1930s social workers were actively participated in lecturing, educational, and publishing activities. Particular emphasis was placed on the link between theoretical knowledge, practical skills and general knowledge about the real needs of the practice. Foreign cooperation was established (e.g., Paris, New York), social workers participated in study trips and conferences, and some even received foreign study scholarships. The area of education always remained a high priority with a focus on the high level of expertise, personal prerequisites of workers, and lifelong learning. Gradually, social work specialized and evolved as a scientific discipline. In general, the Czech social care system was very sophisticated (especially child and youth care or health care), in some areas even one of the most advanced in Europe (care for poor people). The German occupation brought many changes to the practice. The new priority was to support social workers





of non-Aryan descent and their families, including assistance with emigration. Even American colleagues offered help with their relocation. Nevertheless, many of these workers later perished in Nazi camps (Kodymová, 2013; Kodymová, Honsů, 2019). Graduates of Czech social schools were also among the prisoners of the Terezin Ghetto and significantly contributed to the achieved level of care for its disadvantaged inhabitants.

### **The situation of Jews in the Protectorate**

The situation of Jews began to worsen in the autumn of 1938, and they faced a growing threat and feared the future. Statements about the “final solution to the Jewish question” began to appear, also anti-Jewish demonstrations, burning of synagogues and civilian dwellings, arrests, and open expressions of hatred. On March 15, 1939, when occupation started, a total of 118,310 Jews were officially present in the Protectorate. Some managed to get out of the country legally or illegally, and the number decreased to 88,686 in June 1941. Most of them later ended in Nazi camps. The so-called Kindertransports, which saved 669 Jewish children, were sent from Prague to Britain from March to August 1939. After the Protectorate’s establishment on March 16, 1939, the number of anti-Jewish regulations gradually increased to an estimated several hundred. They increasingly restricted the rights and freedoms of Jews and led to their elimination from public life and isolation from the rest of society. For example, two days after the beginning of the occupation, Jewish doctors were banned from practising their profession. Everyday life accompanied more and more restrictions, which affected all its aspects, including movement in public places, school attendance, access to information, and the right to deal freely with own property. Marking with Jewish Badge was in force from September 1941. In the Protectorate, lasting 2,241 days in total, living conditions soon became so difficult that many Jews could scarcely imagine what could be worse. The vocation to relocate to the ghetto – the apparent possibility of protection from persecution – was accepted by some with almost relief (Kárný, et al., 1995; Adler, 2006a; Bernatt-Reszczyńska, 2019; Kárný, Kárná, 2019).

### **Characteristics of the Terezin ghetto**

*“In Terezin they sang, in Terezin they died”* (Brod, 2005).

Terezin, built in the late 18th century as a small military town, had a pre-war population of approximately 7,000 residents who were displaced by summer 1942. The location allowed easy isolation from the outside world. That was one of the main reasons for choosing it, in October 1941, as the most suitable place for establishing a concentration and transit camp. In addition to Czech Jews, Jews from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland were deported to Terezin. The first transports arrived in November 1941. The Nazis sought to give the impression of Terezin as a self-governing territory – a closed Jewish settlement – which would provide its inhabitants with a refuge to survive safely until the end of the war. To make this illusion more convincing, Prague’s Jewish community had to participate in its establishment (Adler, 2006a; Kárný, Kárná, 2019). *“We thought it might not be as bad. We would stay there for a while, then the war would end, and we would return home. There was such funny optimism. However, in Terezin, we were horrified to find that people were transported further on from there”* (Franková, in Drda, 2019). The ghetto was soon overcrowded (only from February to September 1942, the number of registered prisoners increased from 9,903 to a maximum of 58,491; the average was 30 000–40 000). In July 1942, the initially closed ghetto transformed into an open one when the whole town became a prison. For prisoners, it meant greater freedom of movement and contact with relatives (with a few exceptions, men and women lived separately) (Chládková, 2005).

The ghetto was governed by the Jewish self-administration headed by the Jewish Council of Elders appointed by the SS commander and subordinated to his office. Externally, the autonomy of Jews was preserved as they took care of the ghetto’s operation and internal affairs. In reality, the dictatorship of the SS was unlimited. Delegating powers to the self-administration was only



a pretence to deceive prisoners by seemingly civilian conditions and avoid a possible uprising (Chládková, 2005; Adler, 2006a). *"The Jewish elder acted as the head of the community – but with his hands tied"* (Adler, 2006b:39). Internal legal order regulated, for example, civil, criminal, or matrimonial law. Labour duty applied to all prisoners between the ages of 16–60. Often younger children worked too and from the autumn of 1944 even seniors. The official language was German (Adler, 2006b). Among other ghettos, Terezin excelled in its prosperous cultural life. Many prisoners belonged to the European intellectual elite and were leading figures in their fields, and even here used their skills and talents. *"Many prominent personalities of the culture, science and political life of the time were gathered in Terezin"* (Chládková, 2005:29). *"Terezin's paradox was that on the one hand people were dying of hunger, despair, dirt, illness, hopelessness, but on the other hand, football was played, there were concerts, operas...in my opinion, Terezin was in this respect the freest city in the whole Protectorate or the whole Reich"* (Brod, 2005). Children's education was performed illegally and especially for older children to an admirable, above-standard extent as many of these experts lectured them (Redlich, in Friedman, 1992). Furthermore, Terezin was unique in its role in Nazi propaganda and deceiving the world about the real situation of Jews. When the International Red Cross representatives requested to visit one of the main camps and verify growing reports about the mass murdering of Jews, the Nazis chose Terezin. Since spring 1943, the well-planned, so-called beautification of the ghetto preceded their visit in June 1944. Inspection of the ghetto, which became a shiny Potemkin village, fulfilled the Nazis' intention to cover up the reality. In his complimentary report, Swiss Dr Maurice Rossel wrote: *"Certainly there are few populations that would be cared for as much as the inhabitants of Terezin"* (Rossel, in Kárný, 1992:21). Other foreign delegations visited, and propaganda film was made, but no one detected the deception, although the prisoners hoped otherwise. *"This undermined our morale. We felt abandoned and forgotten"* (Baeck, in Shlain, 2017:14).

In 561 transports, almost 140,000 prisoners arrived. Approximately 34,000 died directly in Terezin (most often due to illness). Out of 87,000 prisoners deported to the East, about 3,500 survived. From January 1942 to October 1944, 63 transports left Terezin, and besides Auschwitz mainly to Treblinka. The destination was announced only for the first transport to Riga. The transports most often included 1,000–2,500 people and were irregular, which only exacerbated prisoners' insecurity and fear. Immensely tragic was the autumn of 1944, when almost two-thirds of the prisoners left for Auschwitz in one month, with 70 % of the remaining 11,000 being women. From April 20 to May 6, 1945, approximately 14,000 survivors of many nationalities, most on the verge of death, returned to Terezin in so-called evacuation transports from extermination camps. Their repatriation took place from May to August 1945 (Blodig, 2002; 2003; Chládková, 2005; Kárný, Kárná, 2019).

### **Performance of social work within the structure of ghetto self-administration**

The ghetto's self-administration had a very complex structure and regulated virtually all aspects of its operation and people's lives. Announced in December 1941, the self-administration consisted of seven central bodies, the so-called departments. Gradually, the number increased to nine departments divided into other sub-departments and offices. Besides the health department, which primarily focused on social work activities, the sub-department of Building Management (Department of Internal Administration), also provided care services for the sick and disabled. The activities and competencies of departments often complemented each other. For example, within the Central Work Office department was provided counselling and care for sick workers, the Department of Internal Administration (Legal Department) dealt with guardianship and inheritance affairs; a kitchen for sick people and infants was set up in a special section within Management department. The Department of Youth Care was significantly engaged in social work. It included a sub-department of educational care (special education, kindergartens and nurseries, care for children's leisure time), social care (social administration, nutrition, care for lonely children or those away from children's homes), and care in various homes. An independent **social care**



**department** was established in October 1942 as part of the central body of Health and Care. This body included the following areas: management and administration (scientific facilities, health and personnel records, technical facilities, management office), health care, central drug storage, laboratories, and ancillary facilities (for example, procurement and delivery of linen, bed linen department), sanitary facilities (disinfection, lice removal, hygienic supervision service), official doctor (health statistics, vaccination records, food hygiene, popularization of health care), care department. The care department divided into other sections, including the management office, personnel records and the ration section (Fleischmann, 1943; Adler, 2006b; Kárný, Kárná, 2019).

### **Specific aspects influencing social work in the ghetto**

#### ***Community inhomogeneity***

The ghetto was an involuntary, inhomogeneous community of thousands of people, united only by a sewn Jewish star. Many were not racially pure Jews, and there was disunity also over religion. Compared to other camps, Terezín differed, for example, in its large Christian minority (Tůma, 1946; Adler, 2006a; Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014; Kárný, Kárná, 2019). *“There were basically two camps, internally divided into subgroups, the Zionists with the ideals of the future independent Jewish state and we, the convinced Czechs, affected by racial laws”* (Tůma, 1946:16). There were considerable social differences between prisoners. The unique position with great benefits was held by prominent prisoners, mostly members of the Jewish self-administration or meritorious Jews (Tůma, 1946).

#### ***Living conditions***

Out of 207 buildings, prisoners eventually inhabited 182. Practically it meant an absolute lack of space and privacy (the average living area was 1.6–3 m<sup>2</sup> per person). People living in lofts or the former stables had the worst living conditions. Miserable hygienic conditions prevailed. In addition to fear of East transports, hunger was the primary concern. Meals were prepared in the central kitchens respecting quotas and allowing extras for children, hard workers, or the sick. People could also get food parcels from outside the ghetto. Food and cigarettes functioned as common currency among prisoners, with prices even hundreds of times higher than usual (Adler, 2006b). The most critical period was the fall of 1942, when the provision for basic needs for all prisoners in the overcrowded ghetto collapsed, leading to a dramatic increase in mortality (Blodig, 2003).

#### ***Constant feeling of danger***

Nothing caused more fear than inclusion in transports. Everyone tried to avert this danger and protect themselves and their loved ones. *“Transports became a constant trauma, a nightmare scaring all prisoners”* (Blodig, 2002:12). *“Everyone in Terezín tried to avoid transports, and it was a real good luck in life when someone succeeded”* (Brod, 2005). Protection against transports was secured mainly by essential workforce status, sometimes health reasons, frequent was preferential treatment (Adler, 2006a; Fedorovič, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014).

#### ***Moral impact***

The overall situation and everyday life conditions had a significant moral impact on most prisoners and their values. Under the pressure of circumstances, some resorted to behaviour that they would have previously considered unacceptable, such as theft (Adler, 2006b). By contrast, many selflessly helped their fellow prisoners and were able to *“create something out of almost nothing”* (Adler, 2007:58). The self-administration had an extremely morally difficult position. One aspect was that the transports were compiled mainly by the Jewish self-administration according to instructions from the SS commandant's office. It was an immense source of constant tension, conflicts, moral dilemmas, traumas, and corruption (Blodig, 2003). *“The transport commissioners of the Jewish self-administration held meetings day and night and consulted based on existing files on who*



*should be included. The individual departments had the right to claim indispensable forces and to protect them from transport*" (Borger, 1945:6).

### **Motivation for work**

Because the body of Health and Care belonged to key operations of the ghetto, its workers were protected from transport. Therefore, some were driven by opportunism, which harmed their approach to work (Adler, 2006b). *"Everybody is trying to stay in Terezin, trying to find any assignment or work that will fend off the transports"* (Redlich, in Friedman, 1992:66). Others tried to work as best they could for the same reason: *"People worked with a supreme effort, with great zeal and often with superhuman energy for several reasons, most in order to stay in Terezin, for it was difficult to exchange evil certainty for any uncertainty"* (Tüma, 1946:23).

### **The constant movement of people**

Terezin was primarily a transit ghetto. The number of incoming and outgoing transports and the mortality rate led to a constant population change. Neither the workers nor those they helped ever knew where they and others would be the next day, or in a month, how many people would be in the ghetto, or how many would need help.

### **Working conditions**

All workers were prisoners themselves, many of them old or in poor health, and the demands on their character and skills were high. Many prisoners, erudite in other fields (mostly healthcare and educational), laypeople, and volunteers were involved in social work, but the shortage of skilled workers was a persistent problem. Everyday work was characterized by unpredictability and the need for improvisation.

### **Characteristics of the social care department**

The social care department's main task was to *"care for all sick, physically and mentally disabled and disadvantaged people in the Jewish quarter of Terezin"* (Fleischmann, 1943:1). It started in the spring of 1942 with three staff members within one care institution. Initially, they focused on providing the necessary clothing and daily necessities, mainly to newcomers and those included in transports, but demand exceeded available resources. In the first months, the priority was also monitoring accommodation and food for pregnant women, children's clothing production and repair, supply assistance to hospitals, and Chevra Kadisha<sup>4</sup>, or care for mentally ill prisoners. According to the Report on the Beginnings of the Social Care Department in Terezin from 1942, the emphasis was not only on material assistance to needy prisoners but on assessing their overall situation and the efficient use of resources. Besides basic information (age, health, accommodation, employment in the ghetto), the assessment included information on whether the person did not own the required items, if items were acutely necessary or deferred, whether the person was alone in the ghetto or with a close person, or her background (Jewish Museum in Prague, 1942a). With the rapidly growing ghetto population and more frequent transport, the demands on the department gradually increased. According to a report from July 1942, the needs of newcomers, whose luggage were sometimes confiscated upon arrival, accounted for a large part of the requirements. In addition to supplies for the ill and Chevra Kadisha, the department supplied the central laundry, haberdashery shops<sup>5</sup>, the child and youth care department, laundry warehouses, and the infection department. Mothers with children placed in the room of infants and young children and at home for the seriously ill were cared for by a caregiver who visited them several times a day. Specialized co-workers helped in caring for outpatient and hospitalized

<sup>4</sup> A traditional voluntary association caring for the sick and dying, and providing bereavement counselling.

<sup>5</sup> From the autumn of 1942, there were several "shops" selling goods confiscated from newly arrived prisoners, using special vouchers as the currency (Lagus, Polák, 1964).



mentally ill patients (Jewish Museum in Prague, 1942a). An increasingly pressing problem was staff overload and exhaustion (Adler, 2006b). Later, the department expanded and, besides the central management, included nine sections: care for seriously ill, blind, disabled, deaf and non-verbal, lonely and sick (mental care) persons, small children, war victims, and prisoners in ghetto prisons.

The care department's organization, activities, and planning were described by **Dr Karel Fleischmann** (1897–1944) in his report of October 1943. This Czech dermatologist, talented painter, and writer headed the department for two years before transport to Auschwitz. He considered a comprehensive approach to be important: *"We must think in context because, in life, one act is related to another, one phenomenon is dependent on another"* (Fleischmann, 1942–1945:1). The department performed various activities within closed and open care. Close care included care for people in hospitals and wards for seriously ill persons, homes for the blind, deaf and non-verbal persons, persons with an ostomy, disabled persons and war victims, and homes for infants and toddlers. There was a branch of the care department with one head caregiver in every such home. Open care consisted of nursing and care activities throughout the ghetto in close cooperation with the medical service. One group of caregivers (usually former nurses) were permanently assigned to the homes and lived there, and the other visited needy people throughout the ghetto several times a day. Organizationally, they all formed one group and were trained together to ensure the same care level and readiness for all tasks. Individual sections also had specialized caregivers. The staff included administrative and support staff, clerks, and control doctors. The aim was to provide care *"on the spot as far as possible without unnecessary official procedures"* (Fleischmann, 1943:2). Headquarters discussed only fundamental matters. For example, the number of people being cared for was almost 15,000 in September 1943 (Fleischmann, 1943). Vocational training was also available for staff and, in March 1944, the central medical library with a reading room was established (Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014).

The range of services provided was wide. In addition to direct care, the department ensured various counselling, material, and practical assistance, provision of compensatory aids, assistance in processing documents by mail and contact with relatives, guardianship of young children, assistance in securing work for disadvantaged people, transport to hospitals, the examination of borderline cases (people with psychopathy, epilepsy, addiction, senile dementia), crisis intervention, leisure activities, care for prisoners in ghetto prisons, and more. Occupational and art therapy elements were also used. However, despite the dedication of the staff, putting their help and interventions into practice was complicated. For example, the bath was possible about three times in two months, and obtaining glasses or other aids might take months and often were not adequate or functional. Because caregivers took care of 100–150 people on average, individual care was difficult. Vaguely defined competencies were also a weakness (Fleischmann, 1943).

From the autumn of 1944, the department was led by Dr Leo Baeck (1873–1956), one of the most influential personalities of the ghetto and its spiritual leader. This chief German rabbi was deported to Terezín in January 1943. Dr Baeck treated everyone with respect and tolerance, and many prisoners, including those of different faiths, such as Catholics, saw him as their model and spiritual shepherd. His lectures and services were renowned, and he also provided private consultations. His involvement in manual work and the effort to learn Czech was an encouragement to others. Dr Baeck had a reputation for being an honest and principled man, who often clashed with his co-workers and was criticized for some of his decisions and attitudes. An example could be his disapproval of higher food rations for children at the expense of seniors, or claiming back prisoners included in transports. He also carried the burden of whether people should know the truth, if it could harm them, or whether it is better to protect them by concealing it. It is documented that Dr Baeck knew since August 1943 that the fate of the Jews transported to the East was death or forced labour. After much deliberation, he finally decided to keep the truth secret. He feared that if it spread in the ghetto, it would deprive prisoners of all hope and their will to live (Baeck, in Boehm, 1949; Shlain, 2017).





## Main areas of social work

### *Child and youth care*

From the beginning, childcare was a priority in Terezin. *"The Jewish self-administration did not have enough resources to improve the situation of all prisoners, and thus cared primarily for children and young people, seeing hope for the future in them"* (Brod, in Holocaust, 2011). Approximately 10,500 children under the age of 15 passed through the ghetto. Although first, the self-administration managed to protect children up to 12 years from transports, only about 1,600 children lived to see the liberation in Terezin. Others were sent to the East, where almost all died (Unknown author, 1941–1945; Blodig, 2003). Social work developed from an immediate response to the acute, mainly material and health, needs of children to a systematic work focused on educational tasks. *"At first, we, again and again, faced new, unforeseen difficulties, which had to be addressed on a case-by-case basis, primarily flexibly, quickly"* (Fischerová, 1943:1). The carefully chosen staff knew they could not avert the terrible fate of children, only make their stay in Terezin easier, and did their best to help the children regain their will to live. They, with devotion, took care of newcomers' acute needs, the needs of children included in the East transports, and the long-term needs of "old settlers" children, and ensured that no child remained relying on himself (Unknown author, 1941–1945; Redlich, 1942–1945; Fischerová, 1943). Many workers were young and inexperienced or struggled with a language barrier. Great problems were disease epidemics and traumatization of many children. Most of them also had only minimal contact with their parents, so workers replaced their mothers and fathers (Lauscherová, 1985; Adler, 2006b; Gardella, 2011).

Childcare was initially organized within the health department. Later it included only care for infants and toddlers, and the department for care for children and youth aged 4–18 (exceptionally up to 20) became independent. Care of children in hospitals and psychiatric wards was separate. Since February 1942, the self-administration started to establish children's homes run in the spirit of collaborative care and education to *"create an atmosphere for children free from the physical and mental deficiencies of their surroundings"* (Unknown author, 1941–1945:7). After the first chaotic months, work with children and youth stabilized with the transition to an open ghetto, and care was provided in closed and open form. Children's homes (4–10 years), girls'/boys' homes (10–16/14 years), homes for hard-to-educate children, vocational homes, a children's hospital, and a typhoid convalescent home formed closed care. Their staff included **social nurses** who cooperated with the home leader, doctor, kitchen, and warehouses. They carried out health and social classification, regularly checked children's clothing and repaired or washed it when needed, took care of the material needs of children included in transports, and helped those without support from parents or outside packages. Special social nurses cared for weakened children (Unknown author, 1941–1945; Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014). Thoroughly written files allowed them to assess the situation of a particular child comprehensively. *"For most children, we have an idea of the child's original social environment, his or her course of life so far, and social status in Terezin"* (Fischerová, 1943:2). As part of the collective guardianship, they took care of orphans. Luisa Fischerová, a graduate of the Prague College of Social Care (1905–1942), also worked as orphans' guardian. Her priority was to place mainly the youngest in foster parents' care and often succeeded in her efforts (Kodymová, 2017). Her colleague, Irena Krausová (1896–1944), a graduate of the Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care, was remembered by one girl who survived the war: *"Her motto was to make festive as many weekdays as possible"* (Veil, in In memoriam, 1947:33). Children up to 4 years lived with their mothers and staff in homes for infants and toddlers, which belonged under the Health Department. Social worker Irma Lauscherová, who also started the secret teaching of ill children confined to bed, remembered: *"Working with toddlers was not easy, they had severe frustration problems: often intermittent sleep, loss of appetite, weight loss, aggression. Many of them scratched and pounded themselves and me. They often burst into heartrending cries. They showed a great desire for body heat"* (Lauscherová, 1985:41).



Open care included homes for mothers with children under 6 years, Czech and Hebrew kindergartens, and day-homes for children under 14 living with their parents (for children was not mandatory to live at the homes). This care was carried out by **social workers**, who regularly visited children, checked their health, and tried to provide for their missing necessities (Unknown author, 1941–1945). Office for social care agenda dealt with, for example, guardianship, records of orphans. Children's library or various lectures were available, for youth with work duty also evening courses. Egon Redlich (1916–1944), the head of the department, shared in his diary ethical dilemmas he and his colleagues faced – Should we place children from the Protectorate and the Reich together or separately? What to do when children steal? How to help traumatized children? Can we demand the exclusion of children from transports when someone else is included instead? – and countless others (Redlich, in Friedman, 1992).

Photography 1: Former boys' home L417



### *Elderly care*

The suffering of many elderly Jews was one of the greatest Terezin tragedies. *“Living conditions in Terezin were different. The old, sick people had the worst situation”* (Brod, in Holocaust, 2011). People over the age of 61 represented an extensive group in the ghetto, for example, in July 1942, 58% of all prisoners. The average age of Jews coming from the Reich exceeded 65 (Prochnik, 1945). The Nazis also misused Terezin for their propaganda purposes regarding the issue of elderly Jews, and this aspect differentiated it from other European ghettos. They presented the ghetto as a refuge and permanent residence for prominent and privileged elderly Jews from the Reich, including holders of military awards or widows of veterans (Adler, 2006a; Kárný, Kárná, 2019). Many of them sold all property to afford this stay, some with a surcharge for a lake or park view, only to discover the shocking truth after arrival (Brod, in Holocaust, 2011). *“They announced through individual Jewish communities in Germany that Terezin was a spa in which old German Jews who had not yet been taken to Polish torture chambers would be given a life full of pastimes”* (Tůma, 1946:24).





Compared to other prisoners, adaption in the ghetto was the most difficult for these Jews, and there was high mortality and suicidal behaviour rate among them. *"They rarely had younger relatives or friends in the camp to help them, and they could not speak Czech, the unofficial ghetto language. What's more, they arrived totally unprepared, both materially and mentally, for what would confront them"* (Medawar, Pyke, 2001:55).

Because the priority of self-administration was childcare, many seniors lived in desperate conditions despite the care department's efforts. *"Hunger, typhus, intestinal diseases, poor housing hygiene, lack of medicines caused, especially among the old people, unheard of victims"* (Borger, 1945:4). Elderly care was provided in closed and open form with a focus on nursing care. Already in January 1942, to increase work and staff efficiency, the aged prisoners were accommodated together by gender in allocated buildings (Kárný, Kárná, 2019). Gradually, separate nursing wards were established. Other seniors stayed in the psychiatric ward or ward for the seriously ill. There was also a care service for lonely persons and individual care service. Care for seniors included a wide range of interventions: direct care, counselling, material assistance, obtaining compensatory aids, help with managing mail, providing contact with relatives, priority service when picking up food, shopping service, reading, providing health care, arranging leisure activities<sup>6</sup>, and more. In October 1943, Dr Fleischmann proposed establishing a home for seniors, where they would be cared for concerning their age, poverty, and health. Also, a special elderly care division was established (Fleischmann, 1943).

The desperate situation of many seniors was further worsened by the fact that some carers were only partially or not at all qualified for the job. They chose it only to avoid transports and gain other benefits and cared for seniors with callousness combined with incompetence. Even stealing of senior food rations was no exception (Borger, 1945; Adler, 2006b; Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelinek, Soukupová, 2014). *"One of the saddest experiences in the camp history is how old helpless patients were neglected. Services for them were neglected, provided carelessly, or depended on donors"* (Adler, 2006b:342). The relationships between Czech and German Jews were often hostile, which further worsened their situation. The Youth Care Department organized the **Helping Hand** activity to break the mutual distrust and help them. Older Protectorate children voluntarily helped seniors from the Reich, for example, by delivering food, dusting off mattresses, reading, or walking together, and sometimes even shared saved sugar with them. Gradually the two such different communities became closer. Nevertheless, the relationship of children to seniors was not always idyllic, and besides compassion, they often felt disgusted by them (Tarsi, 1998; Makarova, 2009). **Orientation Service** established in August 1942 helped seniors who had difficulty navigating the ghetto and, for example, wandered around when picking up food (Kárný, Kárná, 2019).

It was food that had a special meaning for many wretched Terezin seniors. Most suffered from hunger more than others, and food became their obsession and survival strategy. They looked for leftovers in the garbage, and some coped with external conditions and the loss of themselves through memories and dreams. Long hours they spent by *"cooking with the mouth"* (De Silva, 1996). Many others also found an escape from reality in their memories. Some seniors apathetically languished, while others were active and welcomed any activity. In general, all were very grateful for any expression of interest and care. *"Little favours and services gave them a feeling of happiness, and they repaid them with devotion"* (Adler, 2006b:399). Dr Baeck was striving to improve the situation of seniors, especially those from Germany and Austria. Under his leadership, the care department managed to expand care facilities' capacity, increase food rations for seniors and improve their living conditions. It can be assumed that his perseverance and devotion to work with old, neglected prisoners contributed the most to the reduction in their suicide rate (Shlain, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> A "café" where they could sit in the warmth, with music and substitute coffee, was popular with seniors. (Lagus, Polák, 1964).



### *Care for ill and disabled people*

Health care was one of the central areas of the ghetto operation and prisoners' lives. *"Everything related to medicine was in the area of everyday interest"* (Adler, 2006b:337). After an initial period of very improvised operation and a critical lack of necessary material, the situation improved considerably. In many aspects, the ghetto medical care was equal to the contemporary modern facilities and provided specialized care in many so-called medical units and offices (from the autumn of 1944, only two units remained). Even pharmacy, central laboratory, and X-ray were available. The main hospital (including operating theatres), an ancillary and children's hospital, an infirmary for the dying, and an almshouse provided closed care. Institute for blind people was established in spring 1943 (there were approximately 1,000 blind people in the ghetto by September 1942). Up to a tenth of prisoners worked in health care, the proportion of patients was up to 31% of all prisoners. The highest rate of prisoner deaths came in September 1942 (on average 127 per day) (Prochnik, 1945; Chládková, 2005; Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014).

The Terezin health care system was unique compared to other ghettos, but not all areas were of the same standard. Desperate conditions prevailed, mainly in the wards for seriously ill or infectious patients, and the capacity was insufficient, especially for dependent seniors. Many diseases had atypical clinical manifestations and a complicated course, which increased staff demands. The lack of sanitary facilities and proper nutrition was a major problem. Pressure ulcers, enuresis, and night terrors were common. The ill lost some advantages over workers but gained others, so many prisoners sought the escape from reality in illness and care. Psychosomatic diseases were frequent, which greatly increased the need for psychological support (Adler, 2006b; Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014).

The care department tried to bring relief to the patients, better fulfil their needs, and increase their quality of life. Its activities, for example, included direct care, taking care of laundry, providing prosthetic aids, transporting disabled people from lofts to the streets in nice weather, ensuring extra food in convalescence, reading to blind people, organizing concerts for the seriously ill, blind people, and war victims in cooperation with the leisure time department, providing contact with relatives, and other activities. Besides, caregivers often did whatever was needed, such as taking care of heating. Simple sewing was used as a suitable job and proven occupational therapy with some women in homes for the seriously ill (Fleischmann, 1943; Kárný, Kárná, 2019). The **Voluntary Organization for the Improvement of Patient Care in Terezin** was founded in the ghetto in the summer of 1942. Besides direct assistance to the ill (faster transfer to a ghetto medical facility, procurement of necessary items from warehouses, provision of ration food packages for patients), it also participated in solving accommodation and overcrowding of open houses or providing equipment to sickrooms. The workers took turns in two shifts and worked closely with the health department (Jewish Museum in Prague, 1942b). Patient care also presented a unique challenge. Patients or those newly recovered were included in transports (even children – for example, about 100 children from the tuberculosis ward in the autumn of 1944) (Unknown author, 1941–1945). It is difficult to imagine the experiences and dilemmas of the staff who, in the face of a critical shortage of material and workers, expended all their efforts to help patients who could be – and often were – immediately deported to the East.

### *Mental health care*

Deportation and life in the ghetto were extremely stressful and traumatic for most prisoners. Their values and priorities crumbled, they lost the meaning of life, and many experienced existential frustrations (Adler, 2007; Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014). Although medical care was a priority, self-administration considered mental health care very important too. The first **psychiatric ward** was established already in April 1942 (Kárný, Kárná, 2019). If a mentally ill was reported in the new transport, he was provided with necessary care immediately upon arrival



(Jewish Museum in Prague, 1942a). For children, there was a separate ward. The most seriously ill remained in care long-term, and, for example, traumatized children with neuroses returned to homes after treatment (Makarova, 2009). There was a division for “mental hygiene” or “mental health help” within the social care department. Specially trained “**mental caregivers**” worked field-based, looked for individuals at risk in the ghetto, and assisted the doctor. In addition to crisis intervention, the division focused on mediating spiritual comfort and rabbinic assistance in dying, bereavement care, supplying books to hospitals, and helping patients fill in their free time. In February 1943, nine psychotherapeutic outpatient offices were established, and later connected into a central one (Čermáková, Pilný, in Jelínek, Soukupová, 2014).

The **Mental Health Help Service** specialized in helping newly arrived prisoners. This mobile team aimed to alleviate the shock immediately upon arrival, support adaptation in the ghetto, actively seek out people in need, prevent suicidal behaviour due to a mental crisis, and provide psychotherapeutic care. Until his transport to Auschwitz in 1944, **Viktor Emil Frankl** (1905–1997) led this service. This psychiatrist and neurologist had previous professional experience with suicidal patients and in the ghetto focused on helping desperate, hopeless prisoners. He helped them find something that would fill their lives with a meaning unique to each individual. He emphasized prevention and also lectured. “*His efforts (Frankl) are a major reason for a steep drop in the suicide rate after the first year*” (Medawar, Pyke, 2001:124). Officially, 271 prisoners committed suicide, usually by poisoning. The majority were seniors from the Reich, and in almost 60% the suicidal behaviour occurred during the first three months after arrival. Fear of transport prevailed as a reason for suicidal behaviour only in Protectorate prisoners (Medawar, Pyke, 2001; Loewith, in Kárný, Kárná, 2019). Some prisoners, mostly old, abandoned people, died due to so-called psychic suicide (Adler, 2006b). German **Regina Jonas** (1902–1944) greatly assisted Frankl. She became the world’s first female rabbi ordained in 1935 and came to Terezin in November 1942. Besides pastoral care and lecturing, Jonas focused on **crisis intervention provided to newcomers**. Upon their arrival, she welcomed confused, shocked, and frightened people and offered them support and comfort. Jonas explained to the newcomers what awaited them in the ghetto, and kindly assured them they could turn to her for help. She was known as the “*true “woman of valor” who gave selflessly of herself to her people in their greatest hour of need*” (Elsby, n.d.).

## SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS

Many Terezin prisoners tried to understand the horrors that took place around them and confronted them with the very essence of existence and humanity, as well as the hitherto unknown depth of despair and hopelessness. Particularly difficult was minimal control over their lives’ external conditions, impossibility to protect their loved ones and constant uncertainty. However, tragic circumstances were not the hardest. “*More than death, they feared that the world would never know what they were enduring and worse, that they would not be believed*” (Levin, in Wasserman, Yuskowitz, 2019:368). Sadly, if we replace “*Terezin prisoners*” with “*clients*”, the paragraph would also describe the reality of many current social workers who help domestic violence or human trafficking victims, abused children, refugees, and many other target groups. They, too, help others in their immense hour of need and accompany them in their fight for survival and future. Dr Fleischmann, Dr Frankl, Dr Löwy, Luisa Fischer, Dr Baeck, Regina Jonas, and many of their collaborators were united by the dedicated care for others. In helping the desperate people, for whom evil certainty was better than any uncertainty – as for many today – everyone in their unique way sought above all “*recovering hope from hopelessness*” (Wasserman, Yuskowitz, 2019:369). They did not help others only fulfil their current needs. Above all, they were examples of what makes life worth living and helped them not lose themselves and their lives amid tragedy. The value and importance of better awareness of this topic for contemporary social work practice may reside exactly in its axiological aspects and their potential, especially in the education of future social workers.



In social work history, Terezin was a place where many stories ended too soon, while new ones arose. Experienced social workers, for whom the ghetto was their last job before death, handed over the baton to those, whose social careers had just begun here and managed to survive. Their lay colleagues or child prisoners, who only studied social work after the war, often found their lifelong mission in this field. Such an example is Dr Löwy. After arriving in Terezin, the 22-year-old student of philology and philosophy became the leader of a group of about 30 boys in a children's home. One of them later remembered: *"The conditions were extreme...it was in these circumstances that Louis must have performed his very best piece of social group work. He helped us to develop a sense of cohesiveness, identity, mutual caring"* (Drehmel, in Gardella, 2011:44). D. Löwy, Terezin and Auschwitz survivor, devoted his entire life to social work. He became a leading gerontology representative and a pioneer in social work education. *"Do not work for the client, but with his resources"*, he taught his students. He also saw international cooperation as a powerful tool for improvement. His contribution to the renewal of social work and the initiation of further development in Germany and Central Europe was remarkable. In 1946 he emigrated to the USA, but in 1964–1984 returned to Germany – the country of murderers of many friends and relatives – every summer as a visiting professor, advisor, and researcher. Dr Löwy, known as The Bridge-Builder, *"connected continents, countries, generations, and the most different people with each other"*. His example of forgiveness became his most powerful legacy (Kersting, in Gardella, 2011:147). Dr Löwy, who referred to his years in Nazi camps as *"a period of early professional activities"*, later used his Holocaust experience *"to instill hope by engaging people in social participation and learning"* (Wieler, in Gardella, 2011:xiv). He believed that *"If we do only what is possible, we will never achieve what is impossible"* (Löwy, in Gardella, 2011:165).

We cannot always save our clients or protect them from their fate. However, we can give even those forgotten ones our compassion, care, respect, and acceptance. There is always something we can offer them, even when others left. After the liberation, Dr Baeck declined the offer of immediate, safe departure to England so he could stay in the overcrowded ghetto with culminating typhus epidemic with sick former prisoners. He remained so that he could not only give them comfort but also bury with dignity those who would die (Shlain, 2017; Kárný, Kárná, 2019). *"He was not able to help most of them to return to life, but he came to give them love"* (Shlain, 2017:15).

## DISCUSSION

This paper describing social work in the Terezin ghetto in 1941–1945 maps a yet unexplored topic and brings new knowledge in the field. It also outlines the significance of a seemingly, "only" historical topic as a valuable, thought-provoking source to current workers and points to the importance of Czech and European social work history research. We can assume that this topic is only one of many still waiting to be discovered in the archives and introduced to the professional public. Due to its role in Nazi propaganda, the Terezin ghetto completely deviated from other European ghettos' conditions in many respects, which also enabled its unique system of prisoner's care. This fact is confirmed by the amount of preserved archival materials and other primary and secondary sources. It should be noted that the data in these sources often differ (for example, due to the distorted perspective of some eyewitnesses, different statistical processing, or author's personal attitude). Therefore, their careful comparison and study of their origin's overall context are fundamental. This aspect is closely related to the most significant limitation of this paper. Those are the limits of mediated knowledge and our personal view of the topic. Overall, we can see great potential for further in-depth research and detailed elaboration of specific social work areas described here and those not yet mentioned or only briefly outlined. Examples of such research may be post-war social work with Holocaust survivors or the use of expressive techniques in the Terezin ghetto as inspiration for support of traumatized individuals today.





## Photography 2: The National Cemetery in Terezin



### CONCLUSION

Social work in the Terezin ghetto is one of many stories of social work during the Holocaust. It is a mosaic of countless stories taking place during this tragic historical event, which brings an extraordinary testimony about the fulfilment of social work values in practice and the need for this profession. They also show its unadorned reality with the problems, doubts, and failures that accompanied social work in Terezin. We can hardly imagine the inimitable conditions and the ethical and moral dilemmas faced by the Jews in Terezin. However, the way they tried to deal with them is an example from which we can learn and find inspiration for our personal and professional lives. Social work in Terezin shows the potential of resilience and creativity and the need to rediscover meaning and self-identity as powerful tools in the fight against helplessness and hopelessness. Regardless of the nature of the adverse circumstances, *“even the most vulnerable can resist victimization by recovering purpose”* (Wasserman, Yoskowitz, 2019:375). It also points out the significance of an individual's need for self-expression to cope with oppressive reality and traumatization. In Terezin, thousands of people experienced their greatest tragedies. And hundreds of them – many nameless heroes – made a real difference in the everyday lives of others through social work activities, despite their own suffering. Social work in the Terezin ghetto is a living testimony of the essence of human dignity, solidarity, and extraordinary strength and capacity of the human spirit amid tragedy. And the greatest wish of many survivors and those who perished was that others would not forget what had happened and keep their legacy alive.



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# Tracing Persecuted Social Workers During the 1930s in Vienna

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** Building on a socio-historical overview of Austria in the 1930s with a special focus on Vienna, this article shows that the history of Austria's displaced female welfare workers has still to be told. Their life stories can be reconstructed by means of biographical research. The article focuses on how to find their traces in the archives and gives insights in an ongoing research project about the topic. **THEORETICAL BASE:** This section is a review of scholarly works on the Austrian welfare system from the emergence of the Austrian Republic in 1918 to the NS regime lasting until 1945. **METHODS:** Since no collective sources on persecuted welfare workers can be found in archives, the lives of individual persons must be traced through biographical research. **OUTCOMES:** Archival sources will be discussed in detail, and it will be shown which archives in Vienna and what other networks can be used accordingly. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** The two massive ruptures in the history of social work during the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime (1934–1938) and the Nazi regime (1938–1945) have not yet been comprehensively discussed, especially under the aspect of persecution and expulsion of female welfare workers. The findings can contribute to adding a missing piece of Austrian professional social work history.

## Keywords

social work history, Austria, biography research, gender, exile, contemporary history

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## INTRODUCTION

In early 20th-century Austria, and similar to other European countries, the welfare state was on the rise. This process was accompanied by newly founded welfare programs and by the implementation of professional training for social workers. The first part of this article describes the welfare system (*Fürsorge*) in Austria in the 1930s, especially in Vienna, using the rich sources that exist on the subject. This part builds on the expertise from Contemporary History and more specifically the Social Work History, Women's and Gender History, and Exile Studies.

I will start with an overview of Austria's social work history. The development of the profession and social policies in the different and often short-lived political regimes of that time are closely interwoven. Therefore, historical milestones are highlighted, starting with the "birth" of the Republic of Austria in 1918 and the interwar-period with "Red Vienna" until 1934, followed by the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg-Regime and National Socialism from 1938 until 1945. Professional social work in Austria began to take off in the 1920s. The following two sections address the difficulties of narrowing down and defining the profession of *Fürsorgerinnen* (*female welfare workers*).

In general, care work is always highly gendered. The women's movement at the beginning of the last century sought professional opportunities for women who wanted or had to pursue paid work. Welfare work was a young and emerging profession and, generally, was regarded to be the right kind of occupation for middle-class women. However, gender equality was still an issue: while it was women working in the field, decisions were made by male superiors in the offices. Women's and gender history has comprehensively elaborated on the various ambivalences of gender-specific aspects of care work.

Exile Studies offer research on the manifold consequences of disenfranchisement, persecution, expulsion, and, above all, the difficult period of forced exile and remigration. Already during the period of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime, dismissals of welfare workers whose loyalty was doubted took place. Some Jewish welfare workers even emigrated to Palestine because of the rise of anti-Semitism. Later, during the Nazi-rule, all remaining Jewish welfare workers struggled to emigrate, as did many others who resisted politically against the regime and were therefore persecuted. Some welfare workers were able to flee, others were imprisoned in concentration camps and/or became victims of the Holocaust.

The third chapter explains the possible methods to trace these persons. For this purpose, the sample under investigation will be narrowed down and defined. Based on this, we will consider which methods can be used to find and analyse historical sources. For this purpose of the article, the method of biographical research is presented. As pointed out, as of now, there is no data published on persecuted welfare workers. Therefore, any research project on the matter must respond to the question of possible sources.

These findings will be discussed in the fourth chapter. It will be explained what kind of sources may be available that are necessary for writing biographies. It will explain which archives offer interesting historical material, how it can be systematically collected, and where to search beyond that. A start was made with the obvious archives such as the City Archives, which administered the personnel matters of the welfare workers employed in Vienna. Other archives, such as the one of the Jewish Community, or archives of political parties and groups, will be able to provide sources on the individuals. In addition to the archival research, appeals and networks are a way to find family members and friends of the deceased welfare workers.

The final chapter discusses the findings of the research as to which methods might be used for the data analysis and how the results can be disseminated. Furthermore, it will point to remaining research gaps. Also, from the perspective of a "history from below", many life stories are waiting to come to light in social work history.



## THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE 1930s

### Contemporary history with a focus on social work history

After the First World War, Austria was a country beset with misery and hunger. The Spanish flu and tuberculosis claimed thousands of lives. Traditionally, welfare was guided by the principle of (Christian) mercy and charity of church and other private initiatives. In the young Republic of Austria, the setting of social policies became a state task. State institutions started to provide assistance to all people in need (Steinhauser, 1993:29). The miserable living conditions of the majority of the population were improved by the funding of programs to the benefit of the youth, war invalids, and, more widely, the sick and the poor. In 1917, a total of 160 positions for female welfare workers was created. The official occupational title became *Fürsorgerin* (Mittermeier, 1994:112).

With the institutionalisation of the welfare system comes the need for professional training. Steinhauser (1993) provides a comprehensive overview of the different social work schools that existed in the 20s and 30s: In 1912, the Monarchy's first welfare school was initiated by the Austrian pioneer of welfare science Ilse Arlt in Vienna (Pantucek, Maiss, 2009). In 1916, the Social Caritative Women's School was founded which later becomes the Academy of Caritas (Veran, 2012). The third school that opened its gates was the Municipal Academy for Social Administration, founded 1918. In addition, there were four more courses in different cities of Austria. The curricula included medical, legal and social, psychological and educational, and general subjects. The focus in training yet also in practice was laid on youth-work and families, especially infant care (Mittermeier, 1994:110). There were many areas in which welfare workers were active: in youth welfare offices, day-care centres, homes, hospitals, health education, and TB prevention. Welfare was closely linked to the health professions and the educational field of child and youth work and was often initiated and supported by political or religious organisations (Malleier, 2003:76–77). Within the history of social work, the demarcation from other professions is very difficult. Many of those who worked in the institutions of the Austrian welfare state actually never received any professional training as welfare workers.

In the interwar-period, Vienna was the only federal state ruled by social democrats, a fact, that earned the city its nickname “Red Vienna” (Pilz, 2019). Julius Tandler, Vienna's city councillor for health, built up a new and extensive health and welfare policy. It was accompanied by attempts to educate the masses and to provide cultural activities to those who traditionally were excluded from them. At the heart of Red Vienna's social policies, however, was the radical advancement of social housing (Wurm, 2017). Tandler, a medical doctor, aspired to build a network that would care for citizens from the cradle to the grave. The aim of his population politics was the improvement of the quality and the quantity of the Viennese population. His quality approach favoured counselling and support for children and young people, and their health, whereas the areas of psychiatry, care for the elderly, etc. were considered less important. In addition, Tandler repeatedly advocated the destruction of *unwertes Leben* “unworthy life” (Schwarz, 2017), a term that was later used by the Nazi regime justifying ending these lives. However, the Nazi racial policy framed it as a conscious strategy of selection and annihilation, in which eugenic goals were linked with racist and anti-Semitic ideologies. The following accounts of socio-political developments in Vienna should also be seen against this background. Family welfare was organised centrally by the Office for Public Welfare, which offered marriage and child-raising counselling as well as childcare. Furthermore, the *Kinderübernahmestellen* (clearing centres for children) were set up to diagnose children's behaviour and to find suitable childcare places, as well as children's and young people's homes (Pilz, 2019:74). Social workers were employed in the hospitals to register every new-born child or mother who was in need of care. From 1927 onwards, welfare workers visited all families with newborns and distributed the City of Vienna's “baby packages”, but it also was a “Trojan horse”, offering welfare workers the



opportunity to check on each and every family (Weigl 2011:123). The findings of those home visits often reflected the welfare workers' bourgeois attitudes towards the working-class milieu (Wolfgruber, 1997). In the area of preventive health care, efforts were made to combat tuberculosis (TB) by important achievements in public hygiene such as bathing establishments run by the city and specialised TB welfare workers who also made home visits (Wurm, 2017). Starting with 91 welfare workers in 1918 (Wolfgruber, 1997:62), ten years later, at the end of 1928, there were about 220 welfare workers and 52 auxiliary social workers in the service of the Youth Welfare Office. Auxiliary welfare workers were those without higher education and without training to become welfare workers. The number of welfare workers continued to increase, in 1931 there were already 278 employed by the Vienna municipality. In 1934, the total number of Viennese welfare workers in public and private institutions amounted to 631 (Weigl, 2011:125). Most of them worked in youth welfare, about a quarter in TB welfare. The field of welfare in Vienna gained in importance, and even after today's standards, it is still regarded as an outstanding example of municipal welfare policy (Wurm, 2017).

In the 1920s, psychoanalysis gain influence in the fields of education and welfare work. The work of August Aichhorn, a Freud student, was ground-breaking. In 1925, he published *Verwahrloste Jugend. Die Psychoanalyse in der Fürsorgeerziehung* (Neglected Youth. Psychoanalysis in Welfare Education) that set new standards in that regard. Aichhorn introduced a new form of psychosocial pedagogy and had great success in his work with neglected children and young people from difficult social backgrounds. Instead of locking them away, they were professionally cared for in homes modelled after his principles. Among others, he is considered the founder of psychoanalytic pedagogy. Today, social workers such as Rosa Dworschak, Ernst Federn, and Bertha Pappenheim are also considered as being pioneers of the profession. Their interesting biographies have been published in the *Schriftenreihe zur Geschichte der Sozialarbeit und Sozialarbeitsforschung* (Series on the History of Social Work and Social Work Research).

Under Engelbert Dollfuß of the Christian Social Party, new Federal Chancellor since 1932, the First Republic declared its "self-elimination of Parliament" in March 1933. On 27 September 1934 the Christian Social Party declared its dissolution. The result was an authoritarian government, the *Vaterländische Front* (Fatherland Front). It was based on a mixture of (Italian) fascist ideology and conservative Catholic influences (Thorpe, 2010; Tálos, 2017). This period also is referred to as *Ständestaat* or Dollfuß-Schuschnigg dictatorship. His successor Kurt Schuschnigg maintained the regime until Adolf Hitler's annexation of Austria in 1938.

During the Dollfuß-Schuschnigg dictatorship there were severe budget cuts in the welfare state: the 1934 constitution abrogated many welfare measures, and the tasks (and thus the costs) were transferred to the federal states. Youth welfare was massively cut, young people were to be reached through youth organisations of the *Vaterländische Front*. Catholicism, and patriotism determined all areas of welfare (Wolfgruber, 2017:31). Wolfgruber (2017) examines how Viennese youth welfare changed with the Austrofascist dictatorship in 1934 and states that it not clear but plausible that social-democratic welfare workers were dismissed (Wolfgruber, 2017:33).

After the annexation of Austria in March 1938, the German welfare law was introduced. All private training centres in the field of welfare were closed (Steinhauser, 1993:45). From 1938 to 1945 the *Soziale Frauenschule* (Social Women School) offered training to Aryans only and included instructions on racial hygiene (Wolfgruber, 2017:38). The former health care and youth welfare systems were combined into the National-Socialist Welfare (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*) that was based on hereditary-biological and racial-hygienic convictions. This meant rewarding the "hereditarily healthy" while those regarded unworthy of help were penalized. On the other hand, welfare workers participated in the selection and thus in the expulsion and murder of people who, according to Nazi ideology, were classified as "asocial", "hereditarily ill", "gypsies", and homosexuals. Welfare workers collaborated with the Nazi regime in the selection of children for the hospital "Spiegelgrund" where thousands of children were used for cruel experiments and about





800 children died (Berger, 2007). They were also involved in stigmatising women and mothers as “antisocial” or “amoral”, which resulted in them being sent to prisons, and concentration camps and often resulted in forced sterilisations (Amesberger, Halbmayr, Rajal, 2019). The majority of welfare workers adapted easily to the new political circumstances (Gumpinger, 2008:5). The welfare workers defined as ‘Jewish’ by the Nazi regime were immediately dismissed (Wolfruber, 2017:38).

In Austria before 1934, there was an abundance of very different institutions offering help to those who needed it. Next to the growing state sector private and confessional institutions also claimed their place. As it is not possible to list all of them, we will pick three typical examples: the Settlement movement in Ottakring, the Jewish Welfare Department of the Jewish Community, and the Catholic Aid Office for non-Aryan Catholics. Not everyone working in welfare had the appropriate training, some even worked on a voluntary basis or for a symbolic pay.

The Ottakringer Settlement was a social project based in a neighbourhood centre founded around 1900 (Malleier, 2005). Following its English model, the Toynbee Hall in London’s East End slum, it was committed to support impoverished children and to promote the education of their mothers. The initiators such as Maria Lang and Else Federn and other women from the Viennese bourgeois women’s movement were thus able to expand the former understanding of social work by the international exchange of experiences. In 1938, the Settlement was forced to close down, and many of the staff were expelled by the National Socialists (*ibid.*:73). The settlement resumed its activities in the immediate post-war period (*ibid.*:91).

Impoverished Jewish girls and women benefited from the self-organisation of female Jewish care workers. In 1938, between 560 and 600 Jewish welfare associations were registered throughout Austria which all have been destroyed by the Nazis (Duizend-Jensen, 2002:22). In Austria alone there were 53 welfare associations, 48 of them were run by Jewish women (*ibid.*:28). The Jewish community ran 13 children’s homes, and 7 day-care centres for children (*ibid.*:26–27), etc. Probably the best-known welfare worker of the Jewish community was Franzi Löw. From 1937 to 1945, she worked for the Jewish Community as a youth welfare worker. She helped many Jews to flee the country, among other things by forging papers. When emigration was no longer possible, she tried to support the families of concentration camp prisoners and people in hiding (Steinhardt, 2012; Simon, 2013).

The Archbishop’s Aid Office for Non-Aryan Catholics was a catholic institution that helped persecuted “Christian Jews”—converted Catholics who had Jewish origins—to emigrate. In addition, pastoral care talks were held on-site and during home visits and people were provided with material goods such as food. Since the support of the Jewish population was forbidden, there was always the danger of arrest and denunciation by the Nazi regime. Most of the approximately 10 staff members were deported later (Menzel, 2014).

In summary, the blossoming development of progressive educational and psychoanalytical theories and concepts of the 1920s and 30s was radically interrupted by the “caesura of the years 1934 to 1945” (Steinhauser, 1993:11). In recent years, a variety of articles and books have been published on welfare during the periods of Red Vienna and the Nazi regime, and a growing scholarly interest in Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime can be noted (Tálos, 2017), including gender aspects (Duma, Erker, Helfert, Lichtenberger, 2016). So far, research clearly concentrated on the role of welfare as part of the murderous Nazi regime. To this end, several significant research projects have been carried out on sub-areas of social work. Today, the involvement of social work in Hitler’s killing machine is mentioned in every outline on the history of social work. Some research was conducted on the social workers persecuted during National Socialism. While this is true for Germany there is still work to be done when it comes to the Austrian social worker’s exile. There are still a lot of blank spaces concerning persecuted and displaced welfare workers (Fallend, 2012; Messinger, 2020). There are some biographies about outstanding individuals who shaped the self-image of



the field of welfare, such as Ilse Arlt (Pantucek, Maiss, 2009), whose school was closed down by the Nazi regime, but there is hardly any published material about those who worked as welfare workers and were persecuted and even less about the ones in exile.

### Gender aspects

The history of social work is particularly relevant from a gender perspective. Gender clearly is an important analytical category as “most of the people that use social work services are women, a majority of social workers are women, and women have had throughout history a significant role in the establishment of social work as a profession” (Leskošek, 2009:9).

For a long time, social welfare for the poor was a voluntary activity of middle-class women. They were particularly committed to combating the high infant mortality rate. However, the volunteers were not available all year round and could not always offer suitable support due to a lack of practice in infant care. Therefore, considerations started on how permanent positions with proper training could be created (Mittermeier, 1994:108–109).

In the 1910s, the bourgeois women's movement fought not only for the right to vote, which could be enforced in 1918, but also for education and socially recognised, qualified activities for women. Their concept of “spiritual motherliness” stated that women were particularly suited for social care activities qua gender and that in this field they could realise themselves professionally. Welfare work developed into a classic female profession promising a meaningful occupation with low but sufficient income.

In Germany, professional welfare work had already developed into a “female” profession. This trajectory can be found in other countries as well. The close link between the bourgeois women's movement and the founders of professional social work such as Jane Adams, Alice Salomon, or Ilse Arlt (Gumpinger, 2008:3) remained dominant for a long time. Besides, these founding figures had connections to the ILO (International Labour Organization) too, and it was in those days that the ILO hugely influenced welfare work (Scheiwe, Artner, 2018).

Despite the push towards emancipation stemming from this occupation, structural inequalities between the sexes remained. While female welfare workers tended to work in the field and had poor working conditions as well as little decision-making power, male civil servants worked in the offices of welfare bureaucracies (Wolfgruber, 1997:132).

Since women from the working class should also be attracted to become welfare workers, and who would not fulfil the education required to be admitted to a welfare school, a “second class” of auxiliary welfare workers was created (Simon, 2010:213). The distinction between better-paid main welfare workers with more favourable working hours and the auxiliary welfare workers led to tensions. Still, both groups remained far down in the hierarchy of the administration (*ibid.*, 2019). It is, therefore, impossible to discuss welfare policies independently from gender relations and the class position of both the caregivers and the ones they cared for professionally (Zimmermann, Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, 1994:20, 25). The gender roles of female civil servants have hardly yet been studied. However, in Garstenauer (2019) and her postdoctoral thesis about “Austrian Public Employees and Conduct of Life 1918–1940”, these issues are explored a bit further. She states that in the sources of the administrative history of the early 20th century, gender issues really stand out. For example, the professional and private lives of civil servants are closely intertwined by service law (*ibid.*). This also applies to the employees of the City of Vienna: a municipal council decision from 1917 stipulated that being unmarried and childless was a prerequisite for becoming a welfare officer. However, since there was a greater need for female welfare workers, this regulation was repealed in 1919 (Wolfgruber, 1997:60–61). The link between professional and private life can also be seen in another regulation: The so-called “double-earner law” of 1933 was tailored to force married female civil servants out of the service if their husband earned enough for the family.



### **Welfare work and Exile**

With the Nazis seizing power in Germany in 1933 and due to growing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism, some Jewish welfare workers emigrated from Austria to Palestine already in the period from 1933 to 1938. During the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship, it was mainly socialist or communists (or those suspected of such political opinions) who decided to flee. However, by far the majority of those who had to leave the country did so during the Nazi regime. An estimated 130,000 Austrians were driven into exile, most of them were Jewish. All of them suffered discrimination, social and economic exclusion, and persecution on the basis of supposed political or racial affiliations.

While emigration of social scientists under the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime took place gradually (Fleck, 1994:3), it later tended to come in waves with peaks after the “Anschluss” in March 1938 and after the November Pogroms. Since the beginning of the war in 1939, emigration became almost impossible. The systematic extermination policy began in late 1941. The majority of the appr. 65,500 Austrian victims of the Holocaust were Jewish. Unfortunately, also some female welfare workers were murdered during the years of the NS regime.

For those who wanted to leave, it was very difficult to both find a country that would take them in, and finance and organise the journey. Before leaving, Jews had to hand over their private assets to the Nazi state (Anderl, Rupnow, Wenck, 2004). Great Britain, the United States, Palestine, states in Latin America, but also Australia and some states on the Asian and African continent accepted at least some Jewish refugees. After Germany conquered most of Europe, refugees who falsely assumed to be safe in countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, or France had to flee in order to avoid imprisonment and certain death.

Those who managed to leave the country faced many difficulties in exile. The time after arrival was marked by accommodation in (internment) camps, problems with local authorities and the local population, and unemployment or a lack of access to the labour market, which lead to women working in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, often without a work permit. Coming to terms with the loss of homeland, language and culture was difficult for the majority of Austrian refugees; for some, however, exile was also a place for professional opportunities (see examples in Korotin, Keintzel, 2002). Only gradually did emigrants succeed in building a new existence in their host countries. Still, less than 10 per cent returned to Austria after the end of the Second World War (Embacher, 2001), but the proportion was higher among political exiles as they wanted to help build up Austria (Neugebauer, Ganglmair, 2003).

Exile research has been dealing with the consequences of Nazi expulsion and the situation in the countries of exile since the 1970s. In the beginning, mainly male researchers examined the biographies of men from the intellectual elite and upper class, such as writers, politicians, etc. (Hansen-Schaberg, 2014). By turning to the stories of less prominent individuals and their everyday lives, the situation of women refugees received increased attention beginning in the 1980s. Networks of women's exile research established in Germany and Austria (Prager, 2015:55), but as Exile studies in general, were kept at the academic margins. Nevertheless, they laid important groundwork and implemented belated memory work (ibid:56). With the focus on gender and women's biographies, unexplored and new fields of research come into view (Hansen-Schaberg, 2014).

In Germany, much work has been done on female social workers in exile. Perhaps this is because the founding figure Alice Salomon was among those who had to leave the country due to persecution by the NS state (Feustel, 2020). The phenomenon that people with related professions only turned to social work in exile, for example, to complete a master's degree in social work in the US, has been researched (e.g., Wieler, Zeller, 1995).

The Austrian history of social work was strongly influenced by Maria Dorothea Simon who had studied welfare in Prague and in 1938, she stayed with relatives in England, as being from a Jewish family it would have been dangerous in Austria. There she worked in one of Anna



Freud's children's homes. Later she moved to the US and eventually returned to Austria. In 1970 she became principal of the Academy for Social Work in Vienna. She also conducted research on the history of the profession (Simon, 2010), especially on Franzi Löw (Simon, 2013).

The Austrian history of the disenfranchisement, persecution, and expulsion of people in professional fields with ties to social work has already been studied extensively. There is work on persecuted medical doctors (Reiter-Zatloukal, Sauer, 2021), social scientists (Fleck, 1994), psychoanalysts (Fallend, 2016), and individual psychologists (Kenner, 2007). In addition, there is a good number of studies that deal with professional networks of women at the time, be it in regard to the Settlement Movement in Ottakring (Malleier, 2005), the Archbishop's Aid Office for Non-Aryan Catholics (Menzel, 2014), or the after-school caretakers of the Schönbrunn school (Bindel, Böhmer-Zechmeister, Zwacek, 1990). All of these studies speak openly about the expulsion, exile, or murder, respectively.

In summary, a collective biography of persecuted Austrian social workers is missing in the history of social work (research). This may be due to the small number of trained welfare workers who were also active in very different areas of the welfare system. We still have a lot to learn about their persecution and the loss of knowledge that their expulsion caused.

## METHODOLOGY

In 2022, I will publish a book that will present short biographies of persecuted and exiled female welfare workers. In the following section, I will present the general focus of the project, followed by a more methodological discussion of biographical research, and concluded by glimpsing at the historical sources at hand.

### Focus of research

For the biographical work, I had to narrow the sample from all women in Vienna being active in the broad field of care work in the 1930s to those selected for further research. The following criteria were used for biographies to qualify for the sample: Biographies of women who were professionally active in the field of welfare in Vienna with priority given to those who had completed professional training as a welfare worker. Persons who held the position of an honorary care worker or those who actively participated in the Nazi regime were excluded. In terms of scope, the project focuses on the persecution during the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg and the Nazi regime.

To compose the biographies the following information will be researched in order to be able to analyse them comparatively: names, date and place of birth, date and place of death, family background, religion, education, occupation and professional context, private and family life, social and political networks, and reasons for persecution. Furthermore, information is collected on places and periods of flight and exile and, if applicable, remigration, detainment in concentration camps, and the circumstances of their deaths.

### Biographical research

Dausien (2020) describes writing a biography as the act of creating meaning by gluing together events in chronological order. Any biography presents the specifics of an individual life embedded in historical circumstances (Dausien 2020:77). The aim of biographical research is to deal with the reconstruction of life courses on the basis of biographical narratives, personal records and formal documents.

In the last two centuries, most biographies were written about socially important people. It does not come as a surprise that mainly men appeared as protagonists of such biographies (Harders, 2020). "Being worthy a biography" is usually a person who was noteworthy and had a meaning in the world (Schweiger, 2009:32). The "biographical turn" in social history brought an increasing interest in the life-stories of "persons who were not in a prominent public position" (Gerhalter,



2020:65). In the course of the Second Women's Movement in the 1970s and the ever-increasing importance of academic debate on gender issues, interest in the specifics of female life stories was generated. An independent feminist biography approach began to develop in the 1980s using its own tools and methods to reclaim women's part in history (Harders, 2020). Writing the "history of the historyless" (Gehmacher, 2015:1026) is not a task concerning women only, but as Gehmacher points out, a challenge in regard to other groups as well such as the labour movement and or the exiled (ibid.).

Many of the refugees were aware that their life story represented something extraordinary because of the historical context. Female refugees increasingly began to write autobiographies in the 1970s and 1980s. They were often written in the plural "we" of a married couple. Nevertheless, we were able to learn a lot about the concrete coping with everyday life in exile, from a different perspective than the heroic male one (Prager, 2015:57–58).

### Historical sources and archival research

The prerequisite for writing a biography is that there are traces of the life lived. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, increasing bureaucratisation has made it more likely to find such traces, for example, in archives; moreover, it has become more common to locate oneself biographically, whether through written CVs or by interviews (Gehmacher, 2019:1016).

Sources can be divided into unedited primary sources and edited secondary sources. An unedited source is understood to be original material from a certain time. Edited sources summarise information, interpret and evaluate them, and provide important additional information. They make the originals accessible to a wider circle of readers (Eckert, Beigel, 2019:23).

For all sources, the authorship must be clarified. Did the person authorise these documents, or even wrote them him/herself? Did someone else write about him or her, as in biographies? The reasons and circumstances for creating a document is relevant as might be concluded from the example of files in a court case. Furthermore, the "timestamp" is relevant. Are we dealing with first-person documents from a certain time period (such as letters or diaries) or with documents that were created afterward (such as memoirs)? In general, the amount of surviving material influences the character and scope of a biography. One of the most important challenges is to contextualise gaps and forgotten or suppressed facts (ibid.:106).

Researching the biographies of unknown women is difficult for many reasons: Traces of women are harder to find as many changed their names through marriage, political reasons, or migration. Women tend to think about their lives as not being worthy of a biography. It was common thinking, so even if the women had a legacy, it was often not passed on to others or archives. For one thing, there was usually no distinct biographical awareness of the significance of their lives for posterity. When it comes to the lives of working-class women, space restriction was another issue. Often flats simply lacked the space to accommodate private archives. Especially during periods of flight and exile, private possessions were irretrievably lost. Prominent people were more likely to leave a rich "paper trail" and are therefore easier to trace.

Closely connected to methodological and theoretical decisions that had to be made beforehand, is the question of type, scope, and accessibility of the material that can be used as sources (Harders, 2020).

### FINDINGS

The following section deals with those archives and sources that have been useful in finding traces of welfare workers. This leads us to the following questions: How can biographical research be implemented in research on persecuted welfare workers in the 1930s? What evidence pointing to their lives is left? How can traces of persecution, expulsion, and flight be found? I will also discuss the holdings (and the lack) of records of different archives in Vienna, as well as online sources and





the necessity of tracking down descendants and private archives. Needless to say, all the findings presented here are preliminary, dating from May 2021. Final results will be published in 2022.

Archives are the treasure troves of source work (Eckert, Beigel, 2019:25), therefore the first step is to consider what kind of sources are most likely to be preserved in what type of archives. The initial situation for a systematic evaluation of welfare workers of the 1920s and 1930s is quite difficult. One of the main challenges was that none of the welfare schools mentioned kept lists of students, graduates, or teachers. My research started at the former academy for social work, until today a training facility for future social workers, by asking the former directors. A folder was found in the FH Campus Wien's archives in which "historical material" was stored. However, it contained nothing relevant regarding the period 1934–1945.

As there was no information about their education, the next step was to search for the welfare workers in their respective fields of work. Since most of the welfare workers at this time were employees of the City of Vienna, archival research started in the *Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv* (City and Provincial Archives Vienna). To gain insight into dismissals and retirements, the protocols of the Youth Welfare Office were inspected. The documentation of all personnel matters is extensive and comprises two thick volumes per year. For this research, the years 1934 and 1938 are relevant. In the book from 1934 there was only one reference to a politically motivated dismissal. In 1938, the protocol shows 40 applications for retirement from welfare workers. Not all the personnel files found their ways into the archives or were kept there, therefore only 17 cases could be examined. Almost all of these women applied for the pension on their own initiative and justified the application with illness, little children or other care obligations. However, it was possible to locate one case in which the retired welfare worker reclaimed her job after the war, emphasising that she has been forced into retirement. She had been afraid that the authorities could find out about her hitherto concealed Jewish ancestry. In the other 39 cases of retirement, it is unclear whether or not there had been possible fear for persecution. To find more personnel files, the aforementioned Therese Garstenauer, working on disciplinary measure against civil servants in the State Archives, kindly shared 24 cases. Some of the 11 files received clearly showed forced retirement because of Jewish descent.

As already noted, The City and Provincial Archives of Vienna stored the personnel files of the city's employees if they were handed over. There is no search option for the occupation of welfare worker. Name and year of birth of a person under scrutiny must be known in advance to be able to inspect the personnel files. Therefore, it is not possible to investigate the entirety of welfare workers in the city of Vienna but only individual life stories.

To search for the names of female welfare workers who were active in the 1930s, the first step was to systematically review the relevant biographical encyclopaedias and handbooks. The following databases and collective volumes have been used (among others): the encyclopedia on women's biographies, *biografia* (Korotin, 2016), *Frauen in Bewegung 1848–1938* (Women on the move, 1848–1938), *Wissenschaftlerinnen in und aus Österreich* (Female scientists in and from Austria) (Korotin, Keintzel, 2002), the Austrian section of the website *Psychoanalytikerinnen. Biografisches Lexikon* (Biographical Dictionary of Women Psychoanalysts). Quite often persons were labelled as welfare workers that never underwent proper training. This again points to the difficulty of narrowing down the professional field.

The standard work on exile biographies is the "Biographical Handbook of German-Language Emigration after 1933–1945" (Röder, Strauss, published between years 1980–1999). "Social work" is listed separately in the occupational index with around 120 entries (Röder, Strauss, 1983:204ff.). Again, a closer look at those entries shows that not all persons categorised as social workers were active in the field of welfare before their forced emigration. Many acquired their training in "social work" only in exile. In addition, the aforementioned book almost exclusively deals with people expelled from Germany; persons – and in particular women – from Nazi-occupied Austria are in fact underrepresented.





In the archival research, the starting point was persecution due to being defined as Jewish by the Nazi regime. Names of Jewish welfare workers were discovered in the archives of the Jewish Community in Vienna (*Israelitische Kultusgemeinde*). For this purpose, questionnaires that contain information about the émigrés were consulted. The Jewish Community, at that time overtightened by the Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung*), handed out these questionnaires to Jews who planned to emigrate. In those questionnaires, the head of the household had to provide information about himself and his family members, including their (previous) occupation. With the help of these documents, I could identify 16 female welfare workers. Most of them were listed as relatives, daughter or wife, so no further information about them was noted. Some of the names mentioned overlapped with those already known through previous research. Still, some were discovered for the first time.

Some welfare workers were persecuted as Jews, others were active or suspected to be active in the socialist or the communist resistance movements, and some were persecuted for both reasons. The VGA (*Verein für die Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung*, Association for the History of the Workers' Movement) and the DÖW (*Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands*, Documentation Centre of the Austrian Resistance) provide extensive information on those persecuted for political reasons.

In the VGA archive, documents of some activists with a socialist background could be found, above all on the Schönbrunn Educators' School. The Schönbrunn School was born in the progressive education movement. From 1919 until 1924 around 100 students graduated. Lots of them started working in day-care centres for children in working class districts. Some of them collaborated in social-pedagogical institutions and founded the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft sozialistischer Erzieher* (working group of socialist educators). After 1934, this organisation as well as the centres for children were banned. The VGA archive contains a lot of material on this movement.

In the DÖW, a database query can be made according to profession, these names can also be included. The findings at the DÖW were especially rich because of their extensive record on political trials conducted against people suspected of socialist or communist activities or even high treason. In the case of some women, the file of the husband was consulted too, for example in the case of a woman who had been dismissed from her job in 1934, after her husband had been arrested. However, the DÖW also preserves self-testimonies of women, for example the applications of those who wanted to join the *KZ-Verband*, an association of camp survivors. Most applications were filled out by hand and, at least in some cases, provided further information. In the archive, there are also questionnaires filled out by survivors of the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück. In both cases, it was possible to find women who had indicated welfare worker as their profession.

The archive *Frauennachlässe* (Women's Legacies of the University of Vienna) contains a comprehensive collection on the already mentioned Settlement, edited by Elisabeth Malleier (2015). Investigating these sources was interesting, as some letters of recommendation depicted the exact areas of responsibility of the welfare workers in that visionary project. In the archive *Frauennachlässe* I was able to take up the trail of two sisters who had worked in a Protestant home for children and stated that they had been subjected to persecution under the Nazi regime. After reviewing the extensive estate, no further clues could be found other than that sparse reference in the autobiographical legacy from the 1980s. Further inquiries with the Protestant parish and a specialised historian rather indicated an affinity of the two sisters with the Nazi regime, which is why they were excluded from the sample.

The estate of settlement-worker Erna Gsur that could be found in the manuscript-collection of the Austrian National Library was particularly fruitful. Filed under her later surname Felmayr, it contained extensive private and professional correspondence. It also included a large number of photos, some from her time in the settlement.

In the State Archives, the search for the keyword *Fürsorgerin* resulted in 6 hits. All of them were files on processes of denazification. Still, if individual names of welfare workers are known, the



state archives are a good source to gain insight into formal procedures before their (planned) emigration.

To obtain further biographies that are not yet known to the project, networks of the author in women's and exile research were activated. We published calls in the newsletter of the Austrian Society for Exile Research and in the journal *Zwischenwelt*; additionally, articles in the Jewish city magazine *WINA* and the *AJR* (Journal of the Association of Jewish Refugees in London) were published. Publicising the topic in the academic community, also by means of a website, brought some important responses.

Especially fruitful are private archives from descendants and relatives as they usually come with personal narratives and memories about the person in question. I am very grateful to the descendants for their willingness to contribute to the history of social work with their documents and their assistance. Reaching the end of that chapter, I will present some impressive findings in the estates: Marianne Prager presided as the director of a Jewish girls' home in Vienna and fled to England in 1939 where she worked in the field of social-pedagogics and later in hospital welfare work. Her nephew in London transmitted a transcript of a lecture she gave and a photo album from her time in Vienna. The life story of the socialist Elfriede Lichtenberg, who fled to Colombia, has so far been overshadowed by her better-known husband Franz Lichtenberg. With the help of her daughter, it was possible to add numerous information and highly relevant photos showing Elfriede Lichtenberg. Extensive material on a psychoanalytical oriented welfare worker, Ilse Hellman, was found by descendants and made its way in her short biography with the help of the researcher Elizabeth Baum-Bräuer. Another Jewish woman who had fled Vienna, Anna Böhmerwald, who worked at the Archbishop's Aid Office for non-Aryan Catholics, was imprisoned in labour and concentration camps from 1938 until 1945 and survived. When she emigrated to the USA in 1948, she concealed her Jewish origins. With the help of her granddaughter, it was possible to complete the family history and find numerous photos from her time in Vienna. In most cases, nothing or almost nothing has been published on the life stories of these women to date.

## DISCUSSION

In the previous section, the focus was on data collection and the description of the possible places and ways to find archival records. This part will discuss methods of data analysis and ways of dissemination. It will also point out remaining research gaps.

From March 2020 to October 2021, I have been conducting the research project on persecuted social workers in collaboration with Thomas Wallerberger, to whom I am grateful for proof-reading this article and sharing his ideas. The project was funded by the *Zukunftsfonds* (Future Fund) and the *Nationalfonds* (National Fund) of the Republic of Austria and the University for Applied Sciences, *FH Campus Wien*. The results will be made available as a book and online. The following questions will be addressed: What are the best ways of defining the scope of the problem? What biographies are relevant? How can they be presented to achieve the following goals: making both the individual person and his or her embeddedness in political and institutional structures visible; discussing social and professional networks; casting light on the category of gender as the prime factor in most of the analysed life stories. While all of these questions will be addressed in the upcoming book, this article will also point to topics that are still missing.

Using the methods of biographical research described above, the data can be analysed in two ways: On the one hand, short biographies can be compiled. On the other hand, the information collected in a database can be compared regarding the following categories: educational and occupational fields, reasons for persecution and its consequences, and further (professional) life paths. I will use both approaches.

To emphasise the uniqueness of every single female welfare worker, short life stories are written with a focus on welfare activities. The collected data is compiled into short biographies, provided



with references to secondary literature and primary sources. Furthermore, I included references to relevant colleagues, their respective training, and field of work. Whenever possible, the women themselves are quoted. The initial findings show that the available material is scattered and varies strongly in scope. In terms of reconstructing the professional development of some welfare workers, the personnel files of the City of Vienna are especially helpful. Additionally, the already mentioned private archives can provide information about private and/or family relationships. The fields of work in which the women were active, as well as their daily tasks, are presented in the individual biographies. All those categories and details form the basis for subsequent generalised statements. The method of collective biographies is particularly useful in studying groups or networks. By examining a group or a network, the commonalities and differences, as well as the relationships between the actors can be examined (Harders, 2020). The database of the project enables a comparison within the selected sample of female welfare workers. Collective biographical methods are particularly well suited for intersectional research questions (ibid.). Different sub-groups can be formed for the analysis. Regarding the categories of persecution, socialists or communists, as well as Jews and persons defined as 'Jewish' by the Nazi regime, and various overlaps between these groups such as Jewish communists can be analysed concerning their agency in leaving the country, to find refuge, and to continue a life in exile. Furthermore, it is possible to analyse and compare dates, be it regarding the time of dismissal, retirement, departure, or remigration.

Networks among female welfare workers can be made visible by linking the private and professional relationships between the respective biographies. Some of those links were established by joint training (e.g., in the *Schönbrunner Schule*). There is also a group that was familiar with each other through their jobs at the City of Vienna, in the Settlement, as employees of social institutions of the Jewish community, and as colleagues in the field of psychoanalysis or the emerging social sciences. In addition, it is necessary to shed light on the institutional as well as the structural and historical framework of the social field. The working conditions are of equal importance, so are opportunities for career advancement, hierarchies between the sexes, and within the group of welfare workers themselves. As already noted by Garstenauer (2019), it is worthwhile to think of public employees' history and gender history together. Gender-specific attributions of characteristics and tasks are explicitly and implicitly addressed in a wide variety of sources, be it personnel files or letters of recommendation. The job profile of welfare work, shaped by gender and class hierarchies during the time of oppression and persecution due to political or religious affiliations, must be analysed from an intersectional perspective.

While some research is already available on social work's links to the bourgeois women's movement, its involvement in international networks of the (women's) workers' movement, such as the ILO will open up new insights into the professional history of social work. Political networks or being active in a political movement may have had a positive impact on opportunities to flee the country. Little is known about this either. Furthermore, networks in exile must be explored. A good example in this regard is the recently published comprehensive biography of Ernst Papanek (Maier, 2021). A research desideratum for the Austrian context is the history of those who only later in exile completed training in the field of social work or turned to social work activities there. Especially for women from related disciplines such as education, psychoanalysis, etc., social work represented an opportunity for paid employment in exile. Already in the 30s, some universities in the US awarded master's degrees in social work.

Another gap in research is the question of remigration and, linked to this, the question of the (re) integration of professional methodologies and approaches into post-war Austria. Many of the former Austrians remained in the country of exile and yet some returned after the war. How could ideas of "social work" be transferred from the host countries back to Austria? Further data collection is required to determine how their remigration affected social work history.

As already shown, some estates of female welfare workers expelled from Austria could be found in the private possession of family members only. This highlights the lack of an archive of exile that



the research community has addressed for years. The descendants often are aware of the treasures they are guarding, but it can also be assumed that many other estates have been lost forever.

## CONCLUSION

In Austria, state welfare emerged at the beginning of the 20th century and rapidly established itself, particularly in Red Vienna from the 1920s onwards. The ideas of welfare suffered from financial cuts already by the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime and later was completely remodelled by the Nazi regime. Significant research exists on welfare in the 1930s, but no research has been done on persecuted and displaced female welfare workers. Until today, the history of the victims remains untold. Biographical research can be used to collect historical data. The importance and originality of this study are that it discusses the possible sources that can be found in archives and other ways to find relevant estates. Based on these data it will be possible to write short biographies of persecuted Viennese welfare workers and to analyse them in a collective biography. A hitherto missing piece of the rupture in the personal life and the professional history of social work can thus be added.

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# Historical Roots of Supervision in Social Work Framed by the Anglo-American Tradition

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** The paper aims to identify the origins and nature of supervision in social work and its gradual development in the context of professionalization following a historical analysis based on the Anglo-American tradition. **THEORETICAL BASE:** The formation of supervision is rooted specifically in the period of aid institutionalization. The process of social work professionalization built the profession on a solid base and has become a supporting pillar of supervision. **METHODS:** The paper is designed as historical research using content analysis of historical texts. **OUTCOMES:** The history of supervision dates back to the beginnings of charitable organizations. The history of supervision in social work shows that supervision has developed alongside the social work profession. Supervision between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by administrative and educational function, followed by supportive function. The authors found that in the examined period there was no differentiation between student supervision and supervision for social workers. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** The

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results presented herein enrich the social work historical platform and offer answers to questions arising in connection with the history of supervision in social work.

## Keywords

supervision, social work, historical development, education, charitable activity

## INTRODUCTION

Following the analysis of the literature, which presents an outline of the historical origin of supervision in social work and other helping professions, it is possible to say that the precise definition of the reality concerning the where, when and under what circumstances supervision originated is challenging and requires a specific focus and understanding of historical contexts. Revealing the original forms of supervision varies across the various helping professions. This also implies a different understanding of the concept of supervision in the practice of various helping professions (Davys, Beddoe, 2010; Milne, 2010; O'Donoghue, Tsui, 2013; Dan, 2017), from understanding supervision as a "helping hand" in education (EDU 710, 2016), through perceiving supervision as an intervention conducted by an older member of the profession to improve the professional performance of a younger member of the profession and to monitor the quality of services provided to clients in counselling and psychotherapy (Bernard, Goodyear, 2014), to its perception as a key component of the social work profession, which is an essential part of social workers' practice and allows engagement and intervention in the complex external and internal "world" of the supervisee and to share information between supervisor and supervised by means of a discussion (Wilson et al., 2008). The diversity of these characteristics is, to a certain extent, determined historically. Therefore, it is necessary, in order to understand the historical formation of supervision in social work, to retrospectively examine and analyse historical milestones in the development of social work as a profession. Based on the historical context of professionalization of social work, it is considered most appropriate anchoring the development of supervision in social work in educational and charitable contexts, which represent a credible and rich "source" of initial historical events on the basis of which supervision has developed to its present form.

## METHODOLOGY

Since the presented paper examines the historical context of supervision in social work within a defined period, the design respected the principles of historical research. According to Hendl (2016), historical research focuses on examining and characterizing phenomena that have occurred in the past. Examining the events and phenomena that have taken place in various areas of the history of our society is important not only to reveal significant historical contexts, but also from the perspective of understanding the current state of any area of social life. Historical research has an interpretative character, and the researcher works with identified and verified facts to reconstruct the events (Hendl, 2016). This historical research aims to identify the origins and nature of supervision in social work and its gradual development in the context of the social work professionalization based on a historical analysis building on the Anglo-American tradition. To achieve the above goal, the following research questions were established: a) What are the contexts of the actual origin of supervision in social work? b) What was the form and character of supervision in social work in the period from its beginnings to the period of the beginnings of its professionalization? When conducting historical research regarding the above goal, the authors collected data using content analysis, which according to Špiláčková (2014:186) is "one of the most used research techniques in historical research". The unequivocal positive of this technique is the fact that it enables finding information that is overlooked in the process of research in historical



documents, as well as the fact that the information constitutes “clean”, undistorted data (Hendl, 2016). The content analysis included both primary and secondary sources. When searching for sources that would correspond to the issues of the research, a total of 132 publications and articles in periodicals were collected and analysed. After the initial phase of the analysis, 46 publications and articles were excluded because their content did not correspond to the research topic. Important findings were summarized from 78 sources, which are listed in the list of resources used in compliance with the ethical principles of research. One factor that limited the research was the fact that the authors worked exclusively with electronic resources that were available online. The authors are also aware that working with secondary sources may distort some crucial historical events and facts that complete the overall “picture” of supervision in its beginnings. Moreover, the focus of the research itself, aimed primarily at the history of supervision in social work, mainly in the USA, may be a limiting factor, possibly causing the absence of important historical facts in the development of supervision in social work from a global perspective.

## RESULTS

### From Socratic “dialog” to the beginnings of supervision in social work

In the search for initial stimuli, which could be a prerequisite for the evolution of supervision to the present form, one comes across the fact that the driving force is clearly a gradual increase in human awareness of living in a tangle of certain social relationships, within which human work becomes a necessary topic of mutual communication. Interpersonal communication gained importance in ancient times, when the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates began to address the issue in his work *Dialog* (Belardi, 1998). The Socratic dialog is based on the reciprocal reactions of two communicating parties, reflecting opinions, attitudes, and evaluations. This dialog is characterized by personal involvement of the communicating parties. Socrates himself considered a dialog to be a process by which he led his students to new knowledge. By asking questions, he gave his students the opportunity to broaden their perspective on the perception of the problem, thus enabling them to gain a key perspective, which subsequently led to a change in the student’s view of the problem (Vyskočilová, Praško Pavlov, 2015). Certain elements of the Socratic dialog are to some extent comparable to the professional reflection methods used in contemporary supervision (Belardi, 1998). The historical roots of social work and supervision are also associated with the establishment of guilds in the Middle Ages. During this period society did not care for people who were in a bad social situation. Although guilds brought together craftsmen, merchants, and other tradesmen, in addition to economic, political, and religious orientation, they provided social care for sick and old members of the guild, as well as the survivors of the deceased members of the guild (Kováčiková, 2010). The activities of guilds are actually the initial professional reflection methods that mostly included the inspection of work quality in the context of this period. Guilds were not only a tool of market regulation. Their activities also focused on ensuring that quality and price criteria were met (Belardi, 1998). Yet, activities that are reminiscent of the first predecessors of supervision were not present only in the early period of our society’s development. On the contrary, the term supervision had been already used in medieval Latin in the sense of “control” over someone, or something. Supervision was subsequently used as a control tool for several centuries, while maintaining its basic characteristics of an older, more experienced worker supervising the work of a younger, less experienced worker. For the less experienced worker, the supervisor represented a natural authority as well as a superior, whose function was to direct their subordinates. The primary goal of this form of supervision was to ensure that the work of individuals complied with the established rules, or that this work was aimed at achieving a specific pre-defined goal (Glanz, 1994). In connection with the historical roots of supervision in social work, there are different opinions on where to look for the beginnings of supervision in social work. E.g., Kaslow (1979) is convinced that it is not possible to determine exactly when, where, and under what conditions the traditional model of supervision in



social work arose. In her view, supervision was based on the model of consultation and supervision that was being developed in the field of medicine in England. In favour of defending the influence of the medical model, Munson (2002) argues that the medical model of supervision was adopted by the first social workers because their work was linked to the work of doctors in different ways. In this context, their personal or professional connections were evident. Doctors also conducted the first educational trainings in social work, and the educational model they implemented was applied in a later period in the education of social workers, and it is still preferred in some schools to this day. However, Watkins (2011) states that supervision has developed on the “field” of several disciplines, which corresponds to the various methods, approaches or models that are used in supervision in the current period. Some authors studying supervision in social work, such as Bruce, Austin (2001); Tsui (2005) and Kadushin, Harkness (2014), on the other hand, believe that supervision originated in the field of social work, because the process of developing supervision and social work as a professional activity took place simultaneously (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014). The English medical model of supervision has been adopted by several European countries as well as the USA (Kaslow, 1979), and the significant impact of this model on the development of supervision in social work, especially in clinical social work, was visible in their environment. However, a more pronounced influence of this model became evident only in the 1920s. Assuming that the roots of social work go back to activities performed in the environment of charitable organizations, common lines in the development of social work and supervision may be searched for in charitable organizations, in which the term supervision was used as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Smith, 1892; Brackett, 1904; Burns, 1958). The term supervision appears in the records of the activities of charitable organizations long before the medical model of supervision began to be applied. The term supervision in a charitable context had several meanings, namely: “inspection”, “correction”, “supervision”, as well as “leadership”. However, the above meanings correspond to the understanding and interpretation of the term “supervision” in an educational context. This is indicated by the fact that in that period the term “supervision” was used mainly in the above meanings, which were subsequently transferred and gradually developed in the field of social work and thus influenced the perception and characteristics of supervision in the current period. For these reasons, the analysis of the development of supervision in educational contexts and subsequently in charitable contexts is considered as justified.

### **Supervision in educational contexts**

Despite the fact that supervision is known primarily as part of the historical development of social work, its roots are also found in the history of pedagogy. In pedagogy, supervision<sup>4</sup> was understood in the sense of “inspection” of the educational process, especially in public schools, which focused on the education of the population of common children. Education in these types of schools aimed at developing the knowledge and skills that a working person needs in everyday life. First, supervision in the environment of public schools was performed as inspection of their financial management. Public schools were financially supported mainly by cities and municipalities, church organizations, individual donors, etc. Therefore, the schools were supervised by important personalities living directly in the school campus. In many cases, inspections in the school environment were also carried out by potential employers who were interested in the readiness of students for practical employment. In the initial stages, random checks focused mainly on the character traits of students such as diligence, discipline, obedience etc. Over time, random visits to schools turned into regular visits, which continued to be referred to as ‘supervision’. The term ‘inspection’ began to be used

<sup>4</sup> Supervision performed in the school environment was subject to the influence of political, economic, and social forces. Particularly significant was e.g., the influence of economic capitalism, which prompted the introduction of production theories into supervision in the school environment, which was reflected in detailed inspection procedures (Bolin, 1987).





alongside (De Grauwe, 2007). External inspection visits aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the education system at various levels, as well as monitoring compliance with established standards in schools (Tyagi, 2010). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were many individuals, mainly in the environment of public schools, without the appropriate pedagogical qualifications. Hence the inspectors focused not only on the formal inspection, but also provided counselling mainly to improve the quality of the teaching process. Due to the presence of the counselling aspect in inspection visits to school facilities, some countries preferred the use of the term “supervision” rather than “inspection” (Glickman, 1985; De Grawue, 2001; 2007). Supervision performed in the school environment aimed both at the mechanical inspection of compliance with the set standards and performance of students and creation of a flexible dialog between the supervisor and the teacher (Glickman, 1985). The predecessors of supervisors in educational institutions were the school superintendents<sup>5</sup> (Callahan, 1966). The implementation and understanding of supervision in the educational environment has changed over time, mainly because the goals and tasks of supervision had to be adapted to the requirements of society. From the originally repressive tool, supervision has gradually evolved into a participatory tool aimed at developing and empowering learners (Munson, 2002). When analysing the history of supervision, it must be taken into account that the historical development of supervision, in the educational environment as well as others, represents a complex web of social events and dominance of specific thought orientations of the time, therefore accurate capture of all factors influencing the development of supervision is challenging and in order to define the important stages of this development, the authors decided to draft Table 1 presenting the development of approaches to supervision in education. Based on the analysis, Table 1 defines: the approach to supervision, the objectives, the role of supervision and the role of the supervisor in individual significant periods in terms of historical development.

Table 1: Development of supervision approaches in education

Period	Approach to supervision	Objectives of supervision	Role of supervision	Role of the supervisor
1642 – 1900	supervisory and repressive	gradual onset of professionalization of inspection – school inspection, supervisory boards – lay inspection	elimination of inefficiency, compliance with the prescribed contents	administrative inspector
1900 – 1920	administrative	training of beginning teachers, profiling of general supervisors, specialized supervisors and supervisory officers	introduction of new teaching methods, specialization by subjects, management of administrative activities	administrative inspector, chief administrator
before 1940	scientific	effort to introduce impersonal, scientific methods of supervision	elimination of subjectivity from the evaluation of supervisors	supervisor, curriculum coordinator
1940 – 1960	scientific	building the scientific basis of supervision	orientation on the development of skills, methods and development of study materials	supervisor chief administrator, evaluator

<sup>5</sup> The perception of the role of school superintendent has changed over time. For more on this issue, see e.g., Callahan (1966); Kowalski (2006).



1960 – 1980	leadership	improving the pedagogical process, building cooperative and democratic methods of supervision, common goal setting	professional leadership support	instructor, controller, coordinator, evaluator, mediator
1980 – 1999	democratic	development of school supervision standards, development of pedagogical performance standards	relationship building	instructor, controller, coordinator, evaluator, mediator
after 2000	supportive	efforts to reform the supervisory system, new guidelines for supervision	joint reflection of problems	leader, instigator of change, cooperation coordinator

Source: Levická (2020), edited and supplemented by the authors

The development of approaches to supervision presented in Table 1 corresponds to the stages of supervision development (see Burke and Krey (2005) for more details) in education as defined by Burke and Krey (2005), namely:

administrative inspection stage (1642–1875); efficiency orientation stage (1876–1936); a stage of the group's joint efforts to improve teaching and learning (1937–1959); research orientation stage (1960–1975); unification stage (1976–1990); stage of emerging participation models (1991 – to date). Examination and analysis of the individual developmental stages of supervision in the school environment revealed that in the educational context the concept of supervision is diversified. The most stable variant of supervision in this area is still inspection, to which concepts such as tutoring, coaching or mentoring were assigned gradually (Armour, 2018). However, these methods cannot be considered as synonymous expressions corresponding to the activities performed in supervision, because supervision, unlike tutoring, coaching and mentoring, provides the supervisee with correct feedback (Milne, 2007) and, importantly, always has the following objectives: normative (quality control), restorative (emotion processing support) and formative (educational) (Milne, 2010).

### Educational contexts of supervision in social work

Supervision in the form of external evaluation of the educational process was gradually applied at all levels of the education system, i.e., also the education and training of future social workers. Before a comprehensive system of undergraduate training of future social workers was created, they were prepared for the performance of their profession informally, which is also associated with the beginnings of supervision in this area. Brnula (2012:86) states that “after 1850, the first measures in favour of solving social issues began to be implemented. At that time, it is possible to speak of a *discipleship* or *fellowship* approach/model to the education of volunteers and social workers.” Navrátil (2007) refers to this stage of development of the social work profession as the stage of practical education, which represented a period when formal and university education in social work did not yet exist. The practical education of social workers was performed by means of trainings led by more experienced colleagues. Future social workers were engaged in direct work with the client under the supervision of a more experienced colleague and attempted to shadow



their teacher's pattern of behaviour and actions (Jenkins, Sheafor, 1982). A more experienced colleague provided direct feedback to a less experienced colleague, and during the "initiation" of a younger colleague into the "craft" they used mainly methods such as e.g., demonstration, modelling of behaviour, attitudes and skills required of a future social worker (Navrátil, 2007). This initial system of training and preparation of first the volunteers and later the social workers had a major impact on the understanding of supervision in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the process of professionalizing social work began. An important part of this process was the fact that universities included in their curricula study programs aimed directly at acquiring knowledge and skills in social work. During this period, supervision was understood as the "professional supervision" exercised by an experienced worker overseeing a novice worker (Robinson, 1936; Towle, 1945; Robinson, 1949). However, the institutional training of future social workers was also subject to external evaluators, therefore higher education had to meet the conditions for this type of study, as well as the requirements of representatives of professional organizations in which students were to be employed after graduation (Brackett, 1904; Wencour, Reish, 1989).

### **Supervision in the context of the activities of the Charity Organization Societies**

With respect to the fact that, according to Payne (2005), the beginnings of social work are associated with aid, which was provided based on the principle of charity and voluntariness, it can be said that the origins of supervision go back to the activities of charities, in which we find the first mentions of supervision in the 1880s. In this period, supervision was associated with case social work, and in the environment of charitable organizations, efforts began to emerge to gradually professionalize the activities of charitable organizations, also due to the emerging need for more efficient organization of work in these organizations (Munson, 2002). The term "supervision" designated a number of activities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It first found its application in the area of inspection and organization of the system of aid and support to families who relied on various forms of aid (financial, material, etc.), in order to prevent abuse of any form of aid (Burns, 1958; Levická, 1999; 2015). In England and later in the USA, the process of professionalization of aid began in charitable organizations, with the first paid employees working in these organizations alongside volunteers. However, it was necessary to involve a much larger number of people that would participate in direct work with families. In the "spirit" of this need, the number of volunteers who were assigned to work directly with families in organizations began to grow. These volunteers were referred to as "friendly visitors". The gradual growth of families in dire need of help and the turnover of volunteers prompted the Charity Organization Societies movement to establish a permanent system for recruiting, training and managing friendly visitors, volunteers (Gurteen, 1882). The above facts lead to the conclusion that: "supervision as it is known today has its origins in the Charity Organization Societies movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014:1). The Charity Organization Societies (COS) movement was originally founded in 1869 in London (Dorey, 2015), and in 1878 expanded to North America, where it commenced its activities in Buffalo, USA (Austin, 1957; Payne, 1994; Munson, 2002; Kadushin, Harkness, 2014). The goal of the COS movement was to bring together various philanthropic, volunteer groups and institutions that focused on working with the poor in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within the COS, the prevailing belief was that poverty was the cause of an individual's failure, not the result of the organization of society or the distribution of its resources. For this reason, the COS did not provide families with financial assistance for the poor but helped them through volunteers who offered informal advice on financial management, home care, or health care (Dorey, 2015). In most cases volunteers came from a higher social class and were usually members of the management of the organization. As most volunteers did not have personal experience of poverty, they were not prepared to address it, hence it was necessary to provide them with assistance and support in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills necessary to perform these activities (Kutzik, 1977). This responsibility was entrusted to the "paid agents" who were



employed by COS. Paid agents can be considered the first forerunners of supervisors. Each agent – supervisor was in charge of a number of volunteers, though the main responsibility for liaising with clients lay with the volunteers under the supervision of these agents (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014). Within COS, the agent was in the position of administrative representative of a specific charity. On the one hand, they ensured smooth operation of the organization in which they worked, and on the other hand, they ensured communication between the volunteers and the organization's committee (Smith, 1892). During this period, the COS functioned as a hierarchically organized movement, which had its “branches” in individual locations, managed by local committees (Eisenberg, 1956; Pierson, 2011). The agent was responsible for the training of volunteers and their work with families, as well as for the performance of the tasks and responsibilities of the COS “branch”, which they managed (Becker, 1956). If a family asked for help, the agent first performed an initial analysis of the case and then reported important findings on the case weekly to a district committee conference. The committee discussed the case and at the same time made the necessary decisions on the case. From this position, the agents had only very low management autonomy. Later, the district committees focused their activities more on politics and administration, so the responsibility for decisions on individual cases was transferred to agents and, over time, to the volunteers and paid staff themselves, who discussed their cases with agents. In this position, agents were responsible for decisions concerning cases, as well as their implementation by volunteers or paid employees (Kadushin, Harkness, 2014). For this reason, too, it was their duty to provide the volunteers with knowledge of the necessary administrative work, which included records keeping of family visits. A crucial part of the work was the assessment of reliance on assistance, which required a detailed examination and description of the families visited (Richmond, 1897; 1899; Smith, 1892). When assessing the family's reliance on aid, charity workers assessed whether and to what extent a particular family deserves the aid requested from the charity. Based on the assessment of the justification of the need for assistance, they proposed to the management of the organization the form of assistance and subsequently supervised the fulfilment of the agreed conditions for the provision of assistance in individual families (Hill, 1883; 1887; Brackett, 1904). The supervision over the fulfilment of the established conditions came closest to the current understanding of supervision. This part of the volunteers' work was based on a relationship with the family. Based on the records submitted from the volunteer's meetings with the family, a discussion was later held by the agents with the volunteers. If a volunteer made a mistake while working with the family, it was necessary to report it to an agent, with whom the mistake was subsequently discussed (Brackett, 1904). Records of errors and their corrections were kept. Based on these records it was possible to identify most frequent errors made by volunteers. These findings prompted the organization of further education for volunteers and paid employees (Gurteen, 1882). Further education of volunteers and paid employees was provided at lectures given by university professors (Smith, 1892). One of the forms of education in this period may also include regular workshops, where volunteers together with agents led discussions about their experiences of working with families. These workshops were referred to as “staff conferences” and were a model for the introduction of group supervision (Heston, 1929). The “philosophy” of well-kept records was also known from the work of Mary Richmond<sup>6</sup> (1899; 1922; 1965), who pointed out that the supervisor and the volunteer should draw their attention to the wider context of working with family<sup>7</sup> and include them in their records. According to Richmond, in analysing the records of work with families, it was also necessary to take into account the facts which were stated

<sup>6</sup> Mary Richmond already at that time dedicated a separate chapter to the importance of supervision in her publication *Social Diagnosis* (1965).

<sup>7</sup> In this sense, it is essential to perceive a family and its members as part of a certain system within which it operates in the whole scheme of its networks, to which it is also necessary to provide assistance (Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula, 2018).



repeatedly in the records. Identification and analysis of the information repeated during the work enabled definition of the relationship between cause and effect, which later facilitated the correct choice of intervention. This way of working clearly indicated that the administrative function of supervision was at the forefront, as the supervision process primarily focused on keeping records and rigorous monitoring of compliance with established procedures. On the other hand, supervision with such orientation corresponded by its nature to one of the current forms of supervision – organizational supervision<sup>8</sup>. The activities of COS agents were guided by the moral rules and principles that were developed and adopted by COS (Smith, 1892; Gardiner, 1989). Adherence to the established rules and principles was to guarantee the retention of volunteers in charitable organizations, as well as their readiness to work with families pursuant to the mission of the COS. The basic rules and principles included e.g., the principle of personal example; the principle of volunteer support; the principle of offering support; the principle of gradually increasing the work intensity and workload of the volunteer; the principle of sensitive consideration of needs when assigning work to a volunteer; the principle of motivation and inspiration of the volunteer in the assignment of work; the principle of the supervisor's responsibility to deepen the volunteer's understanding of appropriate and inappropriate forms of assistance; principle of family protection against damage, etc. (Smith, 1892; Gardiner, 1989). An important part of the agents' work was also the award of praise, which was not only a tool for rewarding the volunteer but was also considered an important tool for motivating the volunteer. This part of the agents' work was dominated by the educational (formative) function of supervision. The gradual transition from administrative, through development and finally supportive supervision could be revealed thanks to the COS's recommendation, which was intended to organize the work of the agent. While in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the group form of work with volunteers prevailed, from the 1890s the advantages of individual work of an agent with volunteers began to be pointed out. The need to individualize work with volunteers was emphasized mainly due to the awareness of the need for a diverse approach to working with volunteers. A strong argument was that just as working with families requires a different approach, when working with volunteers, the agent must realize that each volunteer is unique, has different needs in terms of administration, self-education or skills development when working with a family (Gardiner, 1989). The group work of the agent with volunteers was considered effective mainly in the process of education and work organization. Over time, the individual work of the agent with individual volunteers was preferred. The basis for its implementation were the records and reports from case work carried out by volunteers, which were then analysed together (Becker, 1956). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the agent was expected to have the skills to know the volunteer to such an extent that they would understand the volunteer's problems when working directly with families and to help the volunteer prepare for working with the family (Smith, 1892). These requirements for the agent's work with volunteers showed significant features of supportive supervision. Based on the analysis of the historical development of supervision, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a multi-level approach to supervision was developed in the environment of charitable organizations. At the lowest level of activity performed by charitable organizations, supervision was considered an educational and corrective tool. Agents also participated in regular meetings with their superiors, at which supervision took the form of methodological control. All COS employees were required to participate in supervision. From this perspective, the supervision that was carried out on the "ground" of charitable organizations may be compared to the organizational supervision rather than individual supervision, because despite the great attention paid to the guidance, development, and support of the supervisee, through these activities, the COS primarily pursued its needs and interests.

<sup>8</sup> Vaska, Brozmanová Gregorová and Vrtlová (2020) discussed the organizational supervision as a specific form of supervision in social work in their research monograph.





### **Penetrations of educational and charitable contexts and their influence on the implementation of supervision in the period of the beginnings of the social work professionalization**

The fact is that supervision in social work was understood at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a professional supervision over a novice worker (Robinson, 1936; 1949; Towle, 1945). Therefore, the most suitable environment for acquiring and developing the required knowledge and skills was considered to be in the organizations performing case social work. Employers of these organizations thus became supervisors of beginner social workers. Although, based on the above facts, it is possible to perceive a certain closeness of opinion with current supervision as presented by current authors in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, e.g., Havrdová, Hajný et al. (2008); Vaska (2014); Gabura (2018); Mátel, Schavel (2019) or foreign authors such as O'Donoghue (2003); Tsui (2005); Kadushin, Harkness (2014); Dan (2017) etc. It is not possible to equate their understanding of supervision with the understanding of supervision in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was officially discussed mainly as part of undergraduate training of social workers. The reason for the diversity of perceptions of supervision during this period is found primarily in the understanding of social work itself. As abroad, in the Czech and Slovak territories, the counselling and therapeutic paradigm dominated in the area of undergraduate training of social workers, which subsequently had an impact on the understanding of supervision. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the education of social workers focused on acquiring knowledge and skills that would be useful in solving the social problems associated with poverty. In practical work, an expert approach was preferred, which perceived the client as a social case, i.e., a person who caused their own problems and who does not have the skills needed to solve them. These characteristic features of the perception of social work clients and their problems were also reflected in the education of social workers. Regarding the development of education in social work, Kadushin and Harkness (2014) state that at a time when the activities of the COS became stable, it began to implement formal training programs, which presented a systematic education of paid agents. In order to educate employees working in charitable organizations, state and national conferences began to be held offering the possibility of exchanging experiences, knowledge and ideas between people who were employed in these organizations. The first National Conference of Charities and Correction was held in Chicago in 1879. Later in 1882, the first State Conference of Charities and Correction was organized in Wisconsin. Collections, which summarized important findings from the practice of workers working not only in charitable organizations, were an important material for education and training. These materials were gradually supported by the rapid development of periodicals, in which workers in this area described their concerns, as well as published texts, which were dedicated directly to employees of charitable organizations. During this period, the first texts were published, such as *Friendly Visiting Among the Poor* published by the General Secretary of the COS in Baltimore<sup>9</sup> or the *Handbook for Charity Workers* (1899). These were later followed by a text *The Practice of Charity* (1901) published by Edward Dewine and the General Secretary of the COS in New York City. However, between the publication of these texts, which were supposed to support the education and training of charitable workers, in 1898 a six-week educational training program for 27 students was offered in the COS environment in the state of New York. This training program is considered the world's first formal and professional training program for social workers and was the impetus for the creation of the world's first *New York School of Philanthropy*, which specialized in the systematic training of social workers (Brackett, 1904; Rabinowitz, 1987; Kadushin, 1992; Kadushin, Harkness, 2014). According to Tsui (2005), the school was established

<sup>9</sup> In this context, Kodymová (2018:25) states that "the Baltimore COS began to publish and disseminate a description of real work with real clients so that those interested in working in the field of philanthropy could analyze the practices of experienced colleagues and learn them. These publications were the first and only source of training and information at a time when philanthropy was more of a volunteer's activity than a job."



in 1904 and offered a one-year program aimed at preparing future social workers for field work. Gradually, the school was transformed into the first school of social work known as *Columbia University's School of Social Work in New York*, which still provides education to future social workers. In parallel with the development of education and training of paid agents, volunteers and later future social workers, training in supervision also developed. In 1911, the first course of supervision took place in the USA, i.e., before the opening of a comprehensive study program in the field of social work. The supervision course was held under the auspices of the *Charity Organization Department of the Russell Sage Foundation*. It was designed for COS staff and led by Mary Richmond (Kadushin, 1976; Munson, 1979; Munson, 2002; Tsui, 2005). The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was, in terms of charitable organizations, characterized by an increasing number of volunteers, which caused the inability of organizations to prepare them for field work. At the same time, the belief that future case workers need more thorough preparation and thus deeper knowledge in order to be able to work with families more effectively began to dominate in practice. These events led to the gradual transfer in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of the training and education of social workers working in charitable organizations and other social work institutions to the higher education environment (Munson, 2002; Tsui, 2005; 2008). Undergraduate training of social workers included the development of theoretical and practical knowledge. Knowledge at the level of theory was developed at universities and colleges and at the practical level was associated with supervision in facilities that performed case social work. Educational institutions of the time also agreed that the most suitable alternative for developing the skills needed to practice the profession was the experiential method, also known as field education (Hutchinson, 1935; Robinson, 1936; George, 1982; Caspi, Reid, 2002). Field education provided students with the opportunity to participate directly in solving real problems of people and through participation they developed the skills needed for their future performance of the profession. Moreover, thanks to direct work with individual cases, they gained valuable experience in areas that were not included in formal education. The division of student education between universities and organizations operating in practice was transferred to the understanding of supervision. Supervision in the academic environment had the character of supervising the compilation and content of the study program so that it met the criteria valid for the formation of education at the university level. On the other hand, the area of practical skills development was supervised by experienced charity staff or social workers who were acting as supervisors. Practical supervision focused on the administrative and partly on the supportive function of supervision (Brackett, 1904). Supervision provided by organizations operating in practice became a mandatory part of the educational process of social work students. The aim of supervising students was to properly master the process of helping, knowledge and understanding of the goals and values of the organization, and to master the correct way of implementing working methods and procedures that the organization applied in practice. Although universities and practicing organizations worked together to develop students' theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, they had differing views on the educational process. While organizations considered its involvement in practical work with families under the supervision of a supervisor to be a key aspect of educating social work students, universities saw field students' work only as an additional source of education (Tsui, 2005). Despite these differences of opinion, however, they pursued a common goal: to best prepare students for practice so that they would be able to provide effective assistance to families who suffered from various types of social problems as a result of poverty. The process of supervising practitioners and students was the same. Therefore, the first social work graduates adopted the same attitude to supervision as their supervisors – social workers in practice. In this context, Tsui (2005) emphasizes that these graduates, who later became supervisors themselves, perceived supervision (content and form) on the basis of their personal experience and therefore perceived the position of supervisor mainly through the role of tutor. However, the knowledge they acquired during their academic education and subsequently put into practice had an impact on the perception of supervision, which was



intended for practitioners holding the position of supervisor (Ko, 1987; Tsui, 2005; 2008). The above facts are proof that in 1920s and 1930s the administrative and corrective understanding of supervision was preferred in the social worker education, supported by practical supervisors, who were themselves prepared to hand over the COS mission to new volunteers, practice-proven work procedures focused primarily on administrative work. Therefore, when exercising supervision with students, they applied the same procedures as when working with volunteers. In the truth of this statement, Wilson and Ryland (1949) stated that supervision has two dimensions, administrative and educational, and ultimately aims to streamline supervisees, which in turn leads to improved services provided by the organization. Towle (1945) also agrees with such an understanding of supervision and describes it as an activity that has an administrative and educational goal. This period is characterized by the perception of supervision as a tool for forming a certain type of practitioner, and in practice the prevailing belief was that although education is an important component in performing this work, the moral qualities of a social worker are decisive (Richmond, 1897; Burns, 1958). The administrative and corrective understanding of supervision resulted from two main facts. On the one hand, it was the very perception of social work as a profession aimed at the correction and proper functioning of problem families (Smith, 1892; Richmond, 1899; Arlt, 1921). On the other hand, it was a perception of the supervision process. The supervisor was considered a practical teacher whose job was to teach the student how to become a social worker, and at the same time to help students understand why some strategies are effective and others are not. It is evident that the model of student supervision, which consisted of working directly with cases under the supervision of an experienced social worker, had several advantages. A clear advantage was the involvement of the student in practical social work, which allowed the development of skills of social work students, as well as the direct intervention of a supervisor – an experienced social worker directly in the intervention process, if the situation required it (Bogo, Vayda, 1987; Vayda, Bogo, 1991). The perception of student supervision as an educational process persisted in the following period. This is also indicated by the initial official definitions of supervision formulated in the conditions of social work. For example, Robinson (1936) in *Supervision in Social Case Work* characterizes supervision as an educational process in which a person with more experience, a supervisor, oversees the development of skills needed to perform case social work among less experienced (beginner) social workers. Due to the involvement of students in direct work with cases, supervision in this form also applied to social workers (practitioners). Although student supervision and supervision of practitioners showed some signs of similarity, it was implemented separately. Student supervision was an auxiliary tool designed to overcome the differences about the concept of social work (its forms, content, and methods), which was presented to students in the environment of universities and colleges and the social reality, i.e., what social work really is. It was not until the mid-1960s that the methodological, conceptual, and practical differences between student supervision<sup>10</sup> and employee supervision began to be analysed in the works of scientists and researchers (Bogo, Vayda, 1987). This period was a turning point in terms of a change in the understanding of supervision. Supervision began to be considered not only as part of the undergraduate training of social workers, but also as an integral part of direct work with clients (Perlman, 1969).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the historical facts summarized in the paper, it is possible to state that supervision in social work has undergone a complex development. The presented research findings indicate

<sup>10</sup> For more details on student supervision as part of the training of future social workers, see e.g., Ford and Jones (1987); Havrdová (2007); Truhlářová (2015); Nečasová (2018); Levická, Uhnáková (2019); Brnula, Vaska (2021).



that supervision in social work originated in the conditions of charitable organizations, because the first forms of supervision such as group, individual or organizational supervision began to develop as part of their activities (Heston, 1929; Becker, 1956). In the period of its formation, the supervision was typically perceived mainly through administrative and educational functions, which implies that several authors of historical texts agree on the dominance of administrative and corrective understanding of supervision in this period (Brackett, 1904; Robison, 1936; Towle, 1945; Wilson, Ryland, 1949). Such an understanding of supervision “reflected” the social perception of social work, which was presented as a profession aimed at correcting and restoring the smooth functioning of families in society (Smith, 1892; Richmond, 1899). As the need for systematic education and training of philanthropic workers began to emerge, as pointed out by Mary Richmond (Kodymová, 2018), supervision gradually became an integral part of the educational process of first philanthropic and later future social workers in the form of field education (Hutchinson, 1935; Robinson, 1936; George, 1982; Caspi, Reid, 2002). Since students worked directly in the field and were involved in client interventions, no distinction was made between student supervision and practitioner supervision (Robinson, 1936). It was not until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that supervision was further diversified and, as O'Donoghue (1998; 2003) points out, this process was largely influenced by tensions between organizations with a mission to provide social services in practice and social work as a profession. This argument is also supported by the fact that the development of supervision was somewhere between the interests of social workers in practice and the interests of managers of organizations, which also had an impact on the dominance of whichever function in a given period (Tsui, 1997; Kadushin, Harkness, 2014). In the context of practice, over time, supervision has developed into a semi-profession and currently has a great chance to become an independent profession, also because in several helping professions it is considered an integral part of the education and work of helping professionals.

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# Replacement of Religious Motives and Values by Secular Professionalism in Social Care: Example of Finland

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### Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** The article aims to illustrate the history of social care as transition from religious motives and values in social care to non-religious secularism. **THEORETICAL BASE:** The consideration is based on several historical studies/pieces of historical research regarding the position of religious ideas in social care in Finland. **METHODS:** Child welfare, the settlement movement, prison and probation services, and the care of disabled people are examined in terms of the history of ideas. **OUTCOMES:** The analysis showed that Christian values have had a significant influence on Finnish social care in the past, but do not play any important role in modern, research-based professionalism. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** The review helps to understand the development of social care as a professional activity as part of the overall modernization of society.

### Keywords

history of ideas of social care, professionalism, spiritual values, secularism

## INTRODUCTION

In social work the relationship between its Christian roots and modern secularization seems to be interesting and discussed. The relationship has been described as uneasy, ambivalent, and conflicted (Stewart, 2008; Vanderwoerd, 2011). Furthermore, the need for critical reflection of this relationship has been emphasised (Zahl, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2011). This offers an intriguing setting to study a different kind of relationship between secularization and Christianity in social work, the Finnish example. Modern Finnish society and its public policies are, first and foremost, based on secular rationality. This also applies essentially to social work and other social professions.

However, from a historical point of view, Finnish society among other Nordic countries is significantly shaped by Christianity. This article argues the transition of religious motives and values through four cases: child welfare, the settlement movement, prison and probation services, and care of disabled people. These four cases represent the area of social work that has had a significant role in the history of social care in Finland (see Toikko, 2005). Attention is paid especially to how religious motives and values are replaced by secular professionalism in social care. The article demonstrates through four cases what is characteristic to the transition of religious motives and values in social care from an historical viewpoint. This article interfaces loosely with the case study approach (see Yin, 2003) focusing on one country.

In this article, secularization is understood as a cultural transformation of society in which religious values, interests, and arguments are replaced by non-religious considerations. Secularization largely concerns the ideological and worldview foundation of the institutions in the modernization process. Using Finland as an example, this article aims to provide better cognition of the intellectual history of modern social care in Western countries, in the light of secularization.

The transition of social care activities from religious motives to secular practices is connected to the secularization in general. There are reasons for explaining the change with respect to theories of professionalization. From the point of view of history of ideas, it is a question of a pervasive paradigm shift connected with multi-faceted social and cultural transformations called modernization.

## METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this study instantiates the history of ideas of social care. The design and focus of the study are to describe and explain the changeover of the nature of care philosophy as manifesting itself in the Finnish context. Obviously, Finland is only an example of this trend





occurring widely in Western countries. Although each individual nation may have some country-specific characteristics therein, the procession has been something similar everywhere.

Focusing on the case of Finland, this study illustrates a piece of intellectual history of social care from religious to secular orientation. To date, the historical research of social care has consisted of mainly nation-specific analysis, and there is very little historical research from the point of view of international context, but recently globalization has generated interest in the international history of social welfare (Harrikari, Rauhala, 2019). This study intends to contribute to the global history by providing a country-specific example of a common subject.

The methodological design of the study embodies an idealistic understanding of history seeing history as an expression of human mind and action. The methodological design is not built on the aspiration to explain *why* social care transferred to secular ethos but *how* this happened with respect to consequences. The analysis does not intend to express a naturalistic picture of the transformation but provides information to understand the nature of the shift in terms of intellect substance.

Using four fields of social care, child welfare, settlement movement, prison and probation services, and care of disabled people, as examples, this article draws a description of the change of care ethos as a part of the intellectual history of social care in Finland. No primary data is used, but the narration is grounded on substantive literature.

It has been stated that the intellectual history processing the origins and development of concepts, should not be associated methodologically to social and cultural history (Grafton, 2006). However, the intellectual history necessarily integrates with social and cultural factors, even political interests that shape society. In this study, the intellectual history of social care is discussed in and of itself from the point of view of the process of secularization, which requires consider social and cultural circumstances. In fact, secularization is a social and cultural propensity.

As transfer of concepts plays a central role in all intellectual history, there are reasons to consider the move from the religious to secular rationale of welfare in light of conceptual issues (Willer, 2011). However, the history of ideas should not be simplified to the level of concepts, but it should be seen to encompass values, ideologies, beliefs, and other worldview-related aspects. The shift from the religious to secular paradigm of social welfare does not reduce to the history of concepts. Intending to understand the change of care philosophy in terms of intellectual history, it may be justifiable to draw attention to theories of professionalization. Apparently, professionalization of social welfare is closely connected with the intellectual advance of the field. Methodologically, this concerns the question how the tendency of professionalization relates to the ideological change as a cause and a consequence. The study thus comprehends professionalization as an integrated element of intellectual history of social care, potentially even a key element of understanding the nature of the ideological transformation.

## FROM RELIGIOUS ROOTS TO SECULAR PROFESSIONALISM

### The religiously coloured past

Before the Reformation in the 16th century, Finland was significantly influenced by Roman Catholic Christianity. This connected Finland culturally to Western Europe. Since the Reformation, Finnish society has been strongly shaped by Lutheran doctrines, which were officially embraced by the Swedish court. Politically, Finland was under Swedish rule until the Napoleon wars. From 1808 until independence in 1917, Finland was a part of the Russian empire, having the position of an autonomous Grand Duchy with many political freedoms. For example, Finnish legislation was still essentially based on Swedish traditions.

The Russian era did not separate Finland from Lutheran values. The Lutheran Church kept its position as a state church. In all respects, Finnish society was built firmly on the values of Lutheranism. The Lutheran Church was responsible for the duties of the municipalities until 1860, when the system of secular municipalities was fixed by law. The clergy played a public



executive role in the sense that they were local authorities. The system of secular municipalities was organised around the traditional division of local congregations, and the Lutheran Church played an important role in public life long after the establishment of this secular system.

Thus, Christian-Lutheran values established themselves strongly in the traditional way of living in Finland and its system of public affairs. Lutheran confession was not only a religious but also a political matter that has made a significant impact to the building of the welfare state (Markkola, 2015). Historically, public social help is deeply rooted in religious morals and values. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the early establishment of NGOs for social help was essentially motivated by Christian intentions. Charities often played a decisive role in the development of governmental social aid activities. From a cultural point of view, then, Finnish social work has a strong spiritual background.

In the proper sense of the word, the development of social work as a professional system began in Finland only in the mid-1940s. Since then, the theoretical basis of professional social work and social work education have developed systematically. However, a special step in the development of academic social work had already been taken in the development of professional education for social care workers for children in the Civic College (*Yhteiskunnallinen korkeakoulu*), established in 1925. In this context, the spiritual intentions in the development of child welfare and social work systems in terms of public professional activities were internal to the system, but not explicit.

Before the development of professional social work, some other socially oriented professions emerged in Finnish society. Training of kindergarten teachers took the first steps in the last decades of the 19th century, when Finland was still under Russian rule. Religious education had gained a lot of footing, both in the system of early education and the elementary school system, which was first developed in the mid-19th century. Religious motives were obvious in the early forms of social help and professional training activities, as in, for example, the four fields chosen as case studies in this article.

A significant expression of the public sympathy towards after religious aspirations in the newly independent state was the state's regulation in 1918 that placed the responsibility for initiating professional education for staff in children's homes on the National Mission of the Finnish Church (*Suomen Kirkon Sisälähetysseura*). This training was openly based on Christian values (Karpinen, 2006:105–106). Later on, the Lutheran Church maintained organisations/colleges in which workers were trained for professions in the social field. In the mid-1990s, the Deacon University of Applied Sciences (*Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulu*) was established especially for supplying ecclesiastical staff. In addition, there are also other colleges based on Christian values in which training for social professions takes place.

All in all, the development of educational and social systems was strongly shaped by spiritual motives and values, especially in terms of the Evangelical Lutheran faith, both before political independence and still between the World Wars. Following World War II, Finnish society has become increasingly secularised, and religious movements have given way to secular motives in educational and social activities. Social work is unambiguously seen as a secularly motivated profession within the public welfare system. Generally speaking, this tendency somehow fits the Lutheran way of thinking.

The Lutheran social doctrine has greatly influenced the assimilation of the Nordic welfare state model, according to which modern Finnish society has been ordered following World War II. Unlike Catholic social doctrine, Lutheran theology makes a radical distinction between earthly and spiritual spheres of life. According to the Lutheran doctrine, public authorities are primarily responsible for earthly affairs, the church for spiritual ones. This fits in well the Nordic welfare ideology, in which the role of the official organs, i.e., the state and municipalities (as earthly organisations), is strongly emphasised in organising adequate social benefits and services for citizens. Accordingly, affairs regarding welfare are seen to belong to the earthly life sphere, not to the spiritual one. This philosophy has had a powerful influence on the tendency toward secularisation in social care and social work.



### Religious motives in child welfare

Religiously motivated philanthropy, primarily inspired by Evangelic Lutheran Christianity, played an important role in the development of child protection in its early stages during the second half of the 19th century. Many kinds of childcare activities were generated by philanthropy-oriented circles (e.g., Pulma, 1987:86–87; Satka, 1994:267–271). These civil activities largely opened the way for governmental interests in taking responsibility for the development of an adequate child welfare system in society. Spiritual motives and values played an important role, not only in the charity work, but also in governmental activities for child protection.

Christian rationality was intermingled with interests that were more social and political in nature. Therefore, it is hard to say the extent to which Christianity influenced social reforms and movements. In the history of ideas regarding child welfare, there is a clear line of argumentation in which spiritual and moral values are closely connected with each other and combined with patriotic conservatism (Hämäläinen, 2007:253–255). However, it should be noted that the Christian faith was connected with argumentation that was generally more liberal, both socially and politically.

In many countries, early child protection activities were motivated by religious values with a very country-specific nature. For example, in Norway, child protection was strongly shaped by the Pietistic movement (Hagen, 2001:35–47), and in Ireland by Catholic nationalism (Skehill, 2004:135–140). In Finland, society was thoroughly influenced by the Lutheran Church at the end of the 19th century, when the early child welfare movement developed. The complexity of spiritual schools of thought did not have a significant influence on early social care. Reasons for the need for a child welfare system were given from a religious point of view, but due to the variety of political opinions at the time, it is rather difficult to draw a clear picture of the main points there. Generally, the motivation was strongly tied to those striving to promote the Christian faith in society as an educational endeavour and, at the same time, to the realisation of this faith. Such realisation came in the form of paying attention to children's need for protection by society and organising adequate forms of care for those in need. The preservation of civil morals and compliance with the principle of love for one's neighbour were also seen as foundational and were referred to as well during this time. In any event, spiritual values largely intermingled with humanistic values, which contributed to an array of different social and political ideas and interests.

As early as the 16th century, Finnish church legislation provided for the protection of children without adequate care, which linked the management of the issue of child protection to "Christian belief systems as it was in the spirit of the age." This laid the foundation for the Christian ideology to remain the determinant of legislative rule until the 20th century (Harrikari, 2019). As the legislation and state action subsequently secularized, statutory ways of addressing the issue of child protection moved away from the ethos of the Christian faith, values, and worldview. However, the line between faith-based and secular rule is not steep, although it represents decisively different perspectives. The renunciation of argumentation based on the Christian belief system manifested itself in linguistically different ways of expression in legal documents.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the Lutheran church, as well as several Christian organisations, began several kinds of social aid and professional training programs for social fields, as well as for child protection. Within these activities, the Christian faith was often emphasised as a basic value, the source of the spirit of the work, and even as a part of professional competence. There were some significant differences in views between revival movements and the ideas of the Enlightenment, especially in the 19th century. Both quarters contributed to the development of social care and protection for children, while the ideological tensions between them did not have any marked influence in early childcare and child protection activities (Hämäläinen, 2007:79–83). In practice, the conflicts merged under the umbrella of their common goal of promoting children's causes.

Immediately after the Finnish Civil War in 1918, the National Mission of the Finnish Church (*Suomen Kirkon Sisäläbetysseura*) was commissioned by the newly independent state to begin



training staff, qualified leaders and caregivers, for orphanages in a country ravaged by bloody war. The education took place, in principle, within the framework of the Christian faith in terms of studies connected closely to practical work supported by educational theoretical views mainly adopted (Karppinen, 2018). In keeping with the spirit of the times, the Christian mindset influenced not only the evolving field of child welfare but also more broadly in the various areas of early and gradually professionalizing social care work.

Key individuals among the pioneers of the child welfare movement in Finland included theologians and other confessional Christians. However, the ideological basis for child welfare cannot be reduced to only one doctrine. Instead, it is a mixture of different political interests, in terms of social and moral interests, economic values, education, culture and health policies, citizenship, and family. In the 1920s, which is called the golden decade of Finnish child welfare, child welfare underwent tremendous development in terms of theory and practice (Urponen, 1994). Child welfare took shape as a social system that consisted of both civil activities and activities of public authorities. Collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organisations was emphasised and developed. Morality, based on both Christian and human senses of duty, was used to appeal to citizens.

Still, in the 1920s, spiritual values were in plain view, especially in those interpretations in which the educational aspect of child welfare was emphasised. However, in the 1920s and 1930s, the pedagogical orientation was diminishing and largely eclipsed by political interests focused on society and health (Pulma, 1987:123–124). The enactment of the first Child Welfare Act in 1936 reinforced the position of official authority and bureaucracy in child welfare and strengthened socio-political and socio-scientific issues in different areas of social care (Semi, 1996:34–37). Due to this increasing professionalism, religious motives were pushed more and more into the background.

Historically, there are three main ideological elements in Finnish child welfare: religious, humanistic, and social scientific (Hämäläinen, 2007:468–469). Each of these elements is part of a complex whole, multifarious in content and quite unclear in its boundaries. Over the course of time, generally speaking, the religious element gradually faded, and professionalism, based on scientific ways of thinking and humanist-oriented ethics, has largely replaced religious motives and values. This occurred especially after World War II, and particularly since the 1960s, when the child welfare system was developed as a multi-disciplinary professional subsystem of the Finnish welfare state.

In any case, the secularization of the way of managing the issue of child protection and the distance from the Christian belief system was a change of mindset in the field related to a broader cultural change. The change can be described as a transition from a stratification of culture based on a Christian worldview to a secular stratification in child protection ideology including policy making (Hämäläinen, 2007), legislation (Harrikari, 2019) and development of professional activities (Satka, 1994). This ideological transformation reflects the secularization of the way of life in society in general.

As a modern professional system, child welfare is primarily based on scientific knowledge and argumentation. Already in the first decades of the 20th century, there were high aspirations for managing child welfare activities with a firm scientific basis, and this trend continued to strengthen in later decades. The first doctoral dissertations, before and after World War II, that focused on the organisation and content of child welfare and on child welfare as a social system were located in different scientific disciplines, such as ethnology, education, and social policy. Besides legislation, they also produced a conceptual framework and empirical understandings that promoted the development of the field, both theoretically and methodologically.

Especially in the 1970s, child welfare ideology became rooted deeply in welfare state ideology. In the 1980s, the argumentation based on jurisprudence gained an increasing foothold in child welfare policy, due to the reinforcement of the ideology of children's rights. Child welfare changed



from a civil activity to official measures that were fixed by law. Along with this secularisation, religious rationality forfeited its relevance both socially and politically, and was replaced by secular argumentation. Child welfare became increasingly integrated into the wide welfare system for which the government is primarily responsible.

This growing trend has continued through the present day. In the modern child welfare ideology, research-based argumentation plays an almost exclusive role, without any reference to spiritual values. Child welfare is an important special area of research in different disciplines, especially social work, education, and the science of law. Professional education and praxis are fundamentally founded upon a scientific basis.

### **The settlement movement as socially committed work**

In Finland and worldwide, the settlement movement and social work are closely related. In the field of social work, the settlement movement has been seen as a pioneer of community and neighbourhood work. The movement emerged in England at the end of the 19th century. Social awareness inspired university students and priests as new kinds of social problems generated by industrialisation and urbanisation emerged and demanded attention. Their enthusiasm led to the organisation of a social movement that involved socially committed work. They intervened in social questions like the division of social classes and poverty. The settlement houses and their activities were brought into the slum districts of the cities, as the idea was to *settle* there, where the poor people actually lived. By familiarising themselves with the living conditions of the poor, the settlement workers wanted to improve the material conditions of the neighbourhoods and transcend the social gap between the classes (Satka, 1994:286). This socially committed work was strongly motivated in early years of the movement by Christianity. One of the grounding figures in the settlement movement in the USA, Jane Addams (1860–1935), wrote that ethics must be realized through action and practical Christianity (Puurunen, 2019:94–96, 127). This meant that the interactions between the settlement workers and their neighbours in the wretched ghettos were characterised by a humanistic approach, altruism, and love for one's neighbour (see Addams, 1893). The Finnish settlement movement was part of the international settlement movement, but it had a strong national character attached to the Finnish Christian ideology.

The settlement movement came to Finland through different kinds of experiments at the turn of the century. The permanent settlement work was established by the Lutheran priest, Sigfrid Sirenus, and the clerical assembly at the end of 1910s. The first settlement house, Kalliola, was opened in a working-class neighbourhood in Helsinki in 1919. At first, the settlements were called 'Christian-social working centres' (*Kristillissosiaalinen työkeskus*) (Satka, 1994:286). In Finland, the settlements concentrated on relieving class differences after the 1918 Civil War and carrying on work focused on Christian purity. In the beginning, religious activities, such as worship services, Sunday schools, and Bible study groups, were part of settlement activities (Koskiluoma, 1932:112–119). In turn, the humanistic approach manifested itself through the idea that the settlement work's aim was to serve other people, to try to enforce equality and the value of every human being (Roivainen, 2001; 2002; Puurunen, Roivainen, 2011). Even though Christianity was a notable part of the settlement movement in its early stages, in Finnish discussion, this has been separated from the Christian social work done by churches and located instead in the field of NGOs. Settlement work represents a holistic and preventive approach to the field of social welfare services (Roivainen, 2001:12; Roivainen, 2002).

The combination of the settlement movement and religious motives and values is interesting. On one hand, the movement was started by priests and other "seriously religious persons" with strong Christian motives, but on the other, the work was done among the labour class, which traditionally regards religion with hostility in Finland (see Koskiluoma, 1932:130). In this light, the Christian base and humanistic approach was an appropriate and practical way to overcome the gap between different classes, as it was non-dogmatic, but its practitioners attempted to be inclusive and integrative in their methods (Puurunen, 2019:94–96).





Nowadays, the Finnish settlement movement recognises its ecumenical Christian foundations, but it is independent of any church. It still relies on basic human values having an important status as an actor among NGOs (Roivainen, 2001). It is well-known from its work among different local communities and neighbourhoods, where it offers social, cultural, and educational activities. Also, it has a significant role in working among marginalised people in society. Settlement work is connected to the contemporary social work discussion in terms of resources within local communities, and the discourses of communitarianism, social capital, and network society (Suomen Setlementtiliitto, nd; Roivainen, 2002). It has become an established part of the Finnish social service system as a non-governmental service provider.

The settlement movement in Finland was an active actor in church where it aimed to reform Christian-based social work among people, as well as in the society by enforcing the idea and activities of mediation between social classes. The discussion of the connection between the settlement movement and the church continued throughout decades in Finland, and at the same time Finnish society changed from a class society to a relatively equal welfare society. The Finnish settlement movement has been responding to the changes of Finnish society, and finally after the 1990's deep recession, the settlement movement has become an important part of mending the perished safety nets in society. (Uusi-Rauva, 2008:99–104; Peltola, 2010:227–232) This has brought to the settlements production of services, development of specialization and professionalism. At the same time, changes have gradually faded out the visible Christian vocabulary and activities.

### **Spirituality in prison and probation services**

In general, the orientation of the 'Christian-social movement' was to solve social problems through home mission work with families and disabled people, as well as with prisoners (Toikko, 2005:34). At the end of the 19th century, prison service was developing rapidly through 'Reform of Prison Service' in Finland, and modern prisons were built. The ideology of criminal sanctions was educational and included pastoral care, moral healing, and hard work as ideal treatments for offenders (see Lappi-Seppälä, 1982:126–30; Pajujoja, 1986:31–37). Religion had both instrumental and absolute value; on one hand, prison service tried to change prisoners' morale and behaviour, but on the other, religious education in prisons represented values and philosophies of life within a moral society. Christianity contributed to the reform of prison services: the basis of the legislation changed from stigma and corporal punishment to education and healing (Antikainen, 2004:37, 52).

Social work among offenders has its roots in spirituality and philanthropy. The Finnish Prisoners Association (*Suomen Wankeusyhdistys*) was founded in 1870. The orientation of the Association was to reduce recidivism through 'moral healing', which focused on the helping mission, and the association collaborated closely with the clergy (Toikko, 2005:91; Antikainen, 2004). Relatively early, the Finnish Prisoners Association achieved a 'semi-public' position status and was based on professional work (Satka, 1994:286–287). Later, it became the public Probation Association, which took part in sentencing. In the year 2001, it became Probation Service, but the backdrop of it work is still partly based on those early ideas of reducing recidivism.

Mathilda Wrede's work, which has aroused international interest, is one example of reforms in the prison system. She is considered as a reformer of Christian-based work with prisoners in Finland. The noblewoman came from an upper-class background and started visiting prisons in 1883. Her aim was to improve prisoners' lives. Her work has been seen as 'Christian social work'. She based her work on the early ideology of the evangelical Free Church and their evangelical work with prisoners, and she mainly worked alone. After working within the prison system, she became influential and attained a semi-official status, until political reasons forced her to lose ground in the prisons. Her work in prisons came to an end in 1912, when the prison administration reduced visitors' rights to meet with prisoners, but she continued to contribute to the development of correctional treatments in Finland (Antikainen, 2004; Toikko, 2005:87–88).



Mathilda Wrede's contribution to develop prison care contributes to how an individual vigilant citizen inspired by the Christian view has contributed to the development of social work and laid the foundation for the emergence of state action.

Although the roots of social work in prisons and with offenders are in Christianity, social work developed towards secular ideology. From the late 1920s the emphasis of prisons developed towards rehabilitation. This can be seen also as part of the social movements and development of social security in Nordic countries in terms of rapid professionalism, and e.g., hiring psychiatrists and psychologists, and later professional social workers (Nilsson, 2017:39–40). Even though pastoral care had a great deal of influence on prisoners, the focus was on individual rehabilitation and prisoners' ability to change their behaviour. Professional social work was an important actor in this process.

In work with offenders, what is left of its Christian origins? The idea of the potential for individual change was challenged in the reform of the prison service in the 1970s. A scientific critique of the ideology of (moral) treatment and rehabilitation was one part of the reform, and it has been argued that this critique partly compromised the rehabilitation thinking of prison services (Pajuoja, 1997:118–119). However, values of Christian-based work with offenders still partly affects the present orientation. The Criminal Sanctions Agency of Finland has defined goals, values, and principles of Prison and Probation Services, and the agency emphasises values of respect for human dignity and justness and believes in the potential for individual change and growth (Rikosseuraamusvirasto, 2020). These values and goals are also obvious grounds for social work with offenders (see Juhila, 2008:30–31; Suonio, 2014).

### **Christian social attitudes in the care of disabled people**

The lives of disabled people have been connected with many attitudinal, ethical, and social questions that are difficult to approach during different development phases of the Finnish community. The care of disabled people has generally been considered a public responsibility and, consequently, their circumstances have received special attention. While the moral development of the community has strengthened, the understanding of the causes of disability has come to be interpreted in ever more humane and ways. Up until 1865, parishes were mainly responsible for the care of disabled people. After that, primary responsibility was transferred to communities. It is perhaps, in part, the Christian concept of human being (Niemelä, 1993) and also Christian love for one's neighbour, along with Christian social ideology, that have been most deeply connected with the history of the care of disabled people. In the Christian concept of man, the spirituality within each human being is also emphasised. Christian charity care has been a central indicator of the Christian social ideology, which has been, for example, organised in the form of church social work, based on the German tradition. The purpose of the Christian-social ideology has been to help disabled people in the worst circumstances, and also to strengthen their spiritual lives so that their social problems will also be reduced (Toikko, 2005:32–34).

As a target group, disabled people were first recognised in statutes in 1852 and 1879 concerning the care of the poor and the needy, which, in turn, strengthened the status of disabled people in society. Disability was still stated as a common cause for the need to care for the poor (Piirainen, 1974). In addition to communities and parishes, the National Mission of the Finnish Church (*Suomen Kirkon Sisälähetysseura*) has had a central role as an educator and organiser in the care of the disabled. Voluntary charity work and the operation of organised disability work, which has grown over the decades, both demonstrate general charity and Christian love for one's neighbour. Voluntary aid has enabled people with disabilities to act on their own and through this movement, organisations representing disabled people have had a vital impact on developing social legislation concerning people with disabilities (Kansanaho, 1960; Jaakkola, 1994:146–147; Satka, 1994:271). The legislation concerning the care of the disabled has continued to develop along with other social changes.

Within the traditions of social work, there is also evidence of administrative function traditions, collective changes, and traditions of individual interactions in the implementation of the care of the



disabled in Finland. In addition to material contexts, the non-material context has received special emphasis. In social work, legislative management has been emphasised in accordance with the tradition of administrative actions. The aim of such legislation has been to protect the services of disabled people and, therefore, to protect their independent social participation. The tradition of collective change can be identified, for example, in the aim to influence inequality among human beings and unethical attitudes concerning disabled people, as well as in the desire to protect the social rights of disabled people. The tradition of individual interaction is emphasised especially in non-material social work. One example of this is social work based on Christian charity, which is characterised by two representative features: a) its spiritual attitude, which highlight equality in meetings between different people; and b) the aim to act in ways that encourage people's internal lives to be spiritually renovated, thereby strengthening their resources (Kansanaho, 1960; Toikko, 2005:92–94, 223).

Secularization is identifiable in the care for disabled people as it is clearly the responsibility of society's public service system. Public legislation has been developed to better meet the needs of people with disabilities. There have been public social issues and surveys of attitudinal and legislative grievances and shortcomings that raise public awareness. Secularization is also evident in the fact that society's responsibility for disability research has become increasingly clear (e.g., Vehmas, 2013). Research on disability care and the development of the knowledge base are an integral part of the development of secularization in the field, although they do not necessarily conflict with religious values.

However, the influence of Christian social attitudes has remained somewhat recognizable in work with people with disabilities. For example, the ethical instructions of social work assume beneficence, helping people, and reducing misery and suffering, but also change and development. The core of this ethical understanding is working towards a good life and understanding the difference between right and wrong. In social work with disabled people, not only are ethical understanding and human value emphasised, but so, too, is respect for individuality. Thus, workers must have special sensitivity and deference.

In conclusion, it can be assumed that central elements of the Christian social ideology have been included in the care of the disabled throughout its entire history. Legislation concerning the care of the disabled has continually developed, and the ethical consciousness regarding the status of disabled people in society has grown stronger. The Christian social ideology in this kind of social work has intertwined with the traditions of administrative activities and changes in the community, as well as those of individual interaction. The emphasis on Christian social ideology can still be recognised in the ethical instructions for this social work.

## DISCUSSION

The four examples show that historically Finnish social care is deeply rooted in the motivating force of Christian faith. However, the faith-related orientation did not exclude rational implementation based on scientific orientations. On the contrary, the religious motives were essentially associated with scientific aspirations already in the early stage of social care.

The social security and social care system of each country has taken shape as part of the overall development of society, influenced by different country-specific social, economic, cultural, and political factors. This is also the case in Finland. The special features of Finland's social, political and cultural history, such as the relatively large Swedish-speaking minority in the population or the neighbouring border with Russia, which represents a fundamentally different social order, have no historical connection with the secularization of social care. The social sector has been developed in Finland as a unified national system, in which the secularization of social work can generally be seen as a Western phenomenon that, despite some country-specific features, follows the same development trends that are evident in other Western countries.

There might be different ideological emphases between different country-specific theological directions of Christianity, but in general the similar tendency from faith-related motives towards



secular professionalism may concern all doctrines in the field of social care. In any case, this corresponds widely to the state of affairs of the Lutheran countries in particular, in which the faith has been doctrinally connected with rationality. In Lutheran Scandinavia, as well as other protestant countries, educated people such as medical doctors, nurses, schoolteachers, psychologists, and priests were key persons in organizing social care activities and developing adequate policies and methods from the outset. This concerned social care activities in general (e.g., Quarsell, 1991), as well as sub-fields of social care such as child welfare (e.g., Hagen, 2001) and special education (van Drenth, 2005). Due to this, the rational scientific professionalization continued, although the influence of religious motives declined along with the trajectory of secularization.

The Christian ethos of early social care in Finland was largely influenced by enlightened Christianity, where Christian belief was combined with the rational thinking of the Enlightenment. In addition to the ecclesiastical doctrine represented by the clergy, Pietist-inspired Christianity, which had a widespread influence in Finland in the 19th century, also had an impact on the ideological base on early social care. Gradually, the development of secularization reinforced the rational orientation based on the ideological heritage of the Enlightenment and correspondingly weakened influence based on the Christian faith.

In the process of secularization, the faith became increasingly a private matter. Concerning the ethos of social care, the public authority took up more and more responsibility for ownership. Consequently, the faith-related ethos stepped aside giving way to secular professionalization, legislation, and policies. Gradually, the religion-neutral professional perspective replaced the religious motivation. This paradigm shift concerned the ethos of the social care system and practices thoroughly along with general secularization of society.

With secularization, the way of speaking and the argumentation that openly refers to the Christian faith in the field of social care was replaced by the way of speaking based on scientific knowledge, both in education and work practices in the field. With secularization, the way of speaking and the argument that openly refers to the Christian faith in the social field was replaced by the way of speaking based on scientific knowledge in both education and work practices in the field. The connection between faith and scientific knowledge broke down and religious orientation was left behind or completely extinguished.

The secularization of the value base of social care was clearly visible, for example, in the area of professional ethics, where the explicitly Christian way of speaking of the professional ethical foundation of social care was replaced by a universal and worldview-neutral way of linguistic expression. As legislation evolved, the professional ethics of social care were increasingly built on secular ethical reasoning and argumentation. Although the argument based on Christian faith and values gave way to a worldview-neutral way of speaking, it can nevertheless be considered to remain implicit in secular legislation and professional ethics based on it. However, it was not just a discursive transformation in terms of linguistic secularization, but also of the secularization of the way of thinking and a shift from religious to non-religious perspective, which manifested itself in the renunciation of openly religious argumentation.

The effects of secularization on working methods and work culture in the social sector have hardly been studied. Instead, professionalization is identified as a key trend guiding the development of social work and care. It is evident that the research-based and scientifically based professionalism, which embodies a detachment from the religious value and motivation base, is explained by the secularization of the whole social form of life, in which one broke away from a Christian unified culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is quite a challenge to clarify the position of spiritual values in social care because what we mean by spiritual values is neither unambiguous nor simple. For example, in Finland, there are different kinds of Christian movements, such as the High Church, the Low Church, and the Free Church traditions, and many kinds of theological views concerning both spiritual and earthly matters.



Though, this case study showed that Christianity has played an important role in Finnish society in general and in social care in particular. It has been guiding social work with certain kinds of values and orientations, and has generated the different kinds of pioneer actors in the early stage of social service. In spite of many Christian movements, the Lutheran social doctrine influenced considerably the assimilation of the Nordic welfare state model in Finland.

The emphasis that differs from Catholic social doctrine has enabled an evidently more unproblematic relationship between religion and social work in Finland than what has been the situation, for example, in the Anglo-American tradition (see Stewart, 2009; Vanderwoerd, 2011). Affairs regarding welfare are seen to belong to the earthly life sphere, not to the spiritual one. This philosophy has had a powerful influence on the tendency toward secularisation in social care and social work. In addition, science-based argumentation was not viewed as an alternative or in opposition to faith-based argumentation, but rather both were regarded as important elements of social life. This was also entirely the case in the fields of early social care.

A relatively close collaboration between the governmental and non-governmental organisations has characterised the development of Finnish social care from the end of the 19th century until the present. In the early stages, non-governmental organisations, often motivated by spiritual values, broke new ground for many kinds of reform, forms of work, and innovations that eventually involved the governmental side. The secular orientation gained footing as the responsibility for functions was shifted to the government. Through four cases, it was demonstrated that a secular attitude with science-based argumentation gradually replaced the religious orientation in both social life and social care in Finland.

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# Professional Knowledge Reconsidered: Using History of Ideas to Tackle the Uncertainty of Action in Social Work

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** This article presents the history of ideas as a valuable perspective for social work science to advance the connectivity of the discipline's knowledge base and improve its use for practice. **THEORETICAL BASE:** Starting point are profession theoretical considerations about social work as a profession acting under uncertainty. This characteristic feature of the profession leads to particular demands on knowledge for reflective practice. **METHODS:** General knowledge forms such as theories, evidence, and tacit knowledge are assessed systematically for their potential to guide practice. An additional knowledge type denoted as history of ideas is introduced conceptually and discussed for its added value for social work's knowledge base. **OUTCOMES:** The use of existing knowledge is limited in guiding practice under uncertainty because it lacks an independent momentum for profession-oriented decision-making. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** The existing knowledge base needs a supplement. History of ideas is suggested to complement the existing knowledge forms. It relates other forms of knowledge to the professions' traditions and identity and enriches the existing knowledge base with an independent, profession-oriented perspective. As a conclusion, history of ideas is identified as a valuable research perspective for social work research.

## Keywords

working amid competing interests, history of ideas, professional social work, knowledge base, social work research

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## INTRODUCTION

Social work science should develop a sound, adequate and accessible knowledge base to inform action and decision-making in practice (Preis, 2013). Research activities in social work are on the rise (Sommer, Thiessen, 2018), but Sommerfeld identifies a “notorious distance of social work practice to its knowledge base” (Sommerfeld, 2016:39). Professionals seem to remain unsure about scientific knowledge’s potential to support their actions in ambiguous practice situations (Borrmann, Thiessen, 2016). Ambiguity and uncertainty are frequently associated with social work practice due to working amid competing interests, which hinders the reconciliation of conflicting demands. Against this background, Staub-Bernasconi (2007) claims a knowledge base that is problem-oriented. At the same time, it should allow space for reflection and context-sensitive actions to overcome professional hesitancy and incorporate the profession’s aims. Social work practitioners seem to have difficulties implementing evidence and transferring scientific knowledge to their daily practice (Van der Zwet et al., 2016; Grady et al., 2018). Against this background, there is a call for a “comprehensive, holistic, complex approach to modelling knowledge production in social work” (Trevithick, 2008; Gray, Schubert, 2013:7).

What hinders social workers from using the knowledge base developed by social work science? Surely, structural obstacles such as availability of evidence, limited time resources, and a high threshold to the content due to academic wording might be a plausible explanation. Practitioners also argue that most of the knowledge available is too abstract and does not fit the practice’s needs (Ghanem et al., 2021). This raises the question of how can research in social work succeed in delivering adequate knowledge supporting practitioners in the field?

In this paper, I advocate that a historical approach adds to a more comprehensive knowledge base for social work practice. To do so, I introduce the approach of history of ideas among other historical approaches in social science. After that, I explain social work as a profession under uncertainty and elaborate the benefits and lack of common knowledge forms for the demands on practitioners in such circumstances. I argue that history of ideas is a promising approach to complement the existing knowledge base to strengthen reflective practice in ambiguous situations. I conclude with the history of ideas as a relevant research perspective for providing viable knowledge to secure professional action in complex situations.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

Looking into the international context reveals diverse paths to historical research. Johansson (2021) compiles approaches that were developed in the United Kingdom (Skinner, Pocock, Burrow) the United States (Lovejoy, LaCapra) and the European context like France (Foucault, Derrida) and Germany (Meinecke, Koselleck). These approaches stem from diverse disciplinary contexts, but they follow a common aim. They strive to understand the past of concepts, ideas, and approaches to gain insights for the present and the future. Their perspective is generally applied in disciplines interested in social matters (Dilthey, 2006). Among those disciplines, social work has a particular close relation to practice and therefore a deep interest in the development of the profession and its practices. Historical perspectives are a classic branch of social work research (Lorenz, 2007; Engelke et al., 2009; Kuhlmann, 2013). Developing from poor relief to a triple-mandate profession took several changes in attitudes and pursuant practices. Over time, it came to changes in ideas, attitudes, and methods. But also enduring aspects that remain stable over time emerge. Identifying both the changes and the stabilities allows “a productive idea of [social work’s] theoretical and methodological roots, and of its historical role in society.” (Soydan, 2012:468) Against this background, social work benefits from historical approaches to define its identity and understand its professional domain: Anchoring in traditions helps to clarify the professional identity and its position in society. For this, social work needs a proper perspective on its history that delivers such knowledge.



### Intellectual history

In Germany, scholars like Hans Scherpner and Herman Nohl aimed to determine phenomena in welfare activities by applying a historically oriented humanities perspective. They aimed to understand the contextual and metaphysical prerequisites of welfare to gain a systematic understanding of the concept and its contexts (Scherpner, 1962; Nohl, 2002). Both scholars were influential actors in Germany's social-political landscape at the beginning of the twentieth century, the dawn of social work as a profession in Germany. Their conclusions impacted many welfare policies, political decision-making, and the daily practice of social workers at the time, up to today (Niemeyer et al., 1997). Their intellectual history work was widely received in the practice, but somewhat limited to a German-speaking audience.

Looking for other, more recent, and international historical approaches, one finds a diversity of perspectives and interests. For example, Dulmus and Sowers (2012) identified traces and effects of history on social work education, organizations, professional credentials, and ethics. Based on their reasoning, the authors dare a prognosis for social work practice in the new millennium - right to the motto of 'knowing your past allows planning for the future'. Diverse authors discuss the value of memorizing the profession's past for contemporary practice: Gitterman (2014) argues that the past holds the roots of social work's professional identity, which is the starting point of informed professional action. Hering (2010) denotes historical research's task as "ideally accurate determination of historical facts and their placement in contexts, correlations, and effects." (2010:363, author's translation). Despite different aims and approaches to implement a historical perspective, it is possible to identify characteristic features. Conceptualized as intellectual history, historical research aims to unveil the contexts in which ideas emerge. Beyond that, it is also about unveiling the effects contexts have on ideas.

Genealogy counts as a particularly critical perspective of intellectual history to understand current phenomena as a result of historical construction. Its particular aim is to question given assumptions by revealing the context of its origin. Foucault might be the best-known representative of this historical branch. His essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1977) was broadly received. It introduced critical scrutiny of the origin and development of knowledge to a broader audience. Such a critical stance on the genealogy of knowledge traces back to Rousseau and his critique of social institutions. His considerations about the self and power influenced Nietzsche and Foucault, emphasizing historical philosophy as a valuable tool to challenge modern morality (Saar, 2007). Genealogy represents a dialectic perspective on habits, knowledge, and ideas that are taken for granted because their origin is buried. It is barely possible to counter the existing situation in such an unconscious state, even when it leads to inequality. From a social work perspective, genealogy offers a beneficial method to implement the concern for social justice and the critical perspective of the profession. With its dialectic, genealogy has the potential to inform the political mandate of social work.

### History of ideas

Nevertheless, intellectual history is only one example of how historical interest contributes to social work research. Another prevailing concept for learning about the profession's past is the history of ideas. It is difficult to clearly distinguish the terms 'intellectual history' and 'history of ideas.' However, there are differences when it comes to consequences for the way of assessing historical phenomena. Gordon and James (2008) suggest intellectual history as a "discipline which looks at large-scale concepts as they appear and transform over the course of time." (no page number). It regards ideas as historically conditioned and with special regard to the context of their origin and development. Historians of ideas, in turn, follow the stance that enduring ideas are traceable everywhere, independent of the circumstances in which they appear<sup>2</sup>. The concept

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that this distinction is intentionally presented in a black-and-white manner to mark the main difference between the approaches. In reality, both approaches own a bit of the other, and the perceptions about context or durable ideas are not that absolute.





of history of ideas was introduced by Arthur O. Lovejoy who developed a system to research *unit-ideas*<sup>3</sup>. Such ideas represent stable notions that establish a pattern of meaning differing with regard to the historical context (Lovejoy, 1948). In social work, such stable ideas might be participation, empowerment, and social justice. They stem from beliefs implemented in daily life and transport meanings. These meanings manifest in patterns of behavior that can be studied to trace back the beliefs behind it (Lovejoy, 1948; Boas, 1969; Bevir, 1999; Parsons, 2007). Looking for stable aspects and how they were received during the decades creates a sense of tradition to refer to in professional decision-making. In that sense, the historic perspective contributes to identity-building and guiding practice. Searching for durable ideas might be associated with what Kuhn (1962) calls “normal science.” In contrast to “revolutionary science,” normal science denotes a linear progress in knowledge production that is limited by following its own rules. The resulting paradigm is long-serving and displays the scientific progress, but it might prove insufficient for current challenges. According to Kuhn, normal science lacks innovative potential and falls short when its paradigm meets a problem that the given rules cannot solve. Against that background, the history of ideas seems limited in its connectivity to practitioner’s dynamic and complex information needs. Then again, it delivers a solid standpoint to start from for integrating other forms of knowledge and adapt them to the demands of the situation and the professional mandate. The concept of the history of ideas has a long and successful tradition in Sweden: The academic reception was limited to the national context but the Swedish discipline of *idéhistoria* (translated as “history of ideas”) looks back on a long tradition of historical research, particularly on the history of science (Jansson, 2021). The Swedish social work scholar Haluk Soydan, academically socialized in this school of thought, developed a theoretical frame of reference to study the roots of social work. Here, he was particularly interested in the traditions of scientific thought and action in social work.

In his book “The history of ideas in social work” (1999), he presented a profound analytical framework for studying social work’s durable ideas. For this, he suggests research questions for historical social work research: “What are the traditions of thought and action in which we can find the roots of social work? (...) [W]hat are the traditions of thought and action in social work? What kind of delimitation problems are involved with other disciplines?” This list is not exhaustive, but it represents the significant perspective of the history of ideas. Besides questions with a profession-theoretical and factual focus, Soydan’s interest targets thought traditions, social work roots, and their distinctive value for the profession. Seeking a “typology of classical authors and agents of social action” (1993:205), Soydan identifies names and a stream of ideas in which the profession developed and that shaped modern thinking in social work. His approach to taking into account practical knowledge instead of only scrutinizing literature about research traditions adds a fresh and beneficial perspective on historical studies (Soydan, 1993; 1999). It supports the search for enduring ideas behind professional activities and allows to trace back and explain the sources of actions and patterns instead of merely focusing on their effect (Emmerij, 2005). His approach adds a new perspective on history of ideas: Usually, historical approaches convey insights “from theory to practice”. Soydan’s approach adds “from practice to theory” and thereby acknowledges the central position of practice in social work (Soydan, 2012; 1999).

<sup>3</sup> This concept was later criticised for risking dogmatic interpretation of ideas (Skinner, 1969; Diggins, 2006). To meet this valid concern and to ensure that durable ideas are not a vehicle to pass on unjust, flawed, or unsound ideas, the researcher needs to include a critical perspective on the discovered durable ideas. Ethical guidelines for research oblige work towards a critical evaluation of the identified durable ideas and demand a nuanced presentation of the findings (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, 2010).



## **SOCIAL WORK ACTING IN UNCERTAINTY**

To approach the aim to close ranks between practice and its knowledge base, I would like to take a short foray looking more closely at determinants characterizing the social work profession. Commissioned with a triple mandate (Sylvia Staub-Bernasconi, 2018), social work acts between demands of society, the individual, and its professional self. Correlating ways of action have to be negotiated in situ and here, the different stances might cancel each other out. Decision-making in practice becomes further complicated by changing conditions in the field, such as alternations among the persons involved, a change in acknowledgments, or a failure of agreed goals and measures. Against this background, social work can be understood as a profession acting under uncertainty and ambiguous circumstances.

### **Uncertainty as a characteristic feature of social work**

Böhle and Weihrich developed the notion of acting under uncertainty in the context of reconsidering action theories about life in modern times (2009). Modern times are associated with a digitalized and globalized world that brings far-reaching and quick changes. Beck (1982) refers to growing diversity, neoliberalism, and an increased struggle for resources as the gap between strata grows. In the wake of these developments, biographies become more and more differentiated and fragmented, bringing feelings of loneliness, uncertainty, ambiguity, and insecurity. Due to its concern about social problems and support for coping with everyday life, modernity particularly confronts social workers with this uncertainty and ambiguity. According to the core principles of social work, practitioners' methods for their interventions need to be context-sensitive and implemented collaboratively with the service users and other persons concerned. With the increasing complexity of the lifeworlds, the action becomes profoundly convoluted due to the demand for the dialogic search for solutions, unpredictable effects, and reception by the service users. This complexity increases the high demand to take responsibility and justify actions towards the professionals (Helsper, Tippelt, 2011). Social work adopted knowledge from diverse sources such as medicine, psychology, sociology, and other related disciplines in becoming a profession. Admitting that these bodies of knowledge helped enhance problem-solving and gain soundness, the content is not directly transferable to the field. It has to be adapted to meet the requirements of social work's collaboration mandate (Gitterman, 2014). Galuske's definition of methods in social work mirrors these considerations, subsuming diverse aspects to be considered by professionals when responding to social problems:

"Methods of social work target systematic, comprehensible and therefore verifiable support processes based on social pedagogic and social work-related concepts that have to be reflected and reviewed to what extent they are subject and context-oriented and how far they meet the demands of the working field, institutional, and situational requirements as well as satisfying the involved parties." (Galuske, 2013:35)

### **Methods between technological deficit and structural openness**

Although methods represent a planned and theoretically underpinned move towards action, they are not fully calculable. Understanding social work methods as lifeworld-oriented and collaborative interventions limits the possibility of foreseeing or controlling the situation. It becomes clear that social work methods can never be routinized or standardized procedures that can be allocated directly to a specific problem. Of course, this does not mean that everything in social work action is relative and negotiable. However, it is part of the expert's role to acknowledge the core principles of collaborative, dialogic, and empowering conduct that demands careful attention to the context of an intervention. This part of the expert position brings a particular amount of uncertainty in doing social work. It exceeds the practitioners' control, exposing them to the field situation's logic and structure. Luhmann and Schorr (1982) frame this typical feature of social



work as the “technological deficit” of professional activities in social work and pedagogy. Thiersch conceptualizes “structured openness” (2012) as a significant demand on professional conduct. He states that not the method’s features should shape the intervention, but that the identified problem, in its context and lifeworld-relatedness, must be the guiding aspects. His stance identifies social work methods as a “meeting point between recognition of the problem, consequences for action and definitions of aims of the intervention.” (Thiersch, 1977:124, author’s translation). Luhmann and Schorr’s formulation of ‘lacking’ a technologic tool presents social work as a deficient enterprise – quite different from Thiersch’s approach framing this ‘lack’ as a characteristic feature of social work, defining the innate starting point for professional action. Against this background, uncertainty and openness are not understood as weaknesses or issues to overcome but a distinctive notion of social work and defining its professional action. The concept of structural openness should not be confused with acting intuitively. On the contrary, Galuske (2013) picks the concept up and emphasizes that scientific knowledge in evidence and theory are vital elements to identify a problem, choose the appropriate method but that its adequate implementation with regard to the given situation needs to be considered.

### **Transferring abstract knowledge to concrete practice**

Scientific knowledge cannot be transferred to the field one to one but must be transformed by the practitioners to fit the context and allow adequate handling. Social workers need to be experts for everyday life and collaborative problem-solving. In such “confusing” (Schön, 1984:42) and messy contexts, the practitioners find themselves down to the grounds of reality. Against this background, Effinger (2021) states that social workers need strategies that allow interventions appropriate to the current situation and the context in which they act. From the professionals’ point of view, one of the main reasons for this gap is that their encounters are diverse and barely predictable. They usually do not know much about the persons entering the office, neither their background, moods, experiences, or motives. However, it appears that the conditions of uncertainty identified as a constitutive feature of social work practice hinder reflective action – but do they not, above all, claim for it? The latter considerations framing social work as a profession acting in uncertainty suggest a practice concept defined as responsive, self-aware, ethical and accountable action related to doing and knowing in a reflective and context-sensitive way. For constructive handling of such uncertainty, practitioners need sufficient knowledge to bridge the gap between professional demands and situational ambiguity to allow self-competence in uncertainty. They require an interpretive understanding of knowledge instead of a cookbook mentality based on knowledge consisting of generalized means-ends-relations (Smith, 2020). This issue mirrors the gap between practice and its knowledge base in the practitioners’ daily practice experience.

### **KNOWLEDGE AND REFLECTION AS MEANS FOR APPROACHING UNCERTAINTY**

Against the background of the previous thoughts, professionals need tools to face uncertainty. Such a tool might be a consistent and systematically achieved body of knowledge that builds the foundation of professional conduct. The demand for a theory-based and scientifically generated body of knowledge and having a high degree of control over the working conditions are standard criteria to judge the professional character of any occupation striving to be recognized as a profession (Flexner, 1915; Carr-Saunders, Wilson, 1933; Greenwood, 1957; 1966). Oevermann (1996) criticises the orientation on specialist knowledge and the defining power as the foundation of professions. He understands professional practice from an interactional point of view. In this sense, acting professionally means a reflective approach to strengthening the autonomy potentials of individuals concerning their daily life (Oevermann, 1983). The ability to systematically approach lifeworld situations and act context-sensitively represents a turning point in discussing professionalism in social work (Olk, 1996). Following Parsons (1939; 1968; 1978) and Goode



(1969), the judgment criterion for professions is its societal function, emphasizing the contribution of occupation for the common good. System-theoretical approaches (Luhmann, 1977; broadly received and developed in the German-speaking area by Stichweh, 1994; 1996; Kurtz, 1997; 2002) take a similar stance, but focused on the function for sub-systems. Another contradicting perspective on professionalism are power-sensitive approaches (Larson, 1977; Freidson, 1986; 2001). The emphasis on exclusive knowledge and its associated power are rejected as appropriate assessment criteria for social work's professional status. Although a sound knowledge base remains a crucial demand, the professional status of social work should rely on alternative aspects. Instead of relying on an expert position, the logic of action and its effect should be considered the main judgment criteria. It is not 'knowing best and solving problems' but knowing how to support others in knowing best and solving problems in the given context that makes social work professional. Following this notion, applying knowledge demands the ability to adapt it to situational demands. Professionals should be sure about applying knowledge in ambiguous situations - not only to overcome social work's reputation as a "semi profession" (Etzioni, 1969; Toren, 1972) but to ensure professional conduct adequate to the aims of social work.

A frequently recommended measure to reduce or even overcome insecurity in connecting situational demands and abstract orientation frameworks for implementing knowledge is reflection (Ferguson, 2018). Reflection counts as the primary method to follow the demand for good practice, knowledge transformation, and emancipatory practice. Simultaneously, reflection might not be an easy task in uncertain circumstances. Karvinen-Niinikoski (2009) debates the promises and pressures of critical reflection and concludes that it is prone to trap professionals in double-bind situations between situational and professional demands. Nevertheless, what is reflection, and what does it need to reflect?

### **Reflection as means and ends of professional practice**

Reflection in professional contexts is widely associated with Donald Schön's concept of the reflective practitioner (1984). With his approach on reflection, Schön goes beyond the predominant priority on technical knowledge for pondering action in the field and questions it as insufficient for the complexities of practice demands. His reflection approach is the idea of how to make use of technical knowledge to support action in the "swampy lowlands" of practice, where "problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution." (Schön, 1992:54). Professional action needs to exceed technical rules and include reflective elements and the capacity to act and think in context to suffice a profession's demands under uncertainty (Ferguson, 2018). Later interpretations of Schön's approach combine the need to incorporate scientific knowledge in the first place, considered with confidence, and implemented context-sensitively (Sommerfeld, 2016; Fagerberg et al., 2020; Smith, 2020). Reflection needs an accessible and feasible knowledge background.

Furthermore, for making a practical impact, reflection needs a touchstone for assessing contents. If there is no reference point, e.g., presented by professional aims, identity, or ethos, knowledge remains arbitrary (Gray, Schubert, 2013; Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). This issue leads to the question of what knowledge might be appropriate as such a reference point that can inform a professional identity.

### **What scientific knowledge base for substantiating action under uncertainty is currently available?**

The assumption that professions depend on their specific knowledge base is particularly correct for social work as a profession of uncertainty. Coping with the clients' lifeworlds' complexity and fluidity requires guidance from a reliable source. Dewe, Ferchhoff and Radtke reconstructed epistemological references of pedagogues denoting the underlying knowledge and patterns of professional action in the educational field (1992:87). They found a composite knowledge pool



consisting of scientifically generated facts and professional knowledge in working experience and vocation-related content. They also identified tacit knowledge underpinning actions in the field. Their findings enqueue to other studies focusing on the use and implementation of knowledge in social professions identifying different kinds of knowledge to inform practice and the vital role of tacit dimensions among them (Rosen et al., 1995; Rosen, 1996; Ghanem et al., 2018; Brielmaier, 2020). Against the background of previous studies, social work's knowledge base consists of three significant shares: theory representing scientifically developed frameworks, evidence representing scientifically captured facts, and tacit knowledge representing an elusive reference point for action. The first two knowledge forms' characteristics are their reliability ensured by their systematic nature and their constant testing and expansion by the scientific community. With that in mind, such knowledge types are of high value for professional action and should be accessible and easy at hand when needed.

### **Theory as the backbone of action**

Theories offer objective guidance ontologically or epistemologically “about human development and behaviour, social systems and social problems to analyze complex situations and to promote individual as well as social change” (Engelke et al., 2009:13). Amongst that, ontological theories inform about the action's object, providing the necessary knowledge to understand and explain a problem in its characteristics, relations, and casualties. These are mainly developed by thoughtful reasoning on an abstract level and culminate in normative guidelines for professional action (Aghamiri et al., 2018). Theories flow into action and inspire decisions about methods and their implementation. Like a backbone of the implementation process, theory is understood as the attitude behind any implementation stage of action, serving as cornerstones, orientation framework, explanation, or differentiating aspect during the decision-making process and its resulting action. Professional social work uses theories about human development, human behaviour, and social systems to analyse complex situations and create interventions. Many books for teaching and practice display, explain, and discuss theories relevant to social work and how they are helpful for practice<sup>4</sup>. The structure and focus of presenting theories and connecting them to social work differ, but the basic idea here is to bring relevant theories to the attention of social work to inform its practice. If theory informs every step from thinking to acting, it appears to reduce uncertainty for professionals. However, it remains with the practitioners and their ability to connect to their knowledge according to the situation they find themselves in. Although the backbone is always there, there might be limitations in its sustaining function for practice. In addition to the theoretical backbone needs another, more practical input to inform professional action and reduce uncertainty: empirical evidence.

### **Evidence-based practice as a tangible and rigorous share of social work's knowledge base**

The benefits and limitations of evidence-based practice (EBP) in social work are intensely debated, including diverse perspectives on how it should be applied, what it means, and what role it should play in the profession (Orcutt, 1989; Thyer, Kazi, 2003; Gambrill, 2006; 2018; Ghanem et al., 2018). Despite the many interpretations of what EBP is, we find essential common elements represented in any of these drafts. These common elements trace back to the classic text of Sackett et al. (1996). Even though their assertions target the medical field, the concept advanced to a widely accepted definition of EBP in general. Sackett et al. refer to it as “conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients. The practice of evidence-based medicine means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research.” (Sackett, 1996:71) Individual clinical expertise denotes the knowledge acquired through working experience and practice underpinning

<sup>4</sup> To name only a few examples: Payne (2020), Turner (2011), May (2008), and Lambers (2018).





the competence and decision-making of individual professionals. Practitioners have to assess and evaluate evidence for their genealogy and their potential in the respective field. Transferring this medical model into social work is extensively debated. Gray, Plath and Webb (2009) take a critical stance to the approach by scrutinizing the main concepts and their connectivity to social work, constituting a severe gap between the models and the real-life contexts of social work. There, empiricism is not the only way of knowing. Uncertainty cannot be covered entirely by empirical knowledge. An example of this issue is the standard model for EBP advocated by Gambrill (2008). She states a five-step process for using evidence in practice. These steps comprise tasks related to gathering evidence, implementing, and evaluating it. The evaluation should target the critical appraisal of its validity and its appropriateness for the situation at hand, its transfer, and if the intervention was successful. However, getting research into practice is not a linear process.

To transfer evidence into practice, expertise and tacit elements come into the game. This procedure also links EBP to uncertainty. The exact reasons were mentioned before in the discussion about theory as the backbone of professional action: A purist approach to evidence does not meet the demands of social work practice (Webb, 2001; Gray et al., 2009). EBP alone seems shorthanded to reduce the uncertainties of social work practice, complexities, and related demands of complex practice situations when used as a plain “what works” perspective (Witkin, Harrison 2001; Biesta, 2007; Witkin, 2011). Accordingly, we find the same deficit as we identified with theory before: EBP offers a great deal of helpful information and can maintain good practice. However, it still needs to be complemented with other contents to reduce uncertainty in decision-making and act in ambiguous and complex practice situations when confronted with social work problems (Rosen, 2003; Mullen, 2016; Smith, 2020).

### **Tacit knowledge - the catalyst of a professional knowledge base?**

In debates about professional knowledge, tacit intelligence represents the opposite pole of the conscious, tangible, and nameable knowledge considered professional. Therefore, it is associated with artistry and subjective experience and barely accessible for reasoning and questioning. Its contribution to a professional knowledge base is contested as it contradicts the basic understanding of rigorous expert knowledge, based and developed by scientific inquiry (Imre, 1985; Collins, 2010).

Nonetheless, research findings corroborate its role in action construction, not only in everyday life but also in professional contexts, and consequently deserves to be acknowledged. As previously mentioned, the tacit elements’ role can be comprehended as a catalyst between situational demands on the one side and the available knowledge on the other. While practitioners are aware of context and clear about specific actions, they cannot articulate their actions’ underlying tacit principles or assumptions. In other words, the guiding aspects of the journey from theory to practice often remain hidden and implicit (Hébert, 2015; Remy, 2020). Here we can see the connection to Schön’s concept of “tacit-knowledge-in action” (1984:49), which explains the phenomenon that a great deal of what professionals “involves knowing more than we can say and they struggle to find the language to describe what they do” (Ferguson, 2018:419). This ‘speechlessness’ hinders practitioners from bringing tacit shares in their actions to reflection or critical discussion. Lacking words and concepts to explicate elusive stakes in the construction of action associates practitioners’ actions with artistry (Schön, 1992:51), which might leave practitioners with an awkward feeling of conducting half-baked professionalism. Furthermore, its hidden character is not supporting reflection as a tool to maintain professional action (Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2009).

### **The missing link between knowledge and action in social work**

I argued earlier that professional conduct could be ensured by reflection. However, such reflection depends on profound knowledge and an independent reference point to evaluate the knowledge. Only then it helps to find ways to transfer it to the situation. The previous elaborations about



knowledge and reflection to maintain professional conduct showed that none of the commonly considered knowledge forms delivers a sufficient potential to serve as such a reference point by itself. Indeed, it helps to use them in combination, but some uncertainty remains if an independent, profession-oriented point of reference is missing. This situation indicates why professionals might be reluctant to use scientific knowledge as the foundation of their actions and decision-making: If the knowledge is too abstract and lacks connection to the aims of social work practice, professionals might be overwhelmed transforming it to fair use. As a result, high hopes among practitioners for finding guidance and applying best practices often are disappointed because technical or abstract approaches prove to be an insufficient knowledge base for social work practice (Preis, 2013:180). In these cases, according to Smith (2020), theory or evidence do not abolish feelings of uncertainty among practitioners. They might even increase.

It seems that reflection needs different knowledge forms, each with its informative momentum adding to the knowledge base. Nevertheless, each knowledge type also has its omissions. Layering theory, evidence, and tacit knowledge already proved to cover much of the needed information to tackle decision-making under uncertain conditions. Theoretical knowledge offers guidance, technical knowledge offers procedures, and tacit knowledge catalyses its realization. Due to the need to transform abstract and technical knowledge and the catalyst's (tacit knowledge) elusive character in that quest, some uncertainty still remains for the professional. To overcome this uncertainty, the practitioners need an independent reference point detached from each knowledge type. When discussing each knowledge type's limitations to tackle uncertainty, it became apparent that this link between knowledge and action is missing. In other words, the cause for the remaining uncertainty is the missing, profession-oriented cornerstone to judge information and decide how to use it in practice. It seems worth searching for another knowledge share that integrates the previous intelligence types under the profession's aims and brings them to full blossom in practice.

### **CAN THE HISTORY OF IDEAS FILL THE GAP?**

As introduced earlier, the branch of historical research denoted as "history of ideas" subsumes a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach on historical research targeting the ideological genealogy of the social work. With this perspective, it allows a clearer picture of the profession's identity (Engelke et al., 2009). As the previously discussed forms of knowledge cannot conclusively inform the demand of structural openness in social work activities, the profession's history might offer a map to guide the application of specialist knowledge. The historical perspective, and the history of ideas, in particular, offer a framework obligated to the profession's traditions that allow reflecting and evaluating knowledge for its implementation. The lens of the profession's history of ideas identifies the fit and adaption of abstract content to real-life problems. History of ideas displays approaches and aims concerning problems that have been around in the past and still challenge service users and practitioners today. With its emphasis on durable notions, the history of ideas is at risk of being misunderstood as a normative or normalising perspective. Therefore, it is inevitable to present findings from the history of ideas as suggestion or "reflective foil" (Aghamiri et al., 2018). It does not present best practices but a point of reference for the practitioners' reflection. Researchers are recommended to take great care for the critical examination of the findings concerning their emergence and genealogy to ensure awareness of the complexities and assumptions carried forward in enduring ideas (Foucault, 1977).

If the presentation of the findings is accompanied by a critical appraisal of their context and influences, history of ideas offers a feasible frame of reference to contextualize and interpret empirical knowledge for implementation. According to Kuhlmann (2013), the orientation in history is critical for context-sensitive action: Empirical and theoretical knowledge must be contextualized carefully with the profession's position and tradition to avoid experimental conduct or harm to social work's core aims.



### **Creating a professional identity**

The idea behind the history of ideas is that concentrating on the past helps build a solid foundation to reflect the current situation and corroborate the profession's identity (O'Neill, 1999; Kuhlmann, 2013). Identity is defined here as the profession's inner logic manifesting in convictions, role considerations, original mandate, and a unique methodology that endured over time, representing the spirit in which practice unfolds. The awareness of social work's enduring principles extracted from an inherited body of knowledge is essential to responsible practice. Being an independent cornerstone for reflection beyond effectiveness considerations, public or individual mandates, and personal convictions of the professional prevent getting lost in contradicting demands of theory and practice or being overwhelmed with decision-making under uncertainty.

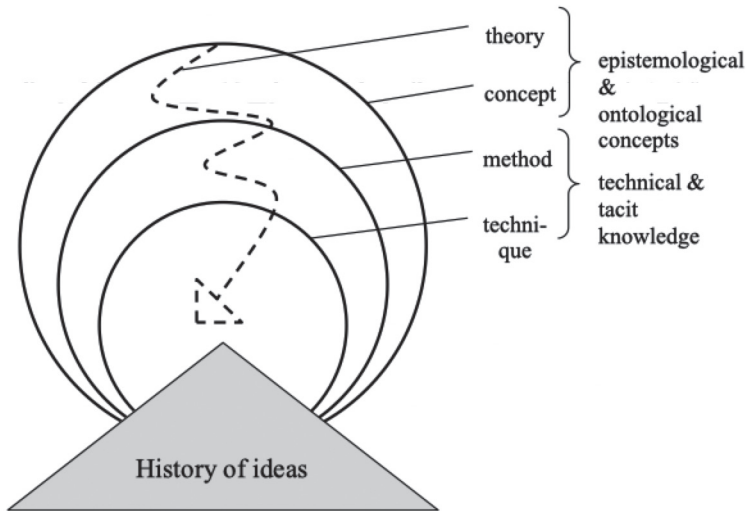
O'Neill frames the professional memory's awareness and the resulting knowledge about professional identity as an "essential precondition for critical thought" (1999:17) in social work. Gitterman (2014) referred to contemporary social work as the outcome of historical trends and coined by enduring aspects in the profession. Of course, social work practice forms in the given context of the client's lifeworld, the current trends in society, environmental pressures, and political demands. However, the enduring features represent a definite reference point in the otherwise changing and uncertain conditions of practice. Practitioners depend on a sound understanding of their professional identity. Accordingly, they need to learn about the profession's historical roots, without which they lack the orientation for decision-making and acting under uncertainty. Lorenz gives an account of the benefit of historical research to the profession: "In taking a position on our history, we are laying the foundations for a clarification of our methodological frameworks in contemporary social work which show a striking correspondence to the end-of-history phenomenon in society. This will underline that we cannot withdraw into a point of view outside history to find universal, unchanging criteria from which to decide on the validity of methods." (2007:600). Then practitioners might not only ask, "What intervention is the most efficient to meet this problem?" but rather, "What intervention fits the problem and the professional aim to act in the spirit of the profession?"

### **History of ideas as "base" or "grammar" of professional action**

Another benefit emerging from the history of ideas is its potential to offer concepts and terminology to identify and express tacit knowledge shares. Having words to express ideas creates awareness. That is the prerequisite to give reasons for decisions and actions or even think about the 'how and why' in the first place. To understand the practice, the history of ideas aims to sort out its ideological development, branches of thought, and ideological roots. Thereby, it identifies diverse traditions, theories, and practices to explain its genealogy and make its characteristic features visible to grasp it and talk about it. That raises consciousness about the identity, self-understanding, aims, and typical and distinctive attitudes of the profession. Applying the history of ideas to current practices means searching for traces of traditions, rooting current action in its ideological past, and finding words to express what has been done and why (Hämäläinen, 2012). Figure 1 depicts the influence of the history of ideas on the knowledge base of social work.



Figure 1: The role of history of ideas in the trias



Source: Based on Geissler, Hege, 1999:22 ff; Galuske, 2013:32

As shown in Figure 1, such awareness of the historical roots and relevant theories in the field helps to understand actions and connect them to the profession's roots. Other knowledge shares can be reflected against social work's enduring ideas and traditions. Enduring ideas and traditions need to be challenged for their timeliness, too. Only because they are considered classic, they should not be taken for granted. Considering a genealogic perspective, as suggested by Foucault, together with the history of ideas reveals overcome or unjust positions by questioning their origin and development.

Becoming aware of social work practice's historical and cultural roots heaves them out of their tacit embeddedness in professional routines. Here, the history of ideas goes beyond studying what previous social workers did, and how, and somewhat, which spirit and conceptual frameworks influenced practice over time, becoming part of the profession's identity. In that sense, the history of ideas in particular, has unique access to professional identity by studying and reconstructing its roots and the traditions evolving.

Against this background, we might understand the results of studying the history of ideas as developing a sort of "grammar" (Bevir, 2000:297), representing overarching concepts with a guiding dimension. Alternatively, we might understand them as stable features clotted to "outlasting concepts" (Nohl, 2002:151, author's translation), defining the profession's specific aims and values. However, both lesarts would conclude that the knowledge generated by the history of ideas functions like a cornerstone on which each decision can be tested and argued against the profession's basics. Against this background and particularly in the way Soydan (1999) suggested its implementation, the history of ideas is an independent research perspective on roots, traditions, and durable philosophical aspects of the social work profession. Complemented by a critical perspective on possible flaws of enduring ideas and presented as a propositional cornerstone for the professional evaluation of knowledge, history of ideas seems like a valuable complementing perspective for practice research designs. The outcomes have the potential to reduce the gap between professionals and their knowledge base. It substantiates social work's triple mandate by offering an independent and profession-oriented perspective for transferring knowledge into practice.



Examples for research adapting the history of ideas mirror the aim for connecting the current to continuities from the past. Lorenz (2007) focused on the establishment of social work as a profession. He identified durable ideas that marked three waves of modernization in its methodology: Firstly, the transition from voluntary to systematic work starting from Richmond's *Social Diagnosis*. Secondly, finding an *international perspective* on social work and social problems. Thirdly, efforts to overcome the *crisis of the welfare state*. Each wave was initiated by a new impulse that was afterwards indispensable in the profession. Taube (2021) scrutinized practices of intensive pedagogy with hard-to-reach youngsters in Germany. The findings indicated patterns of locating the intervention in closed settings with a high experiential potential and a strong power position of the adult and a high dependency of the youngster in the setting were patterns identified in the pedagogic interventions. This result raises the question whether the patterns represent a pedagogic enterprise or a restrictive or even punitive measure. Looking into the history of ideas matched these patterns to enduring ideas in pedagogic theories. The identified patterns relate to the notion of the *pedagogic province*, tracing back to Rousseau and picked up and developed by social pedagogy, reform pedagogy and today's trauma pedagogy (Nohl, 1926; 1965; Böhnisch, 1998; Gahleitner, 2017). These issues appear in pedagogic theories since Rousseau's *Emile* (1963) and left traces in pedagogic approaches ever since: A closer look into the history of ideas behind the pedagogic province reveals a critical discussion about the use of power and balancing dependency and empowerment in the history of pedagogy. It identifies the ongoing challenge of creating and confronting learning situations, and particularly balancing power and relationship. In this example, history of ideas offered an assessment framework about the character of the identified patterns and allowed a critical examination of the findings.

## CONCLUSION

Uncertainty counts as a characteristic of the social work profession due to the disarray of modern times and is rooted in its very own core principles of dialogic, lifeworld-oriented, and collaborative action together with the service users. These principles apply to understanding social problems as context-related phenomena that need to face the situation and its given features. Against this background, Lorenz defines the practitioners' situation by one pivotal aspect: "disorientation" (2007:597). It is not the lack of advice and knowledge causing that loss of orientation. The missing link between the knowledge and the situational demands in social work leaves professionals behind, bewildered and clueless. As Lorenz puts it: "We are set adrift in a sea of possibilities, without a sense of direction, not knowing where we came from or where we want to be going." (2007:597). Furthermore, the human image of social work demands joint troubleshooting and forbids understanding the social worker's role as a solution-machine. In this regard, acting and decision-making cannot follow rule books or recipes on handling specific problems. Such understanding of professional practice falls short and ignores the demands of professional social work conduct. As elaborated in this article, evidence and guidebooks alone cannot offer a sufficient knowledge base for becoming a reflective practitioner and inform decisions of what to do and how to do it in collaborative and lifeworld-oriented support processes. I presented in detail how the widely recognized and, in many aspects, beneficial approaches of evidence-based practice, theory, and tacit knowledge need to be complemented by another type of knowledge to enable practitioners to apply a reflective practice. I argued to fill this gap with the research approach of history of ideas. Conducting empirical research with this research perspective showed how the history of ideas generates outcomes complementing the knowledge base by connecting facts to the professional identity. By this, it consolidates a profession-related critical consciousness for social workers in the field. Beyond being a touchstone for decision-making, understanding traditions, roots, and the genealogy of the profession and its methods helps to represent the momentum of social work conduct and differentiate it from other professions. Such insight provides beneficial orientations





adding to methodological knowledge delivered by evidence-based practice and other forms of knowledge relevant to social work derived from neighbouring disciplines. It might also bring to light the undiscovered shares of social work's traditions that stem from indigenous knowledge or influences on the profession's identity submerged and forgotten over time.

I wrote this article to encourage social work researchers to expand their understanding of the importance of social work practice's historical assumptions. Daring to widen the perspective from "what works" and "how does it work" to exploring the traditions behind actions would root practice, offering another assuring dimension for social work practitioners' decision-making. Providing practitioners with the sense of possessing an inherited body of knowledge complements their reflective abilities. It transforms practice from a matter of knowing and doing to a matter of being.

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# The Story of Two Social Workers, Marie Krakešová and Vlasta Brablcová, Against the Background of the Creation of Educational Social Therapy (1943–1973)

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVE:** The aim is to depict the story of Educational Social Therapy as a method of individual social work, influenced by intersections of professional tracks of Marie Krakešová, the work author, and Vlasta Brablcová, her student. **THEORETICAL BASE:** The Educational Social Therapy, published in 1973, is the magnum opus of Marie Krakešová, which definitively crowned her work on the theory as early as in the 1940s. At that time, Gordon Hamilton and Helen Perlman were developing their scientific and research activities. And although the theory of Marie Krakešová had not crossed the borders (as the outputs were first published twenty years later), her work does not lag behind developments of social work theory abroad. **METHODS:** To achieve the aim, historical research using content analysis has been selected. **OUTCOMES:** Synthesis of findings has been used to describe reasons for the author's twenty-year silence and circumstances of her return, when she was allowed to revise and publish her work. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** The benefit of the presented outcomes is in further expansion of knowledge concerning development of Czech social work, comprehension of which will help social workers to boost their professional identity, while opening the way to further research into the application of the theory.

## Keywords

social work, history, social clinic, Czech school of social work, social work theory, social policy, social security, socialist state, communism, socialism

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## INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of historical research already carried out focused on the development of the field of social work in the Czech territory<sup>2</sup> between 1918–1948 and 1948–1989, activities of Marie Krakešová were partially explored. She was the author of the Czech school of social work, and between 1935 (publication of her first work called Sociální případ (Social Case) and 1973 (publication of her crowning work entitled Výchovná sociální terapie (Educational Social Therapy) brought her own theoretical framework and its practical implementation in the work of social workers. Almost two decades passed between the completion of Educational Social Therapy, the publication of which was announced as an impending event as early as in 1946, and its actual publication. This was due to changes caused by the 1948 coup, the onset of the communist party rule and the associated changes, when the Marxist concept of the history of society and its future direction influenced the existence, and later the form and direction of social work in our territory. However, it remains an unanswered question why the author was finally allowed to publish the work. In an interview, Marie Krakešová's granddaughter mentioned a former student Vlasta Brablcová (later a Czechoslovak politician, economist, feminist, lecturer, and social worker), who supported publication of the work crowning the theory of Marie Krakešová, by “...stretching the political umbrella over her”, so to speak (Bruclíková, 2018). The fact that Vlasta Brablcová supported publication of the Educational Social Therapy is also mentioned in the two monographs about Marie Krakešová (Brnula, Kodymová, Michelová, 2014; Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula, 2018).

What is missing, however, is how the professional careers of the two social workers intersected, resulting in the fact that Vlasta Brablcová pushed for the publication of Marie Krakešová's work. The work is based on the method of qualitative historical research using primary and secondary sources. Content analysis was chosen as the concrete research technique. Primary and secondary written sources are the research objects. Information about the life and work of Marie Krakešová was drawn from published outputs based on the processing of primary sources within the framework of historical research that I carried out with colleagues between 2013 and 2018 (Brnula, Kodymová, Michelová, 2014; Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula, 2018). Another range of secondary sources was based on literature related to the topic, which were works on social educational therapy by Klimentová (2009; 2013) and Chytil (1998; 2004; 2006). Also works focusing on the development of social work as a profession, social work methods, and education of social workers in our territory between 1918 and 1989 (Charvátová, Brablcová, 1986; 2018a; 2018b; Šiklová, 2000; Brnula, 2012; 2016; Špiláčková, 2013; 2020; Špiláčková, Nedomová, 2013); on the genesis of social work with an accent on Eastern Europe. And secondary sources mapping history of the two schools educating social workers, where Marie Krakešová worked and Vlasta Brablcová studied (Kodymová, 2017; Kodymová, Honsü, 2020). The last of the secondary sources was the published memoirs about Mr and Mrs Krakeš written by Jan Králík (1992; 2017; 2018).

Additional historical research (between 2019 and 2020) was based on archival sources in the possession of the Society of Social Workers of the Czech Republic; the not yet fully accessible and processed collections of the University of Political and Social Sciences stored in the Archives of the City of Prague, and the collections of the Organization of Social Workers (an association of alumni of the Higher School of Social Care in Prague, later also of the Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care in Prague), stored in the Archives of the National Museum. Another group

<sup>2</sup> Although the paper focuses on the history of Czech social work, the development of social work in the territory of today's Slovakia and Czechia, except for differences in practice and geopolitical arrangements during the war (the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the independent Slovak State), was common because of the common past in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in the subsequent common Republic of Czechoslovakia, and in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. (Brnula, Kodymová, Michelová, 2014:7)



of sources consisted of printed sources depicting the professional activities of Vlasta Brablcová (Brablcová, 1946; 1973; Brablcová, Čepeláková, Šrůtka, 1968; Brablcová, Matějček, Křivánek, 1974; Charvátová, Brablcová, 1975; Keller, Zelenková, Brablcová, 1975; Brtníková, Brablcová, 1978; Charvátová, Brablcová, 1978; Brablcová, Průcha, Keller, 1979). The inclusion of her activities devoted to the re-establishment of social work in the context of the needs of socialist society, and her socially committed activities necessitated the inclusion of period newspaper and magazine articles among the primary sources. The key group was represented by the daily *Rudé právo*<sup>3</sup>, due to her political involvement, and by the weekly *Vlasta*<sup>4</sup>, due to her activities focused on social work, family and women's issues. Of the searched texts related to Vlasta Brablcová, mainly those containing an interview with Vlasta Brablcová or her direct statements were used and can therefore be considered as primary sources. These sources were processed with the acknowledgment of the fact that working with texts from media as historical sources entails many limitations and restrictions (Orság, 2008:137) and cannot be accepted as a source without taking into account the risks inherent in the characteristics of media, in particular the desire to present information as quickly as possible at the expense of careful verification of its truthfulness, accuracy, and reliability (Baumgartner, 1981:256).

After collecting the sources, I sorted, analysed, and critiqued the historical facts, which were then synthesised and interpreted. The results were then compiled with previous findings in order to reconstruct the professional stories of the two social workers.

### **HIGHER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE, MASARYK STATE SCHOOL (1918–1945) – THE FIRST ENCOUNTER**

Professionalization of social work in the Czech territory was based on, and in its early days linked to professionalization of the American social work. In our territory, it was Alice Masaryk who, based on the knowledge gained during her stay in America, significantly participated in the transition of social work from its experience-based phase: the transition from charitable work to the beginnings of social work (up to 1918), to the phase of building the social work methodology: a rebuilt Austro-Hungarian model with elements of the American model of social work (up to 1938). (Brnula, 2016:30; Kodymová, 2018:19). Individual social work underwent a similar development in Czechoslovakia as in other countries. The term individual social work was derived in Czech literature from the American term “social casework”. In period materials we can find terms “case social work”, “specific social work” or, in Krakešová (1973a; 1973b), “individual social work” (Špiláčková, Nedomová, 2013:12). With the work of Marie Krakešová, the joint path of the Czech and American casework begins to diverge.

After completing her university studies at the Faculty of Science of Charles University in Prague with professor Matějka (anthropology, zoology and philosophy) and concurrent studies at the Higher School of Social Health Care, Marie Krakešová, as one of five applicants, was awarded a scholarship to Vaasar College in the U.S. Here she studied sociology from 1920 to 1922. After returning in 1923, she defends her doctorate in natural sciences. (Králik, 2018:22)

At the beginning of the 1920s she also meets Alice Masaryk, with whom she later cooperates for many years and with whom she enjoys a bond of long-standing and deep friendship. In 1924, she begins to lecture casework at the Higher School of Social Welfare. At the same time, she works, using the theoretical and practical experience gained, supplemented by research, to adapt the work and methods learnt during her study stay in America for the needs of Czechoslovak practice. The result is the publication named *Sociální případ* (Social Case), which she publishes

<sup>3</sup> *Rudé právo*: a daily and central press body of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Specification until 1989.

<sup>4</sup> *Vlasta*: a weekly and press body of the Czechoslovak Union of Women. Specification until 1989.



in cooperation with her husband Josef Krakeš in 1934 (Krakeš, Krakešová, 1934). Already with this publication, the author is ahead of her time when she states that the aim of an individual social work intervention is to return the clients to independent living by means of their own forces, perhaps with assistance of people around. (Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula, 2018:48). In this way, she combines psychological and sociological approaches in her conception. The benefit of this work is that it draws theoretical conclusions from practice, and then re-verifies them in practice (Klimentová, 2013:59). Her detailed analyses of social cases, by which she presents to her colleagues both the casework and the professional approach of a social worker, are also published in a series between 1932 and 1934 (Krakešová, Došková, 1932; 1934a; 1934b) in the professional periodical “Sociální pracovnice” (Social Worker).

In 1936, the Higher School of Social Welfare is disestablished and replaced by the Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care in Prague, financed by the Rockefeller Foundation.

This school also provides education during the Second World War, when universities are closed in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Therefore, in addition to the first-choice applicants, many applicants who would otherwise have chosen to study at universities apply to study here. Věra Pohlová, a student from the war years, thinks back to Marie Krakešová and her husband Josef Krakeš. “...*I continued my practice in the group of Dr. Marie Krakešová. ... Marie Krakešová demonstrated interaction of mother and child to our group... Josef Krakeš adapted new procedures and methods of social work from America. Throughout my practice as a social worker, I tried to incorporate as much knowledge as possible from the Krakešs into social work and use everything I learned from them in that short period of time. It helped me a lot in practice.*” (Kodymová, Honsů, 2020:93) Věra Pohlová also appreciated Marie Krakešová's approach to teaching her students; she did not limit herself to imparting knowledge and skills but encouraged them to engage in discussions leading to the search for truth and knowledge (Pohlová, 2018).

Vlasta Brablcová is one of those who choose to study here instead of a university, and successfully graduates in 1943 (Hájková, 1969:15). Here, as a student, she encounters Marie Krakešová for the first time, who lectures casework jointly with her husband Josef Krakeš, while continuing with her research.

After graduating, Vlasta Brablcová joins the anti-tuberculosis counselling centre in Prague-Žižkov. According to her recollections, she visited 18 to 20 families a day, wrote reports, secured analyses of taking as well as allowances, support and pensions from the Prague Municipality. She is very successful and after one year she becomes a leading social worker of the anti-tuberculosis counselling in Prague-Smíchov. Due to her accomplishments in practice, she is invited to lecture about her casework to students at the school from which she herself graduated (Hájková, 1969:15). The decision to recruit Vlasta Brablcová as a teacher is proof of her high expertise, but also part of the efforts to supplement the ranks of lecturers with social workers, graduates from social work schools as soon as possible, which concerns especially the subjects related to theory and practice and later also to social work research. At the end of the war in 1945, Vlasta Brablcová joins the Ministry of Social Welfare, where she focuses on the field of social work she had studied and practiced.

## UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PRAGUE (1946–1952) – THE SECOND ENCOUNTER

The coming end of the war brought with it new needs and tasks the state had to respond to appropriately. One of them is completion of the pre-war efforts to establish higher education that would build on the network of lower-level schools, while responding to the current requirements of social welfare.

In the short period from 1945 to 1948, wide discussion is going on in the press about the necessity of university studies and professional entry of social workers into the field, where several thousand



of them are missing. The cost of interventions is an argument, too, as random interventions without any knowledge of theory and methods tend to have only temporary effect and often need to be repeated, while professional interventions are ultimately more effective not only in the clients' lives, but also in view of the costs. (Machačová, 1945:4; Uhlířová, 1947:5). 'The University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague<sup>5</sup> was established on the basis of parity of the four parties of the National Front<sup>6</sup>, and students could choose with which view they agreed. However, from the very beginning there were quite a few convinced communists among the students.' (Dolejší, 1973:28)

Marie Krakešová is a lecturer at the newly established University of Political and Social Sciences, too. She continues her work on the concept of Czech social work theory and the construction of a system of practical training of social work students. She establishes centres for practice and research in the field of social work, the "Social Clinics". In the model of Social Clinic as a place for practical training of students from social work schools, Krakešová emphasizes mutual learning taking place cyclically on a well-defined relationship between the education providers and the implementers of social work practice, interconnected with research. The clinics thus serve the school as a theoretical (work with real case studies) as well as practical (casework in the field) base. For the needs of the school, Marie Krakešová completed methodology, *Úvod do praxe na sociálních klinikách* (Introduction to Practical Training at Social Clinics; Krakešová, 1948), The manuscript of the methodology, which Marie Krakešová completed in 1948, is reproduced in several copies for the clinics' staff and for students of the University of Political and Social Sciences, but not published as a book, because by then, Marie Krakešová is no longer allowed to publish (Králík, 2018:13).<sup>7</sup>

In 1946, Marie Krakešová's monograph *Psychogenese sociálních případů* (Psychogenesis of Social Cases) was published. While pre-war social work focused on psychoanalytic theories of social work, here Marie Krakešová already presents her work based on the psychoeducational theory (Chytil, Nedělníková, Příhodová, 2004:77). This title is immediately reported in the December issue of the professional journal "Social Worker" and the monograph is rightly defined there as the only Czech scientific book that turns its attention to the profound problems appearing in the beginning of social failure of individuals.

After the publication of the book, Vlasta Brablcová, already employed at the Ministry of Social Welfare since 1945, writes in the professional periodical "Social Worker": ... *"We are proud that with this work, which is in line with contemporary professional world literature, not only case literature, but also psychological and psychiatric literature, we bear favourable comparison with methodology and knowledge of countries that are advanced in casework. Discoveries that Dr. Krakešová made independently during World War II, based on her own data, are in harmony with discoveries that were simultaneously made in other countries, especially at social schools in the United States. Thanks to this work and many years of research work by Dr. Krakešová, we are ascending the first row of states in the field of casework."* In the same text, Brablcová announces the follow-up work: *"Significant and independent discovery, the*

<sup>5</sup> The University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague first had a branch in Brno, where it was possible to complete a two-year academic course, after which students could continue their studies in Prague. Later, it branched off as a separate University of Social Sciences with its seat in Brno (Machačová, 1945:4).

<sup>6</sup> Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, Czechoslovak Social Democracy and Czechoslovak People's Party

<sup>7</sup> The methodology was published only as a separate part of the monograph Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula (2018). *Sociální kliniky Z dějin sociální práce a sociálního školství* (Social Clinics: From the History of Social Work and Social Education). Prague: Karolinum. The agreement with the copyright heirs allowed both the publication of the manuscript and the use of Marie Krakešová's name as a co-author.





*classification of social cases into two basic types, will be appreciated and fully utilized in the next book dealing with social therapy, which is a necessary continuation of social diagnostics. Psychogenesis of Social Cases is an ideological and theoretical basis for Social Therapy.*" (Brablcová, 1946:135–136) However, professional public had to wait for this work of the author until 1973.

In 1947, Vlasta Brablcová starts her studies at the University of Political and Social Sciences, and in the same year she is sent by the Ministry to a four-month scholarship in the United States to learn about the methods of social work there (Hájková, 1969:15). She successfully completes her studies at the university two years after starting.<sup>8</sup> At this school, too, she becomes involved in the education when she starts as an instructor of students of social clinic. Her contribution is also evidenced by the fact that Marie Krakešová in her foreword to the methodology of social clinics from 1948 states, among other things, that instructors of social clinics with their experience were very helpful in its preparation and mentions Vlasta Brablcová as one of them.

### **REVOLUTIONARY YEAR 1948 AND CONSEQUENCES FOR SOCIAL WORK – ABOLITION OF EDUCATION, LEVELLING OF EVERYTHING IN THE FIELD**

After the February coup, political power in the state is taken over by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC), and following the CPC's IX Congress (1949) bolshevization of welfare state begins. In accordance with the official ideology of the state, built on historical materialism, changes also come in the perception of the social work profession, based on the assumption that individuals are determined in their behaviour by their class origin, and classes are determined by their economic status. And all social problems, from poverty and unemployment to violence, wars, prostitution, alcoholism, crime, and so on, are only temporary and will disappear as soon as class differences disappear (Šiklová, 2001:140).

The area of social policy does not constitute an integrated unit managed from one place. Social issues are dealt with by various authorities closest to the given issue, such as the ministries of education, health, the interior, the State Population Commission, and so on. Some of the issues are dealt with by local authorities, the national committees and their departments of social security, education and health, departments of labour force and others. (Lišková, 1969:1)

Because of the promoted view that the use of national income in favour of social care merely represents irretrievable drawing of funds, it stagnates. The importance of social measures is assessed from the economic point of view from the perspective of workforce, for example in form of social allowances to families for the upbringing of children (future labour), security for senior citizens who have already submitted their share of work, work rehabilitation to people with disabilities, etc. Human life is simplified only to the reproduction of workforce, and social policy reduced to its economic core (Pánek, Šálková, 1974:123). Development of social care is intended to achieve the form of mass and protective care, while case-related, termed "preventive" and "therapeutic (curative) care" is intended to become only complementary for individuals where they are not yet sufficiently taken care of by applicable legal regulations (Siblík, 1963:7).

Within the massively promoted claim that socialism would solve all social problems, the signification of the existence of social work for the future is called into question, and efforts to gradually eliminate it are legitimized. In *Základy marxistické filozofie* (the Basics of Marxist Philosophy) (Konstantinov, 1959:647), social therapy in the conception of bourgeois sociologists is referred to as an idea which is: *"to justify the settlement of reactionary classes with the revolutionary movement, it is to justify preparations to intervene against the countries of socialism or the States of the East that have agreed on political independence"*. Given the link between social work and the previous

<sup>8</sup> To graduates of the follow-up post-secondary education at the Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care, this study was, due to its high demands and contents, recognized as the first stage of higher education.



regime, this sentiment also affects its conception as a profession that was helping in the past to maintain the status quo and thus the class differences.

Individual social work, hitherto taught in all schools training social workers, was subjected to criticism by some students at the University of Political and Social Sciences and, in the context of proposed change in methods, was seen as a lengthy and, given the individual approach, expensive way of handling social cases. The argumentation was based on the assumption that with further development, towards a communist classless society, individual social work would disappear of its own accord. The occurrence of social events in the lives of individuals, which the person is unable to avert and overcome by his own efforts, will be reduced to a minimum by economic security and the new social order. For the interim period in which this ideal was to be achieved, social work was to intensify interventions using the facilities that already existed in order to achieve the greatest possible reduction in the number of people with 'defective' behaviour and with the undesirable shift in the attitude towards society. At that time, the University of Political and Social Studies was already facing criticism that its curriculum was filled with bourgeois pseudo-science (this concerned especially the psychology and sociology lectures), which, as presented to the students, contradicted the Marxist basis on which education should be built. The planned gradual reconstruction of institutions of higher education was carried out within the framework of one of the objectives of the Communist Party, which was to participate in the construction of socialism (Rudé právo, 1949). In the academic year 1949/1950, the University of Political and Social Sciences was abolished, the faculties of journalism and politics were transferred to the newly established University of Political and Economic Sciences in Prague, and the faculty of social sciences was abolished without replacement, as it was 'unnecessary': *"... the social faculty of the University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague and the University of Social Sciences in Brno<sup>9</sup> are being abolished completely, since the social universities have deviated from their mission by their broad and varied focus and, moreover, social welfare as it was presented is losing its significance in the socialist or socialist-oriented state; what used to belong to social welfare finds its place in the interpretation of administrative law and social policy (care for workers, care for the incapable of work, for old age or loss of the possibility of work, the pathological social phenomena are to disappear, etc.)"* (Government Bill on the establishment of the University of Economic and Political Sciences).

Therefore, the previously successfully developing profession, implemented in both the public and private law domains, with its three-stage education system and rich associational activity, is reduced to the bare minimum. Social workers' associations are abolished and only one secondary school ending with school-leaving examination is left from the entire educational system for the field (Kodymová, 2018b).

As a result of the demise of professional associations, social workers lose their professional backing and merge in trade unions with other work groups, which can no longer provide support to their professional distinction. Therefore, individual social workers are often transferred to other positions. As a result of the restraint and dislodging of the profession, institutions lose interest in professional social workers and the general public gradually lose its awareness of the specificity of the profession. Highly qualified graduates seek new job opportunities, join the state administration apparatus, or remain in their considerably limited positions in social, health and educational institutions (Schimerlingová, 1974).

With the political changes after 1948, the life of Marie Krakešová and her family takes a turn. Marie Krakešová, who was appointed associate professor in 1945 and an adjunct professor at the Social Faculty of the University of Political and Social Sciences two years later, is expelled from

<sup>9</sup> Both schools were abolished by Act 227/1949 Coll. on the Establishment of the University of Political and Economic Sciences in Prague in section 3, which states that the University of Political and Social Sciences in Prague (...) and the University of Social Sciences in Brno shall be abolished successively from the beginning of the academic year 1949/50 starting with the first year.



the faculty as early as in 1949 for reasons of public interest – without being given any specific reasons. Josef Krakeš, as a right-wing social democrat, is relieved of his duties that same year and dismissed from the Ministry of Social Welfare in 1951. In 1952 they were both banned from Prague and forcibly evicted from their own family house (they never returned to Prague) (Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula, 2018:104). With this twist of fate, they find themselves in the midst of the harsh reality of the social cases they had been dealing with until now. Their friendship with the Masaryk family is like a stigma. However, Marie Krakešová continues to be active in the field of social work and therapy despite the prohibition of activity and makes use of her skills in sociological research, mainly cooperating with Jaroslav Skála at his Psychiatric Department of the Psychiatric Clinic “U Apolináře” in Prague. Following the end of this activity, she cannot find, for political reasons, any possibility to continue with her research or practice. Nevertheless, she continues to maintain contact with the field and its development abroad and monitors the domestic situation. (Králík, 2018:14)

Contrary to this, Vlasta Brablcová's career develops successfully. She became a member of the communist party in 1948 and works at the Ministry of Social Welfare until 1950; the ministry was abolished in the early 1950s. Vlasta Brablcová later moves to Brno, works as an accountant for less than a year and after her success in the recruitment process, she is accepted to the Department of Political Economics of Brno University of Technology. She starts as an assistant, later an assistant professor. She develops her career as part of a five-year external post-graduate study at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Prague. From 1955 to 1956 she is an economist at the Research Institute of Cooling and Food Machines in Prague (Hájková, 1969:15).

In 1949, professional careers of the two social workers parted for a long time.

### THE REVIVING SIXTIES (1967–1970) – THE THIRD ENCOUNTER

At the beginning of the 1960s, a critique of the existing socialist regime emerged, accompanied by an attempt to reform it in the economic, political, and social spheres. Social policy and social work remain fully nationalised and centrally managed, but a new concept of social policy is being formulated and social care renewed. Changes in the perception of the need for progressive social policy and professional social work stem from the growing number of severe social problems (e.g., unfavourable population trends, housing, divorce rate and inadequate care for the elderly), which gradually begins to be reflected in the Communist Party's action programme, in the government's programme statements (Šiklová, 2001:144; Schimerlingová, 1974).

Part of the changes is the federalization of the state. Therefore, the re-established ministry of labour and social affairs consists of three parts: the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and ministries of the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic. The abolition of the original Ministry of Social Welfare is retrospectively assessed by Vlasta Brablcová in such a way that it was cancelled at the time when it was most needed. Its demise and subsequent incorporation of individual social issues as something marginal to different ministries, where they were rather a hindrance and degenerated, had been done under the wrong assumption that difficult and complex social situations cannot arise in socialism. She adds that while it is difficult to assess the damage caused by this, a degree of centralism could have played a positive role here. Only in this way, tasks could be performed thoughtfully and evenly. (Lišková, 1969:2)

The efforts of “socialism with a human face” also provide a positive view of the role of social policy, arguing that, if implemented properly, it has positive impact on the economy and its development. The previous neglect in dealing with social problems, postponement in solving them, denying or ignoring them is considered a faulty process, resulting in economic difficulties. (Pánek, Šálková, 1974:123)

The new Social Security Act of 1964 and its amendment in 1968 open the way to changes and to recognizing the necessity of the social work profession as well as its development during the



Prague Spring. "Solving social problems often through institutional health care or similar repressive institutional form e.g., by locking patients up in psychiatric hospitals, alcoholic treatment centres, hospitals for long-term diseases, etc., began to be questioned and the first more client-considerate alternatives began to emerge." (Šiklová, 2001:144–146) The need for a change in the attitude towards the role of social work was also caused by social problems still objectively existing in society (e.g., alcoholism and crime of both adults and minors, high divorce rate, etc.) and the growing necessity to address them urgently. This has opened up the need to implement new types of social services within which social work is carried out, and to expand the scope of social work. In this context, for example, the broad concept of social services is worked out (Šmýd, 1969).

Civil society activities begin to emerge. Another change positively affecting the possibilities of social work is the re-establishment of independent professional associations. Social workers use this opportunity and, after a 20-year enforced pause, they follow up on the activities of the Organization of Social Workers, abolished in 1948. At the founding meeting of the professional association, the Society of Social Workers, Věra Vostřebalová (a long-time chairwoman of the Organization of Social Workers) looks back on the past and states that: *'At the beginning of the First Republic, the public, brought up in the Austro-Hungarian philanthropy, had to be persuaded that serious social issues would not be solved only by personal charity. That we cannot do without social institutions and qualified professional forces in this area. And it is one of the paradoxes of this time that half a century later we had to fight the opposite extreme: persuading people that the state alone is not sufficient to solve all social pains.'* (Macháčková, 1969:19)

Vlasta Brablcová, an assistant to the Department of Political Economy of Brno University of Technology and an active member of the Presidency of the Czechoslovak Women' Union, has the introductory word on behalf of the delegation of Czechoslovak women received at Prague Castle by President Antonín Novotný. Here she expresses her belief that women will have the opportunity to contribute even more to the development of the society of the socialist republic (Pravda, 1967:1).<sup>10</sup> In 1969 she is sent as an official of the women's movement and State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with a delegation of Czechoslovak women to the World Congress of Women in Helsinki (Pravda, 1969:2).

She is appointed a member of the government in January 1969 and becomes Secretary of State at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is one of the highest state positions. Here she stays until January 1970 (Buchvaldek, 1986:615–616). Thus, at that inaugural meeting of the Society of Social Workers, she assesses the changes from this position in her introductory speech, saying: *'Finally, after years of false illusions, we have once again admitted that every society, even a socialist one, will always have its social problems, which it will have to deal with somehow. ...after all, it is social workers who cannot only proclaim humanistic socialism, but actually bring it to life, too.'* (Macháčková, 1969:19) About the past period, she says in another interview that: *'the period of the 1950s, with regard to the initial building of socialism in our country, exclusively emphasized the society-wide interests, to which the interests of both large and small social groups were subordinated. Primarily, it was necessary to increase the number in the workforce in order to speed up the running of the national economy.'* (Lišková, 1969:2) Vlasta Brablcová did not abandon the topic of family, but now she devoted herself to it from the economic point of view, culminating her efforts in 1968 by defending her dissertation at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of Charles University with the topic: The importance of family budgets (Maťová, 1969:218).

In addition to efforts to return to professional activities interrupted by the previous period, there is also an effort to allow many to complete their studies or to follow up on their interrupted professional activities. In this way, the educational social therapy is also 'resurrected'. Its author Marie Krakešová is rehabilitated by the activities of her former students, and Vlasta Brablcová

<sup>10</sup> The established Czechoslovak Women' Union has a mission to increase the share of women in the management and to deal with the issues of a woman's position in the socialist society.



asks her to prepare her manuscript of the Educational Social Therapy for publication (Králík, 2017), providing social workers with professional methodological procedures for interventions in the lives of clients.

The Prague Spring period ends with the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968, as a result of which a period of so-called normalization begins.

### **NORMALIZATION (1970–1989)**

The reform efforts of the 1960s were forcibly ended by the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops (August 1968) and the subsequent normalization of society in the spirit of the Communist Party's return to a Soviet-style dictatorship. (Keller, 2004) Nevertheless, some of the measures already foreseen in the reform period were applied in the process of normalization. By doing so, the regime wanted, among other things, to show citizens that it would provide those who would remain loyal with a relatively comfortable social system (Tomková, 2009: 717).

The profession of social work is affected by the re-abolition of many interests and political associations, and organisations and other repressive measures, which include the abolition of the Society of Social Workers. Solution is offered by the Society of Nurses at the Medical Society of J.E. Purkyně, which allows social workers to continue their activities as its associated section.

Many projects remain unfinished. Among them, for example, the widely developed concept of social services, which is not implemented in its original form and scope. However, the need for social work is no longer called into question.

"In the countries of the socialist camp, there is no longer any place for social work in the sense it was carried out under capitalism, i.e., as moderation of the most blatant shortcomings that could threaten social peace, or as one of the tactical means by which capitalists operate in the class war." (Siblík, 1963:7). The activity of a social worker in the socialist society is intended to aim at the target of the socialist social order, i.e., to implement the Marxist theory of the development of an individual's personality on the basis of the development of economic, sociological, and anthropological conditions for the creation of the most progressive production forces and new civilizational foundations of human life (Schimerlingová, 1972:12). Social work is included as part of the universal socialist care of people, with the task of professionally ensuring that all citizens can participate in the benefits provided by the socialist regime, while making optimal use of the existing institutions of the care for people (Siblík, 1963:8).

Social work and its methods are part of newly published textbooks and are contained in methodologies issued with general validity by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. However, this does not mean that they are applied in the practice of social work without exception. The reason for this is that to take up the position of a social worker, applicants do not have to be graduates of social work schools. If people enter the profession without the appropriate education, they must gradually round off their education, but they are not always supervised during this period by a practicing colleague educated in social work. Therefore, throughout this period, the different quality of the profession performance is influenced by the different level of competence of the individuals for their performance, as well as by the quality of their supervision in practice.

At the end of this phase, social work is again established among other helping professions. It is implemented in local government units and in the production sector in the care of "working cadre", where many social care services are transferred to from the local authority administration (Šiklová, 2000:147). The section of social workers enjoys support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for their activities in the development of the branch, etc.

In the early 1970s, Marie Krakešová completes preparations for the publication of her two-part work, *Výchovná sociální terapie* (Educational Social Therapy), which was published in 1973. The time of preparation is remembered by her contemporary J. Králík: "Although she was prevented from contacting the academic milieu, the world of modern psychology and social work for a long





time, she maintained a high level of knowledge in her field. I don't know how she did it, but when her ex-students visited her after a long break in 1968, they were amazed to see how well up to speed she was. Vlasta Brablcová, then State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, was one of the first to visit her during the Prague Spring. Later, she was meeting with her repeatedly in Toušeň, and the doctor had always been conscientiously preparing for this long in advance, writing down her refined reflections, observations, and memories. Thus, her last extensive book, the Educational Social Therapy, was completed." (Králík, 2018:16) The possibility to publish the work was certainly supported by the fact that this two-part book was published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs within its methodological series. And as such it "escaped the eye of the censor". Vlasta Brablcová accompanies the Educational Social Therapy with a foreword, noting that: *For the first time, the socialist society comes up with a fundamental, generous, and society-wide solution to problems in the field of social policy [...] primarily for the benefit of families with children. The generous measures of the present time [...] are unprecedented in the capitalist world. [...] However, some families fail. These are assisted by national committees, the authorities of people's power, in various forms of professional social work. Dr. Marie Krakešová's two-part publication is an important help in this area from a methodological point of view.* (Brablcová, 1973:1).

With the first part of the book, the author crowns her life's work in the field of social work theory and clearly defines the "Krakešová's School" (Krakešová, Kodymová, Brnula, 2018:42). Marie Krakešová's theory is comparable to that of Helen Perlman; it was even developed earlier, but its late publication deprived Marie Krakešová of her entry in among the significant theorists of social work of her time. She based her theory on actualized social therapy (case social work) from the first half of the 20th century, included in her research work, but in the 1970s the ideas of Florence Hollis, Robert Carkhuff, William Reid and Laura Epstein, Harriett Bartlett and others that respond to that time already appear in the theory of social work. Despite this fact, her theory influenced the "domestic" tradition of social work in Czechoslovakia. The second part of the book comprises descriptions of three studies of social cases, in which Marie Krakešová demonstrates the use of the theory presented in the first part (Kodymová, Brnula, 2020).

What is admirable about the work of Marie Krakešová is that throughout her professional activity, she never stopped intertwining education, practice, and research. She proceeded systematically and managed to create a comprehensive work consisting of not only theory and method, but also methodology of how to master the theory and the method in teaching. She also included a series of sources (case studies) on which she demonstrated to social workers already in practice how to work with social cases. And she has proven that research is the connecting bridge between school and practice. The fact that she was active as a consultant to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and acted as a consultant, free of charge, to staff involved in post-penitentiary care. For the rest of her life, testifies to the renewed recognition of her high erudition (Králík, 1992:170; Novotná, 1997).

At the onset of normalization, Vlasta Brablcová expresses her disapproval of some activities from the Prague Spring in 1968. For example, about the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Women's Union, she says: *"Its socialist nature had simply disappeared from the concept of the women's organization. This had also reflected in the concept of the Action Programme, which was actually a summary of the demands on the socialist state and its authorities."* (Zajoncová, 1970:3) She is not in the government from January 1970, but she still holds important positions during this period. Since 1973 she is chair of the Committee for Family and Education of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Women's Union. She works as a head of the Department of Family and Youth Care at the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. She is also mentioned as a member of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Red Cross.

Throughout her active years, she focuses and publishes on the following topics: family, marriage, parent and child, politics and government, social conditions, social policy, social security, social work, then also: the importance of women's participation in the process of work for the socialist



state, the process of women's emancipation, and the conflict of high employment rate of women with the style of family life. The key issue for her is the topic of family, which she does not leave throughout her entire career.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout her professional and, briefly, scientific career, Vlasta Brablcová focused on social work with families. Since her graduation from the Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care, her professional career was a successful one, and there was no breakthrough in its growth that many experienced in 1948 or 1968. On the contrary, the professional and scientific career of Marie Krakešová is marked by consequences of the events in both of these years. After 1948 she is side-lined and prevented from continuing her teaching and research activities. After 1968, she is rehabilitated and allowed to partially resume her interrupted activities. A milestone in the interrupted cooperation of the two social workers for almost two decades was the dissolution of the University of Political and Social Sciences in 1949. Vlasta Brablcová graduated from it as a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and continued her career smoothly after the closure of the school, where she had also briefly acted as a mentor of students' practice. Marie Krakešová was expelled from the same school for political reasons. This was not only because of her different political beliefs, the social class she belonged to, her contacts and cooperation with Alice Masaryk, her professional and personal contacts in the USA, but also because she was an important representative of Czechoslovak social work prior to 1948. For a long period of time, her career is over.

The professional influence of Marie Krakešová on Vlasta Brablcová was already evident at the time of the first professional encounter and cooperation between the two social workers, especially in the concept of family-oriented individual therapy. After all, the theme of family is interwoven throughout Vlasta Brablcová's professional life. Vlasta Brablcová was unquestionably not only a good student but also a good practitioner, which is evidenced by the fact that soon after graduating from the Masaryk State School of Health and Social Care and the University of Political and Social Sciences she was invited to participate in teaching. Even later, her erudition cannot be described as negligible, as evidenced by her work dedicated to supporting the development of social work practice, albeit understood differently than it was at the time of her initial practice, but also by the fact that Marie Krakešová accepted without reservation the cooperation offered by her former student and colleague, who, unlike her, at least in her repeatedly declared position, was in line with the views and actions of the ruling Communist Party.<sup>11</sup>

The story of the collaboration of the two social workers, which is intertwined with the story of the creation of the Educational Social Therapy clearly shows a strong bond to the profession of social work, the beginning of which was built on a bond between teacher and student. Marie Krakešová, as a teacher, was able not only to equip her students with the necessary knowledge for practice, but also to inspire many of them to stay with this profession for life. She herself, although she was unjustifiably prevented from continuing her teaching and research work, never left the profession and kept in touch with its development throughout the period of forced pause.

The entire story is also intertwined with the element of cooperation among social workers. Cooperation between Marie Krakešová and Vlasta Brablcová could have been interrupted in its early days by different political beliefs and attitudes towards changes brought about in 1948, the

<sup>11</sup> This is also reflected in several of her publications, where she points out the difference in the concept of social welfare before and after 1948. She evaluates social welfare before 1948 as the prevention of a vital political solution to the life situation of all those who found themselves in an unfavourable situation as a result of long-term class oppression and exploitation combined with other factors (preface to Marie Krakešová's *Social Therapy*). And the field of child and youth care at that time she considers partial, haphazard and of little effectiveness (Brablcová, 1975:5)



consequences of which not only diverted their career paths, but while Vlasta Brablcová's career grew after this year, Marie Krakešová's career was made impossible. This did not happen, however, mainly because their common priority was the development of the profession and later its reintroduction. This, apart from the bonds of working together at the aforementioned schools in the 1940s, allowed them to cooperate also in the last phase of their encounters at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s.

Marie Krakešová's school, built on social work with an individual and family, is evident in the whole work of Vlasta Brablcová, as well as in the work of her other student, Věra Pohlová. This opens up another important topic for the history of domestic social work, which is to monitor the impact of Marie Krakešová's school on the practice of her students.

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## Štefan Strieženec, Pioneer of Modern Slovak Social Work

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### Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** The aim of the paper is to analyse the work and contribution of Štefan Strieženec for Slovak social work in its modern history, i.e., after 1989. **THEORETICAL BASE:** Although social work is currently an internationally accepted profession and academic discipline, in each country it must fight for its independence. An important part of its establishment is also conceptual

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work, creation of a terminological dictionary and systematization of professional education. In the conditions of Slovakia as a post-communist country, Strieženec in particular devoted himself to this work. According to him, the national model of social work should focus on the use of specific conditions and resources in a particular country. **METHODS:** From a methodological point of view, biographical method and analysis of theoretical concepts of Strieženec were used. The compilation of an interpretative overview of the most important publications of the monitored author was carried out by content analysis in which the contextual unit was monitored. **OUTCOMES:** Through his scientific, terminological, and educational activities, Strieženec fundamentally contributed to the formation of modern Slovak social work as an independent managed field and an independent education one. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** Strieženec's approaches "think globally, act locally" as well as the concept "help to self-help", are also an inspiration for current social work.

### **Keywords**

social work, profession, state paternalism, terminology, methodology, education

## **INTRODUCTION**

The paper aims to analyse the work and contribution of Štefan Strieženec for Slovak social work in its modern history, i.e., after 1989, when the Velvet Revolution ended the rule of communism in the then Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR). From a methodological point of view, biographical method and analysis of theoretical concepts of Strieženec was used. The compilation of an interpretative overview of the most important publications of the monitored author was carried out by content analysis in which the contextual unit was monitored. This is supplemented by an oral tradition, as one of the authors of the article was a colleague from Strieženec from the university environment, a friend, with whom they jointly participated in many professional meetings at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (MPSR SR), scientific conferences, and professional events. The data obtained in this way were verified by the technique of semi-structured interviews with former colleagues of Strieženec from the academic environment, the Ministry, and his family relatives. In the text of the article, data were obtained based on oral tradition, especially in the parts on the life of Strieženec. The hypothesis of the authors of the article is that the scientific, educational, and professional contribution of Štefan Strieženec is so significant from the point of view of the Slovak history of social work after 1989, that it can justifiably be considered a pioneer of it. The selection of written sources about the researched personality is related to his work in the area of social work, and partly also social policy.

## **SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGES AFTER 1989**

Until 1989, social work and social services in Czechoslovakia were characterized by their first charitable approach and later institutionalized culture, a paternalistic approach (Brnula, Vaska, 2021). According to these authors, social work in the post-revolutionary period, as well as after the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent states in 1993, was understood mainly as a tool of social policy. A typical manifestation of the socialist regime in the years 1948–1989 was state paternalism. Strieženec (1996:146) defines it as "the concentration of all care (employment, social, health, etc.) in the hands of the state. In the social field, it manifests itself by not allowing a pluralistic share of other subjects in comprehensive social care for a person. A typical manifestation in our country (Czechoslovakia) was that it was not possible to do business in the social area, and charity was considered a relic of the past. Regarding the consequences of state paternalism, Strieženec (1993:4) states: "decades of social security have led people to social passivity and are handed over



to the care and guarantee of the state". The measures, which are continuously accepted and aim to mitigate the negative elements of the social impact of economic reform, will be difficult to reconcile with the objectives of the final social system. Therefore, it will be necessary to accept changes in the content of social policy to meet the needs of a modern democratic state with a market economy. The aim of the transformation of social policy is to change the very meaning of social policy. It is needed to support and initiate individuals and social groups into activity, leading them to social independence and responsibility for their social situation. It will be necessary to design a new social policy while addressing existing and emerging social problems, such as reducing the living standards of the population with the accompanying emergence of poverty, unemployment, etc. From the point of view of sociological theories of deviation, socio-political changes created a state of anomie after the Velvet revolution. The theory of anomie was first described by Émile Durkheim, who understood it, as social disintegration and socially deviated behaviour in the sense of insufficient social regulation in a certain social system. In situations where values and norms are not clearly defined or when traditional norms are replaced by new ones, a state of lawlessness, i.e., anomie, can occur in society (Mátl, Schavel et al., 2011). Its accompanying features are an enormous increase in socio-pathological phenomena and socio-economic problems. Strieženec (2001) states that after 1989 a number of new phenomena, unknown in the last 40 years (or unseen, unperceived and unreflected) by society, escalated on the territory of Slovakia, emerging with the development of new technologies with changes in the labour market, with the process of privatization, the development of the level of social dialogue, but also in connection with the strengthening of the responsibility of the individual and the family for their own life situation. A wide range of plurality in approaches was created from the state paternalism. The new starting principle has become "human and civic responsibility for one's own life and for its quality" (Strieženec, 1996:5).

The need to legitimize social work in Slovakia in the 1990s in 20th century arose as a necessary precondition for solving key socio-political themes, as well as socially latent socio-pathological phenomena. The phenomenon of unemployment manifested itself in connection with the transition to a market economy, which required a solution of the not only economic but also social and political. There was also a need to change the attitude of professionals, until then employees of social affairs departments in district national committees in thinking and especially in the approach to solving social problems in society. A change was required from a paternalistic perception and a directive solution to the client's unfavourable social situation to his support of the solution to promote collaboration with other professionals within multidisciplinary teams (Gabura, 1999). It was necessary to address the deficit of (university) educated and for practice ready social workers.

#### **ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ŠTEFAN STRIEŽENEC**

To understand Strieženec's work, at least a brief introduction to his biography is appropriate. Štefan was born in the period before World War II, in 1938 in the village of Čuklasovce, together with two other municipalities merged into the current municipality of Veľké Držkovce, located in the district of Bánovce nad Bebravou. He completed his general education at the Eleven-year High School in Bánovce nad Bebravou. After graduating from Pedagogical University in Bratislava as a graduate teacher, he was a teacher of primary and secondary education in Trnava (Kmec et al., 2014). From a historical point of view, it should be added that until the mid-1950s of the 20th century in Czechoslovakia, education in the teaching profession took place at the Pedagogical Colleges, which were later transformed into the pedagogical faculties of individual universities (The first was the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava, which was established in 1946). As a teacher and a graduate of the Faculty of Education, he was also a participant in postgraduate education at the University of Politics in Prague; he ended this education with the final work *Social Prognosis*. In 1983, he defended his candidate (doctoral) thesis with the title *Some Theoretical and Methodological Problems of Social Policy*.



After 1989, he began to devote to social policy at the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava. In 1991, the first Department of Social Work was established at this faculty. Although Strieženec had his professional profile anchored in the former communist regime, he actively participated in the creation of a new study field of social work and became one of the important members of the pedagogical team of the department and the guarantor of the study of social work. When changing the socio-political orientation of the state, at the department until 2005 his professional potential was used. During this period, he gradually published *Náčrt problematiky sociálnej politiky* (Draft of Social Policy Issues, 1993), *Slovník sociálnej práce* (Dictionary of Social Work, 1996), *Úvod do sociálnej práce* (Introduction to Social Work, 1999; 2001) and together with Bednárík *Písomné študijné-kvalifikačné prejavy v odbore sociálna práca* (Written Study-qualification Expressions in the Field of Social Work, 2000). His authorial participation in foreign publications of a lexicon character is also significant, specifically within the framework of the Phare project of the European Commission *Dictionary of Social Protection Terms* (Veghte, Schmitz et al., 2000) and Polish *Leksykon Wiedotreningu Komunikacji* (Srzednicka et al., 2002). He carried out journal activities mainly in the professional monthly *Práca a sociálna politika* (Labour and Social Policy) published by the Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (Strieženec, 1997; 1998; 2001a; 2001b) and later in the journal *Sociální práce / Sociálna práca* (Social Work) (Strieženec, 2003). He also confirmed his commitment to the field of social work by completing a habitation procedure at the Faculty of Health and Social Work of the Trnava University in Trnava in 1999. During his work at the Department of Social Work, he was a member of the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education for the accreditation of the study field of social work, member of the Terminology Commission of the said ministry. He also served as a member of the Board of the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. He was the initiator, in 2002 the founder and first chairman of the Association of Educators in Social Work in Slovakia. In 2003, he was a member of the preparatory committee of the editorial board of the Czech-Slovak magazine *Sociální práce / Sociálna práca* (Social Work) and subsequently became the first vice-chairman of the editorial board. He worked on the editorial board of the magazine until his death in 2006. In the same year, his book *Téória a metodológia sociálnej práce* (Theory and Methodology of Social Work, 2006) was published in Slovakia. Less well known is the fact that he wrote poetry, essays, and aphorisms. He published a collection of poems *Nad kruhmi vody* (Above the Circles of Water, 1996) and a collection of aphorisms *Večné polopravdy* (Eternal Half-Truth, 2003b). In 2005, Štefan Strieženec was awarded a commemorative medal of Elena Marótha Šoltésová for the development of social work in Slovakia by Faculty of Health Sciences and Social work, Trnava University in Trnava, together with the Association of Educators in Social Work of the Slovak Republic.

## ANALYSIS OF KEY PUBLICATIONS OF STRIEŽENEC IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK

Here we present an analysis of three key publications of Štefan Strieženec in the field of social work, which represents the decade (1996–2006) of his terminological and systematic work, which had a fundamental influence on the then and future development of Slovak social work. We performed an interpretive overview using content analysis, which was the basic technique for evaluating input data. Further research was derived from this structure. We used the Hendl (2005) model, goal, source material, source criticism and interpretation, which we modified for the needs of the presented overview. We focused on contextual units such as topic and theme (Kuzyšin, 2002) and the impact criterion, significance for the progress of the field of social work in Slovakia. The impact criterion was identified based on the peer review method performed by the authors of the article. The characteristics are given in Table 1. We included three publications in the final overview.





Table 1: Key Publications of Strieženec

Title of the publication	Dictionary of a social worker
Place of edition, year, scope	Trnava, 1996, 255 pages
Type of publication	terminological dictionary
Characteristics of impact	The work had a key impact on the Slovak scientific concepts of social work and social policy (including their interconnection) after 1989, arrangement of social work terminology and its internationalization.
Title of the publication	Introduction to social work
Place of edition, year, scope	Trnava, 1999 (2001), 215 pages
Type of publication	university textbook, partly terminological dictionary
Characteristics of impact	The publication was important for the classification of key theme in the field of social work, the revision of terminological work and the impact on the systematization of university education in the field of social work in Slovakia. Here was introduced the long-accepted theoretical concept of work of social workers - "self-help".
Title of the publication	Theory and methodology of social work
Place of edition, year, scope	Trnava, 2006, 296 pages
Type of publication	scientific monograph, partly terminological dictionary
Characteristics of impact	The monograph had an impact on strengthening the scientific character of social work in Slovakia, the revision of terminological work. In addition to the internationalization of social work, its Slovak specifics were emphasized, which expresses the slogan "think globally, act locally".

### Dictionary of a Social Worker (1996)

Strieženec published the First and to date only Slovak Dictionary of a Social Worker in 1996. According to the author, the intention of his writing was to offer an initial orientation to those who struggle daily with the complexity of social work as well as to provide a wider range of readers with basic information about the social conditions in our society. Strieženec (1996:7) understood this work as *"the first attempt, one of the views on the arrangement of the most frequent terms in a practical dictionary form."* Such an understanding of the terminological dictionary does not correspond to its traditional understanding in terms of systematizing the established terminology of the field but is based on a model of social change and we could say of "terminological anomie". Anomia as a sociological theory of deviation is characterized by the fact that the old laws no longer apply, but new ones have not yet been created or implemented in practice. This is similar even in terminology, especially in areas undergoing fundamental changes. The social sphere underwent significant political and social changes after the Velvet Revolution, which resulted in that older (communist and socialist) terminology ceased to apply in many areas and was replaced by a new one. The primary tool of terminological changes was legislation, which introduced new socio-legal terms. Strieženec takes over these new legislative terms and is fully aware of the very close link between social policy and social work. If we were currently looking for an alternative name for the dictionary, we could call it *Slovník sociálnej politiky a sociálnej práce* (Dictionary of Social Policy and Social Work). The author expresses the understanding of social work at the time of creating and publishing a dictionary as follows: *"We understand social work as the specific work of a social worker and individual social institutions and facilities in the implementation of social policy at various levels and in various areas of people's lives and society"* (Strieženec, 1996:8). Strieženec's understanding of social work was interdisciplinary in this period, especially with regard to its theoretical concepts: *"It is based on the system of knowledge of many social sciences (psychology, sociology, philosophy, ethics, pedagogy, medical, legal sciences) and applies scientific knowledge into practical activities"* (1996:161). In addition



to these sciences, he also defines in the dictionary andragogy, axiology, criminology, management, penology, psychopathology, social anthropology and from theology mentions social ecclesiastical encyclicals. An interdisciplinary approach to social work is an important theoretical basis for him, to which he returns when defining the methods of social work and the social worker. "In social work (in Slovakia) is about the formation of a new profession, corresponding to the new changed social requirements" (1996:165). He refers, in its definition, to the global definition of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) of 1988. It was probably a revision of the Brighton definition from 1982. In any case, Strieženec tried in the dictionary to follow the world development trends of social work as one of its pillars of terminological work. The second pillar was respecting Slovak specifics, which is fully even in line with the current global trend of the IFSW. According to the current global definition from Melbourne (2014), *social work is underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge*" (IFSW, 2014).

As part of social work, Strieženec distinguishes ten areas of its actions in dictionary, while the author reflected not only the Slovak practice of the time, but also historical and global trends. It was the individual work (he understood case work in its psychosocial form), group social work, community work, behavioural social work (it was more of an approach), preventive social work, curative social work, rehabilitation work, resocialization work, corporate social work, penitentiary, and post-penitentiary social work. Since the period, in which the Strieženec's dictionary was created, belongs to the period of change, transformation of the social sphere, it also contains several developmental tendencies. These were not only in terminological innovations, but also in theoretical concepts. One of them was an effective corporate social policy and social work, which was the author's vision, which has not yet been realized in Slovakia. According to Strieženec (1996:163) is "*content of corporate social work management, communication, social structure, social climate, social mobility, effects of work process and social behaviour, hierarchical system of superiority and subordination and its social effects, external relations between company and society, conflicts, hobby, retraining, etc.*". In this context, we can also mention the practical consequence of Strieženec's interest in corporate social work, which was the elaboration of a Comprehensive Project of Corporate Social Policy in the company ŽOS Vrútky (1996). This company is engaged in the maintenance, repair and manufacture of vehicles, especially electric locomotives. Strieženec was also practically involved into this project. Although Strieženec's Dictionary of Social Worker was innovative for its time, we can also identify several older approaches or deficits. For example, social work with the family or family therapy is in deficit. From the point of view of ethics, the author does not deal with the ethics of social work, but with the ethics in social work. He also uses, in some places, terminology, which we would currently call labelling and depersonalizing, for example the term "homeless".

### **Introduction to social work (1999; 2001)**

The first edition of this, one of the first Slovak university social work textbooks was in 1999 (second revised edition in 2001). In addition to Czech and Slovak colleagues, the work identifies the influence of German terminological works and authors (for examples Salomon, Kreft, Dewe, Engelke, Galuske, Lüsi, Rossner, Thiersch, etc.), and to a lesser extent English writers (for example. Richmond, Hollin, etc.). The work is divided by the author into 12 parts so that in principle they contain the all-important theme of education in social work (in terms of the core of the study programme), as understood by Strieženec. Even a brief dictionary is an integral part of the work, under the term terminological-explanatory dictionary of social work. The first part, entitled the humanistic concept of social work, is focused on the person in his social environment. He understands man in a holistic perspective, positively outlines his own theoretical concept of the approach of social work to man, which he describes as "help towards self-help". This principle of social work is very similar to the principle of empowerment. Strieženec (2001c) presents it here at this place, that "it consists in providing help where it is necessary. It is an occasional help with the aim that an individual or group that is not able to realize their goals and tasks on its own can



continue to implement them after the help has been provided. The principle of subsidiarity creates interpersonal relations towards the priority of the human person as the basis of human rights.”

The second part of the work deals with the theoretical and methodological starting point of social work. We could also include the content of the ninth part focused on social research in Slovakia. Strieženec (1998, 2001c) even distinguished up to six starting points in defining social work, its subject, content, goals, tasks, categories, and methodology:

- social work as a practical activity (historical aspect);
- social work as a scientific field (theoretical point of view);
- social work as an independent profession (practical aspect);
- social work as an academic discipline (educational aspect);
- social work research (development aspect);
- intentions of social work and its development trends (integration aspect).

The third part of the publication is the author's original contribution to the relationship between social work and social policy. Strieženec understood Social Policy (1993; 2001c) as a purposeful activity of the state, organizations, institutions, entities, which prevents the causes of social imbalances, creates a space for participation in the balanced development of individuals, groups, communities, and society. During this period, he represents social work in the sense of its global definition (IFSW, 2000), but in terms of its content he understands it as a field that provides social care for a person on a professional basis through special working methods. He tries to apply scientific knowledge to practical activities. He deals with the optimal functioning of social institutions focused on the care, provision and help of individuals, groups, and communities. He states the intersections between the two disciplines implicitly, whereas the dominant (if not exclusive) direction is from social policy to social work. It was not until later that he presented this relationship reciprocally, including from social work to social policy: “He presupposes the creation of feedback with social policy, in order for social work to be an effectively functioning institution. Social work is a verifier of practical social policy, which contributes to the dynamism of socio-economic development as a prerequisite for creating an overall environment for the use of own, personal potential of the individual” (Strieženec, 2003a:60). The socio-political theme in the book is supplemented by the eighth part of the work devoted to social legislation. There he follows three lines: the development of social legislation in Czechoslovakia, then in the independent Slovak Republic, and the internationalization of social rights. We can also include here the twelfth topic, social institutions in Slovakia.

The fourth and fifth parts of the book are devoted to social work as a profession, the process of professionalization, its current problem and its “basic categories”. In these chapters, the author discusses the client, the personality of the social worker, professional principles and, briefly, ethics. Among the important principles of social work presented by Strieženec are, in addition to the above-mentioned holism and “self-help”, respect for human dignity, free decision of the client, observance of confidentiality of information, participation, and competence (literally “the preservation of the scope”). According to the author, in addition, it is important for a social worker to use own personality in social work, his social intelligence, the ability to work in a team. The sixth part is devoted to methods of social work. It is based on works by other authors (Krakešová, 1973; Novotná Schimmerlingová, 1992), paying attention to only three “classical methods of American social work” (case work, also referred to as individual social work, group and community work). An important contribution is the attention paid to supervision, which in this period began to develop in Slovakia under the influence of German supervisors (especially Martin Scherpner). Strieženec (1999; 2001c) sees as the basic goal of supervision the gradual clarification and direction of the activities of a social worker in relation to the client to achieve the anticipated social goals as effectively as possible. In this context, we can state that “the key year for social work and the use of supervision in social work was 1999, when at the initiative of the German-Slovak working group for education of social workers the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak



Republic, supported the professional training of first supervisors in social work (Schavel et al., 2013). The seventh part of the book is focused on planning and designing social development. The special (tenth) part of the field of professional education was professional internships, professional practice, its preparation, and criteria. The use of a computer in the practice of a social worker was an innovative (eleventh) topic at the time in Slovakia.

### **Theory and methodology of social work (2005; 2006)**

The work was published in Slovakia in 2006, the year before it was published in the Czech environment by the Faculty of Health and Social Studies of the University of Ostrava. This is the masterpiece of Strieženec. In terms of writing style, it is basically a continuation of terminological work in the field of social work. According to the content, the author divided the work into three main parts. Man and his problems of social life stand in the centre of the first part. According to the terminology of Sibeon (1990) it is a theory about the client's world. Strieženec's central approach was the concept of man in person in social environment. Under the influence of the global Montreal definition of social work (IFSW, 2000), human rights of man are the culmination of this book. Although the author's primary interest has never been the ethics of social work, he draws attention to human values, the dignity of human life, as well as some bioethical questions (e.g., genetic engineering). In term of the environment, he reflects on the effects of globalization on society as well as on the person who is beginning to be understood as *homo interneticus* (using an expression from Michael Goldhaber). In accordance with content of work, we can also include the subtopic, which is located in the third part of the book, and which is social development. He presents social work as a source of economic and cultural social development. "The mission of social work is to work together to enable all people to develop their potential in the broadest dimensions of human existence, with a clear intention of development tendencies and a manifestation of belonging" (Strieženec, 2006:139). The second part of the book is considered as a central. It is devoted to the methodological problems of social work and the theory of social work. Given Sibeon's typology of theories, these are theories of what social work is and theories of how to do social work. These are always formal theories; Strieženec does not pay attention to informal theories. We will discuss the author's understanding of social work as a science separately. An important note, however, is that Strieženec understood social work as an independent field. The global Montreal definition of social work (IFSW, 2000) has had a significant impact on him (in this part of the book, it basically analyses this in detail). His approach is characterized by the slogan "Think globally, act locally" (Strieženec, 2006:27). The key contribution of the author is his terminological work, specifically the terminology of social work in Slovak written literature. The author is critical of the mechanical adoption of terms from Czech, English, and German languages as well as the uncritical adoption of terms from other fields. "The constitution of social work in Slovakia needs to be supported by the gradual organization of social work terminology." Although the presented publication does not have the title "dictionary or encyclopaedia", its form and content have a dictionary and encyclopaedic character with respect to selected areas of social work. We know from oral tradition that one of the unfulfilled ambitions was the creation of a Slovak encyclopaedia of social work. This aspiration was fulfilled only by the collective work of Slovak authors *Vademecum sociálnej práce* (Vademecum of social work) (Balogová, Žiaková et al., 2017). Methods of social work are not the primary subject of the author's interest. The author uses brief introductions of methods from other Czech and Slovak authors (com. Krakešová, 1973; Charvátová, 1990; Novotná, Schimmerlingová, 1992; Řezníček, 1994; Navrátil, 2000; Tokárová et al., 2002). We remind you that Strieženec made a significant contribution to this area with the often-used term "help towards self-help", which was often used in Slovak social work for the next two decades. Strieženec explained it, as "a client is willing to communicate with a social worker, he shows a willingness to cooperate so that the social worker can look for ways together, and the client participates in overcoming dysfunctional elements. It starts with encouragement, respecting the



client's wishes on the part of the social worker. It is important to respect the client in the fact that it is necessary to treat his feelings very sensitively, keep them in a state of readiness and gradually move in communication with the client to conduct a dialogue about what the client wants and to some extent knows." (Strieženec, 2006:81–82). In the third part of the book, the author focused on social work as a field of education. We will deal with this topic separately.

### **SOCIAL WORK AS AN INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE AND ITS SLOVAK SPECIFICS**

Štefan Strieženec made a significant contribution to the establishment of social work as an independent social science discipline in the Slovak environment. It is possible to support these claims mainly in his attempt to define social work as a scientific discipline, in particular due to ongoing attacks leading to an underestimation of the field of social work, even to its rejection, especially by pedagogues, university teachers in the fields of psychology, social pedagogy or special pedagogy. The arguments of the opponents of the field of social work were clearly named: social work, as a science, does not have its own conceptual apparatus methods as well as theoretical concepts of the given field are not identified. The history related to the given field was not described either. Back in 2012, it was stated at an international scientific conference with the participation of Czech and Slovak university teachers and students of social work that "social work as a science has not yet developed. Even its existence as an academic discipline is questioned as a result (Ondrejko, 2012:146). Strieženec refuted many such claims with his works, especially by works focused on scientific terminology, theory, and methodology of social work (1998; 1999a; 1999b; 2001; 2003a; 2006). He rejects the understanding of social work as a semi discipline or «problem discipline» (2003a; 2006), but understands and presents it as an independent discipline and theoretical-practical field. From the international social work shift in the defining was important for him, namely the Montreal definition of social work (IFSW, 2000; Strieženec, 2001a; 2001c; 2006). According to Strieženec (2006:5) scientific-research and theoretical-practical activity needs to be gradually focused on specific Slovak conditions. He emphasizes Slovak specifics mainly because "every individual human life is connected with the social structure of the existing society, it manifests himself in the interaction with the environment, which we perceive as a specific space of the social sphere in society. This is the part of the problems in interpersonal relations that express concrete, as well as Slovak individual, further group, community, society-wide respect" (Strieženec, 2006:123). The national model of social work (Slovak model of social work) focuses on the use of specific conditions and resources in a concrete country. This presupposes the implementation of specific social research, which would substantively justify and use its procedures so that the entire social system focused on effective use for people (Strieženec, 2006:146).

### **SOCIAL WORK AS AN INDEPENDENT FIELD OF EDUCATION**

After the change of political regime in the 1990s, the need to educate professionals who will be involved in solving social problems on the principle of helping, supporting, and gradually accompanying people in unfavourable social situations opened up. The state was not prepared for this approach, professionals were absent, systematic education of social workers was not established. Until 1990, a postgraduate study in the area of social-law in our educational system existed within the framework of secondary education as a post-secondary form of professional preparation for those interested in working in the social area. Reflections on the necessity of systematic preparation of professionally erudite social workers were attempts at specializations in previously established fields of study such as andragogy and sociology. Strieženec (2006:121), on the other hand, sees the beginnings of social work as a field of education in the search for published rights in Czechoslovakia (Novotná, Schimmerlingová, 1992) and looking around the world, finding out the state of education in other countries.





According to Strieženec (2001:4), “Social work, as a field of study in Slovakia, began to be significantly profiled in the 1990s as an independent field of study, and a concept was gradually developed in the education of social work at universities. It is a professional study aimed at preparing experts for practical performances in various areas of economic and social life at university-type faculties and in the form of higher professional study with a strong practical orientation.” An independent field of social work in university education in Slovakia dated by the establishment of the Department of Social Work at the Pedagogical Faculty, Comenius University in Bratislava in 1991. It was the result of an implemented project between the university and foreign partners. Its origin and development connected mainly with the names of the then dean Miroslav Bažány, then Štefan Strieženec, at that time associate professor, Vladimír Labáth and Ján Gabura, who became the head of the department. At the Department of Social Work, Strieženec focused on study subjects such as social policy, theory, and methodology of social work, social projects, and corporate social work. He was the only one who began to deal with the extraordinary zeal of theory, methodology and terminology of social work in Slovakia, which resulted in the first comprehensive publications in the field of social work. His publishing activities, which we mentioned above, contributed to a significant improvement in the academic training of social workers in the field. Strieženec belongs to the group of university teachers, who emphasized the independence and peculiarity of the study field of social work compared to those who tried to understand it as a subcommittee. Strieženec retrospectively recalls that the publication *Úvod do sociálnej práce* (Introduction to Social Work Strieženec, 1999) played a role as an attempt to reintegrate material for the study of social work in Slovakia. The written speech of students and teachers was important for Strieženec as well as the quality of seminar and final thesis at the university. Together with Rastislav Bednárík, they therefore published a handbook *Písomno študijné-kvalifikačné prejavy v odbore sociálna práca* (Written study-qualification speeches in the field of social work, 2000). They understood it as another contribution that responds to the needs of developing social work in Slovakia. Also, Strieženec’s terminological interest cannot be overlooked in this guide (At the end is a glossary of terms).

Strieženec (2003a:50) critically pointed out that “in the field of teaching, the previous formation of social work has struggled with the problem of HOW to teach social work in Slovakia and less attention has been paid to the substantial progress of WHAT we have to teach in social work.” The quality of education and the application of graduates in practice were the main topics discussed by Strieženec with educators and experts from practice. He contributed to the development of social work by organizing the important international conference European Consortium of Social Professions with Educational and Social Studies entitled *Príprava sociálnych profesií pre budúcu Európu* (Preparing Social Professions for the Future Europe) in 1999. The teaching process should take place as theoretical and practical information on the usability of the results of the current state of scientific knowledge effectively create a strategic concept for the development and solution of social problems in specific everyday practice (Strieženec, 2003a:55). From the point of view of the vision, it was also important for Strieženec to “develop basic educational standards, which should bring the organization of their content for individual levels of education in the field of social work” (Strieženec, 2006:131).

In the 1990s, Štefan Strieženec was one of the initiators (along with Anna Tokárová) of a meeting of educators in social work in creating the characteristics of the field of study and its subject composition, as well as in the definition of social work in relation to other social science disciplines. Improving the education of social workers led to the description of the study program of social work (curriculum) at Slovak universities (formally approved in 2003) after mutual communication between universities and colleges. In this context, Štefan Strieženec initiated the establishment of an organization that would cover universities and educators in social work. According to Schavel (2012), the preparatory committee for the establishment of the Association of Educators in Social Work (AVSP) consisted of university teachers Alžbeta Mrázová, Štefan



Strieženec, and Milan Schavel. AVSP was established as a civic association, whose main goal is to bring together educators to support education in the field of social work. It was registered at the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic in 2002. Strieženec understood AVSP (2006:126) as “a professional organization which, with its seriousness and natural authority, should monitor and help focus of the social work in Slovakia. It creates content-based, systematic methodological and methodological procedures in the training of professionals in the social sphere, supporting the enabling of all people to develop their human potential. Strieženec was its first chairman until his death in 2006, when Milan Schavel was elected as a new chairman. At the initiative of Strieženec, Slovak AVSP has become an important partner in the publication of the professional Czech-Slovak journal Sociální práce / Sociálna práca since 2003.

### **VISION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL CHAMBER**

Strieženec (2006:126) often emphasized the need to establish a professional organization of the Chamber of Social Workers, which should fulfil the function of a joint attempt to establish an institution whose functionality and legislative powers based on the mission of social work. He understood the Chamber as “a self-governing professional organization, which will unite social workers, protect and defend the rights of members of the Chamber, including the working conditions necessary for the performance of the profession of social worker. The Chamber will also comment on the professional and ethical qualifications of social workers. On the basis of specific professional approaches, it will issue certificates authorizing the performance of the profession of social worker in the non-state sphere” (Strieženec, 2003a:60). For these reasons, as chairman of the AVSP, he initiated the establishment of the Chamber of Social Workers, which was widely discussed with colleagues at the association’s meetings. He also created theoretical starting points for this goal.

Part of Strieženec’s (2006) last publication was a specific pragmatic bill on the establishment of the Slovak Chamber of Social Workers. Unfortunately, this goal was not achieved during Strieženec’s life. His vision was continued by the new chairman of the AVSP, Milan Schavel, who initiated three important meetings with representatives of the ministry. An important outcome was that the program statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the years 2012–2016 included that “the government will create conditions for professional ensuring performance of social work.” In 2014, a professional law on social work was approved in Slovakia, specifically Act no. 219/2014 Coll. on social work and on the conditions for the performance of certain professional activities in the field of social affairs and the family (Mátl, Schavel, 2015). This law fundamentally contributed to the professionalization of social work in four key areas: 1. establishing the necessary qualification preconditions for the performance of social work by social work assistants (bachelor’s university education in the field of social work) and social workers (master’s university education in the field of social work), thus excluding higher professional education and fields outside social work; 2. the establishment of the Slovak Chamber of Social Workers and Social Work Assistants as its professional organization; 3. creating conditions for the development of specializations in social work; 4. creating conditions for independent practice of social work, the competence of its approval was given to the chamber. The activities of the chamber began in September 2015. In terms of the scope of the Chamber, it primarily protects the rights and interests of its members in connection with the performance of social work, issues a code of ethics and opinions on ethical issues of the profession, provides free counselling to members of the Chamber in connection with the performance of social work and mediates to members of the Chamber, if necessary, representation in court proceedings in matters related to the performance of social work” (Section 15 of Act no. 219/2014 Coll.). The establishment of a professional chamber fulfilled Strieženec’s predicted vision.



## CONCLUSION

Levická (in Brnula et al., 2016) asked an inspiring question at a conference on the history of social work: “Who all should be perceived as a representative of social work? Should it be authorities who belong to the academic community and who may never have done practical social work such as Štefan Strieženec? Or rather practitioners who have never been scientifically active such as Serafina Hermanová? Or should they fulfil both attributes?” At the same time, the global understanding of social work, as represented by the latest global definition from Melbourne (IFSW, 2014), no longer sees social work only as a profession, but also as an academic discipline. Social workers are understood in a narrow sense not only as persons who carry out direct practice (practitioners), but also as educators and researchers (cf. Mátel, 2019). From this perspective, Štefan Strieženec was a social worker, teacher, educator, and scientist. Due to his practical participation in corporate social work in a particular company, we can also see the practical dimension of his work (which few people knew about) in the hitherto neglected social area in Slovakia. In the breakthrough year of 1989, Strieženec was already 51 years old. Much of his work was related to pedagogy and social policy of the communist regime. He was an ideologically controversial figure for many people. The fact is, however, that Strieženec put all his pedagogical, philological, knowledge, scientific, and prognostic potential into the service of the (old) new educational and scientific field – into social work. We can rightly consider him a pioneer of modern Slovak social work.

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# "The Landlord Treads on Them, so Everything's Fine": Exploitation and Forced Mobility in Substandard Private Rental Housing in Czechia

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** This study explores the representation of the private landlords' practices that may contribute to housing insecurity and forced mobility in Czech segregated areas. **THEORETICAL BASE:** Following debate on the "poverty business", the study uses literature on Roma marginalization, sociology of eviction and housing studies. **METHODS:** The thematic analysis of 167 documents published mainly by the Agency of Social Inclusion was conducted. **OUTCOMES:** The landlords' practices are analyzed in four areas: overcharging rent and other payments, tenancy contracts, disinvestment, and coercion. Their relation to housing security and eviction is pointed out. **SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS:** Social workers shall continue to embrace the issue of exploitative practices in private rental housing and use social work methods to reduce the power asymmetry in the tenant-landlord relationships, prevent eviction, and improve rental and housing conditions. Tenant stigmatization should be countered by exposing the agency of other actors and structural factors that co-produce housing insecurity and forced mobility.

## Keywords

exploitation, forced mobility, eviction, rental housing, private landlords, Roma

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## INTRODUCTION

One way to make sense of forced residential mobility is through eviction. Defined as the “expulsion or removal of one or multiple individuals from a premises or land for reasons such as a breach of contract, unlawful occupation or urban development” (Vols, Belloir, Hoffmann et al., 2019:n.p.),<sup>4</sup> the process of eviction has been recently scrutinized in the context of urban marginality and social inequality (e.g., Desmond, 2016; Greif, 2018; Lancione, 2019). The research reveals that the structural developments are pivotal in explaining why evictions take place, although they are mediated by agency and interactional patterns between tenants, landlords, financial institutions, and the state. It is in this sense that Susanne Soederberg (2018) conceptualizes evictions from rental property as “a global capitalist phenomenon” and situates it within the broader framework of political economy, referencing the literature that recognizes the increasing commodification and financialization of housing in contemporary societies (cf. Aalbers, 2016).

In Czechia, these processes are linked to the transition from state socialism to neoliberal capitalism. Liberalization of the centrally planned economy, privatization of state properties, and deregulation of social interactions, including rent deregulation, weakening of the protection of tenants, and restrictions in access to welfare benefits, have produced housing insecurity which particularly affects low-income individuals with different types of stigma. These people are over-represented in the private rental sector where many find only housing of substandard quality and/or in segregated areas (Lux, Teller, Sunega, 2018). The residential segregation in Czech towns and cities has an obvious ethnic dimension, as poor Roma have been relegated to certain locations (GAC, 2015).

In addition to structuralist accounts that revolve around the notion of lower socio-economic status of Roma on average and the corresponding distribution of housing in terms of quality, the intensification of segregation after 1989 was related to practices of landlords (Baršová, 2003; Moravec, 2006). Eviction has been central in displacing some Roma to substandard and often exploitative housing that tends to perpetuate the poverty of its inhabitants and to entrap many within a cycle of recurring mobility, while substantially draining public resources as a consequence. At the governmental level, this was acknowledged by a series of measures designed to “combat poverty entrepreneurs” (MPSV, 2019a). One of the first was the 2016 amendment of the Act on Assistance in Material Need that allowed municipalities to halt the provision of a housing supplement<sup>5</sup> to people with a new tenancy contract in selected areas. By the end of 2019, 88 municipalities have taken advantage of this option, mostly in order to assert control over the mobility of the poor, which is allegedly encouraged by those entrepreneurs (IPSI, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> The word “eviction” is usually understood in legal terms. In the Czech context, the word connotes a court decision (Kynclová, Vašňovská, Janoušková et al., 2006:34), as this was once necessary in order to execute the eviction of tenants. Under the regulation of the Civil Code (Act No. 89/2012 Coll.), this is no longer true. The court becomes part of the process only if the tenant has objected to the termination of the tenancy contract. As tenancy is legally protected, the landlord may terminate the contract prematurely only for reasons given by law, and this act must be in compliance with additional legal provisions. We depart from this legalistic view, rather using a sociological definition that allows us to cover not only legal but also illegal instances of eviction, as well as situations that are legally unclear. As shown below, this is often the case of substandard private rental housing in the country.

<sup>5</sup> There are two housing benefits: housing allowance and housing supplement. People may get a housing allowance if their housing costs exceed 30% of their income (35% in Prague), including welfare benefits, and have permanent residence registered at the given place of abode (to be proven by a title deed or lease). A housing supplement can also be drawn if the income is still insufficient to secure adequate housing and the applicant is in material need (indicated by receiving a housing allowance that covers basic needs, typically by the unemployed). As proof of permanent residence is not required, this benefit is usually provided to people in substandard housing, including hostels (see below). Both benefits are administered by the Labor Office (cf. European Commission, 2019).



This paper aims to continue to study the renting of substandard housing in segregated areas. Since this is still an emerging field of research in the country and has been mainly developed as a side-product of studies focused otherwise (but see Frištenská, 2000; Baršová, 2003; Mikulec, Ripka, Snopek, 2017), we are convinced that the reconstruction of the existing knowledge on this subject may be beneficial for both researchers and social workers.

To achieve this, an analysis of documents mainly produced by the Agency for Social Inclusion is performed. The Agency provides government assistance to municipalities in tackling the issue of “socially excluded localities” (SELs; Hurrle, Sýkora, Trlifajová et al., 2016), as locations inhabited by a number of poor Roma are officially called and where “poverty entrepreneurs” are typically assumed to operate. The assistance involves the production of the so-called situational analyses (*situační analýzy*), which map the condition of social exclusion at the local level, including its specific aspects such as housing or residential mobility. As such, these documents comprise the most comprehensive archive of public knowledge about the phenomena in question. We analyze them in order to answer the research question: How are the practices of private landlords in SELs that may contribute to tenants’ housing insecurity and increase the risk of forced mobility represented in the documents?

First, the “poverty business” is contextualized using the literature on Roma marginalization and SELs. Then, the methodology of our research is introduced. The third part presents the findings of the empirical analysis, centering on the construction of private landlords in SELs and four categories of practices: overcharging rent and utilities, disinvestment, tenancy contracts, and coercion. To conclude, we discuss how social policy and social workers may use the presented findings.

## THE “POVERTY BUSINESS” IN CONTEXT

The term “poverty business” lacks a clear definition, although it frequently appears in government documents (e.g., ASZ, 2016a; MPSV, 2019b; 2020) and media discourse (Kupka, Brendzová, Walach et al., 2018). A media analysis demonstrated that this notion generally refers to profit-driven practices that exploit the situation of the marginalized, whether this means providing unreported jobs, high-interest lending, or renting substandard dwellings for inflated prices that are possible due to a relatively generous welfare system (Kupka, Walach, Brendzová et al., 2019). However, it is the latter meaning that gained prominence and now seems to be predominantly associated with the notion, which is also reflected in academic discourse. For instance, Lux, Teller, and Sunega (2018:130) draw attention to the profitability of providing rental housing to a large number of Roma and other vulnerable households that creates financial incentives for speculators under the rubric of “business with poverty.”

The conduct of “poverty entrepreneurs”, as well as the moral frames often applied to them (see below), indicate an affinity between the notions of poverty entrepreneurs and rogue landlords or slumlords. Reviewing the literature on this subject, Vols and Belloir (2019:3) identified characteristics that distinguish these landlords: exploitation and the unruly treatment of tenants, discrimination, substandard housing, the use of property for illegal activities, and tax evasion. These characteristics correspond to the representation of “poverty entrepreneurs” in the Czech discourse including the documents analyzed in this study. In this regard, the current paper may be seen as introducing the Czech context into the international debate on the landlords who abuse their superior position to pursue predatory interests (cf. Cowan, 1999:423–446; Aalbers, 2006; Lind, Blomé, 2012; Oliveri, 2019). What follows is a brief account of how “poverty entrepreneurs” established themselves in Czechia, focusing on the practices that they have used in doing so.

Together with the decrease in income of many low-skilled workers in the post-socialist period, it was the closure of the public and private rental housing systems that has enabled turning the housing of marginalized people into “a lucrative business” (ASZ, 2016a:1). Standard housing



options are denied to some tenants based on their inability to meet requirements such as paying a high security deposit or absence of rent arrears in the case of municipalities or private landlords with a larger housing stock. Ethnic discrimination also plays a role. Landlords are often reluctant to lease to Roma, as suggested by both experimental (Bartoš, Bauer, Chytilová et al., 2013) and self-report studies (FRA, 2018; Toušek, Walach, Kupka et al., 2018a:146–147). On the side of marginalized groups, this closure, in conjunction with non-existent laws on social housing, leads to high housing insecurity and readiness to accept housing under conditions that others would reject as inappropriate. Exorbitant rents and worse quality of housing are typically mentioned in this respect (cf. Mikulec, Ripka, Snopek, 2017; Klusáček, 2018).

The increase in the number of Roma displaced from public housing, usually due to rent debt and related default charges (Bařšová, 2003), was paralleled by the increase in reported cases of their exploitation by private landlords. Already in the 1990s, some of the owners who acquired properties in the privatization process harassed sitting tenants in order to deprive them of the rights to use the apartment that they possessed notwithstanding the change in ownership. This also involved cases of illegal evictions, some of which were later canceled by the courts (Frištnská, 2000).<sup>6</sup> Housing security of tenants was high at that time. It included a tenancy contract for an indefinite period, a guarantee of lower-than-market rents as well as allowing very limited reasons for eviction, which, moreover, was to be exclusively ordered by a court. This has produced a situation where it was virtually impossible for landlords to remove the tenants from privatized properties legally. Once this displacement was over, other forms of exploitation appeared.

It was social workers who were among the first to point out that housing poor Roma may be more profitable than evicting them. The so-called “Roma housing business” was identified in the Karlovy Vary region where dwellings were rented without the supply of hot water for amounts that would be unaffordable for tenants unless they received a housing allowance. However, this benefit only covered part of the rent, which made some tenants run into debt (Kyša, 2005). This approach proved even more profitable after the Act on Assistance in Material Need, passed in 2006, allowed tenants without a standard tenancy contract to draw the housing supplement (IPSI, 2020). As a consequence, the speculative practice of turning hostels designed to provide short-term accommodation for workers into long-term housing for marginalized people has expanded, reaching the amount of 27,000 recipients of the housing supplement in hostels in 2014 (GAC, 2015:14).

The mushrooming of such hostels was interrupted when the government started to regulate the provision of housing supplements in 2015. Many hostel operators may have decided to quit the business since then, but others have found ways to continue, such as moving the residents to standard apartments where they can receive a housing allowance (see ASZ, 2016a). Another practice is the exploitation of other apartment owners in a condominium. This is done through non-payment of fees for jointly purchased services (water and sewage, heat, waste collection, cleaning services, etc.) and contributions to the common fund used to cover maintenance, including potential credit obligations. In some locations, this practice led to the heat and hot water supply being stopped. This, in turn, caused the devastation of buildings and the departure of their inhabitants (cf. ASZ, 2019a).

Although the causes of tenant mobility are much more diverse, increased residential mobility is one of the consequences of the “poverty business.” This was suggested by research conducted in SELs. While Toušek, Walach, Kupka et al. (2018b:29–30) found out that the inhabitants of

<sup>6</sup> Owners also used *winkling*, which involves “offering of financial inducements to tenants so as to persuade them to leave their accommodation” (Nelken, 2013:51) usually under rent control. All these practices were part of broader gentrification processes that were driven by the restoration of capitalism. Once-dilapidated city centers where poor Roma and other stigmatized groups were often allocated, have become a locus of capital accumulation, and this has also changed patterns of how different groups occupy urban space (cf. Růžicka, 2010).



these localities tend to move more often than their neighbors from other parts of town, Hruška, Foldynová, Juráš et al. (2016:106) argued that “the main motivation for migration is the loss of housing, or the opportunity to get better housing.” Rent arrears usually precede the loss and are partly caused by high rent and utility charges. Since the inhabitants suffer from housing insecurity, they often have to accept the conditions that put them at risk of forced mobility (ibid.:97). Part of our analysis is to contextualize the act of eviction via examining landlords’ practices that make tenants more likely to fail to make proper payments or otherwise motivate their movement.

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

The dataset consists of situational analyses and other documents produced by the Agency for Social Inclusion, which was established in 2008 to help municipalities with the social inclusion of SELs’ population. Since the implementation of social inclusion policy is decentralized, the Agency’s main role lies in the coordination of local stakeholders, both public and non-governmental, involved in social policy and the stimulation of their cooperation. To this end, the Agency and the stakeholders create a “local partnership” that plans, organizes, and implements the social inclusion policy on the local level as a collective body (Lysek, Ryšavý, 2021). Part of this is the elaboration of the situational analysis, which maps the situation of social exclusion in the municipality and the capacities of local social policy actors. Covering a spectrum of issues, the situational analysis relies on research using both quantitative and qualitative methods, including interviews with local officials, residents of SELs, and landlords. The research is conducted by either the Agency’s employees or outsourced staff.<sup>7</sup>

We identified 150 situational analyses using the Agency’s website ([www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz](http://www.socialni-zaclenovani.cz))<sup>8</sup>, adding another 17 documents about the poor Roma housing. These were mainly produced by non-governmental organizations working with marginalized people in segregated areas. These 167 documents concerned at least 210 municipalities in all regions of Czechia and were produced between 2005 and 2020 by more than 100 researchers from 15 institutions.<sup>9</sup>

The variability of researchers, together with the developing structure of the documents and the different nature of research, make the dataset diverse and comprehensive. There are also some limits. The research usually lasted up to several months. The depth of insight into a local setting or specific issues is thus rather restricted. Furthermore, the “poverty business” was not central to any document, although some paid more attention to it than others. Only rarely were researchers able to examine the issue in more detail, resulting in a situation in which the information is frequently just presented as told to a researcher rather than analyzed, or it is analyzed but without sufficiently describing the circumstances. This is especially important when researchers frame some practices as immoral or illegal.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the data proved valuable in identifying the variety of

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the Czech social policy and the role of the Agency see MPSV (2020).

<sup>8</sup> Under the heading of situational analyses, we also include documents titled “initial analysis” (*úvodní analýza*) or “thematic study” (*tematický výzkum*), as they basically fit our characterization of situational analyses.

<sup>9</sup> The list of the analyzed documents is available here: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352061630\\_The\\_Landlord\\_Treads\\_on\\_Them\\_so\\_Everything's\\_Fine\\_Exploitation\\_and\\_Forced\\_Mobility\\_in\\_Substandard\\_Private\\_Rental\\_Housing\\_in\\_Czechia\\_dataset](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352061630_The_Landlord_Treads_on_Them_so_Everything's_Fine_Exploitation_and_Forced_Mobility_in_Substandard_Private_Rental_Housing_in_Czechia_dataset).

<sup>10</sup> This study works within the interpretative paradigm of social sciences. Some authors of the documents are also aware that the truth value of statements they present based on their interviews with respondents is contentious (e.g., Radostný, Štěpánková, Vališ, 2014:20; Konečná, Konečný, Hájková et al., 2018:30). Keeping this in mind, it should be made clear that the status of the information present in the data is not verified and shall be determined in subsequent research. The issues of morality and legality should also be elucidated.





practices that characterize the renting of substandard housing in SELs and making visible their possible impact on tenant housing security.

We conducted a thematic analysis using MAXQDA 2020 software. First, we coded all segments of the documents that referred to private landlords' practices with a set of codes derived from the literature. This set included general categories such as housing quality, housing costs, illicit practices, or eviction. As a result, 2,686 segments were coded across all documents. Second, the coded segments were re-examined in order to identify sub-categories, and these were then used as specific codes within the category to which they belonged. This stage generated 22 different types of practices. In the last stage, the identified practices were re-classified based on whether they related to overcharging rents and other payments, tenancy contracts, disinvestment, or coercion. The four categories represent the basic scheme of the exploitative system of the "poverty business," which produces, among other things, forced mobility. These categories also form the analytical framework of the following empirical study. Our arguments refer to particular documents but given the limited space we only cite selected examples.

## PRIVATE LANDLORDS AND THEIR PRACTICES

Four characteristics are crucial in terms of the representation of private landlords in the data. The first is economic rationality. Private landlords are depicted as profit-driven actors who strive to maximize their revenue. Along with demanding the highest possible rents, this can be accomplished by property expansion. Some landlords place more unrelated people in one dwelling (Hajská, Pixová, Hurrle et al., 2013:23–24) or split their properties into multiple smaller apartments to accommodate more households (Štěpánková, Lomozová, 2013:12). Others purchase new properties, typically in deprived regions where out-migration has caused a surplus of cheap dwellings. This expansion is sometimes framed as "*speculation*", which points not only to the fact that these properties are bought with intention to rent but also to the perceived immorality of this business, which promises a high return on investment but produces negative externalities (cf. Socioklub, 2009:10–12; ASZ, 2016b:63).

Second, private landlords are often said to "*specialize*" in welfare recipients, usually poor Roma but also non-Roma who are disadvantaged in the regular rental market due to a variety of reasons (Hajská, Pixová, Hurrle et al., 2013:122). This orientation contrasts with the approach of other private landlords who tend to discriminate against these groups of people because they are seen as "risky" tenants, mainly in terms of rent arrears (cf. Bierre, Howden-Chapman, Signal, 2010).

Third, part of the specialization is the idea of "*know-how*", which concerns practices designed to eliminate the risk and keep the business going (Křištof, 2013:13). Omitting the security deposit to make housing accessible to the poor, assistance in applying for welfare benefits, creating a power of attorney to allow the landlord to deal directly with public institutions, the institute of direct payment<sup>11</sup>, setting strict rules to regulate the everyday life of tenants, obliging certain tenants to cooperate, collaboration with other landlords, and debt collection are some examples of the risk-management practices we have identified.

Finally, moral frames are applied to private landlordism, mostly to denounce practices associated with the "poverty business." Although the argument of "risky" tenants occurs (Korecká, Smékalová, 2019:22), renting to marginalized people is framed as immoral based on the notion of abusing people who have little to choose from given the closed opportunities for standard housing – and all this is financed via welfare benefits (Šolková, 2015:24). The moral economy framework is clear just

<sup>11</sup> This is our translation of *institut přímé úhrady*. This legal instrument allows a direct transfer of housing benefits from the state to the landlord and the homeowners association to secure rent payment and utilities payments on time. It is used in cases where there is a perceived "real" risk the funds will be misused by residents and/or landlords.



from the expressions used to characterize the private landlords or their business: “*unfair apartment owners*” (Vepřková, 2016:38), “*mafia*” (Štěpánková, Lomozová, 2013:12), “*obscenely high rents*” (GAC, 2009a:36), “*housing usury*” (Bedřich, 2019:14), or “*housing serfdom*” (Křištof, 2013:22).<sup>12</sup>

“Undeserved” earnings are not the only reason for moralism. The consequences of this business for everyday life of inhabitants in SELs or their surroundings are sometimes presented as even more important. Tenants of the “poverty entrepreneurs” are often mentioned as a source of disorder, which entails “annoying” living, increased alcohol and drug consumption, vandalism and crime. Likewise, the exchange value of properties is said to be falling. Whether these constructions are justified or not (cf. Dvořáková, 2017:37–40), they produce a demand for redress on the part of landlords. As shown below, satisfying this demand is sometimes done at the expense of tenant well-being.

### Overcharging rent and other payments

Rent and utility payments may be a heavy burden for certain groups of people (cf. Desmond, 2018). Certainly, this is true for some inhabitants of SELs. There are three ways how rent is constructed as overcharged in the data. First, the amount of the rent is said not to correspond to the quality of housing, which is typically deemed low. The social worker quoted in a document to illustrate the poor quality of housing claimed: “*These private landlords give people substandard housing, often it's not even fit for living. And they want outrageous money*” (Kroupa, Paleček, 2014:26). Second, the rent demanded in a SEL is compared to the rent charged outside the locality, both in private and public housing. That renting from private landlords in SELs is more expensive is sometimes substantiated by stating the total amount of monthly rent and/or price per square meter. Also, categories such as “average rent in the municipality” or “the amount of rent that is usual in the place” are used to demonstrate this disproportion. In some cases, these characteristics are combined:

*“The Šumavská hostel, an accommodation unit of approximately 48 m<sup>2</sup>, sets the rent for a family of four at approximately CZK 10,800.<sup>13</sup> Based on the rent map of the Ministry of Regional Development, the rental of a standard-quality apartment of approximately 65 m<sup>2</sup> in Větrní ranges from CZK 3,198 to CZK 5,499 a month. According to the Větrní housing department, renting a standard-quality municipal apartment of approximately 65 m<sup>2</sup> costs CZK 2,294 per month”* (Pelikánová, Šmoldas, 2013:16).

Although payments for utilities are included in the hostel rent, as is usually the case in this type of housing, the quotation above suggests that the rent charged by private landlords in SELs can be two to three times higher. This range – up to three times – was also mentioned in other documents that compared the rents of private and public landlords (ASZ, 2016b:91; Büchlerová, Kubíčková, 2017:19). The lower municipal rent is expectable to the extent that this type of housing may be considered a public service. The comparison between municipal and private housing was probably meant to highlight a mismatch between the amount of rent charged by private landlords and the needs of marginalized tenants.

We can infer this also from the last manner of presenting private landlords’ rent as inappropriate: the amount is not proportionate to the income of tenants who are mostly welfare recipients. The following quote illustrates this with respect to the detrimental effects that arise as a result:

*“Since the required rent often exceeds the amount of the housing supplement, people have to top up the rent from the living allowance or other sources. This leads to persistence in actual poverty (one of the respondents calculated the remaining funds after paying rent to CZK 500 per person per month)”* (ASZ, 2018:38).

<sup>12</sup> To be clear, in some of these expressions we quote people interviewed by the documents’ authors. We usually do not distinguish who the speaker is in the analysis, since we are not primarily interested in particular perspectives but in the content of documents.

<sup>13</sup> As of 1 June 2021, EUR 1 is CZK 25,46.



The role of charging exorbitant rents in exacerbating tenants' marginality, which results in the lack of resources to satisfy basic needs, is also mentioned in other documents (e.g., Pixová, Ripka, 2013:34; Vepřková, 2016:38; Topinková, Topinka, 2017:78).

Rent overcharge is not the only way to increase return. There are many specific "extra" payments that range from small to larger amounts, and that may eventually lead to the inability to pay the rent itself. At hostels, landlords charge tenants for having visitors, for a single use of the washing machine, Internet access (Dvořáková, 2015a:78), for using one's own refrigerator or television (Jedináková, Pischová, 2013:20–21), for hot water in a shared shower (Kvasnička 2010:80), for access to a shared kitchen, and renting furniture owned by the landlord (Rákoczyová, Šimíková, Trbola, 2013:95,108). In apartments, tenants additionally pay for using furniture that was part of the rented apartment (Konečná, Konečný, Hájková et al., 2018:26), having the cesspool emptied (ASZ, 2019b:5), and confirmation of the amount of rent paid that is necessary to claim housing benefits (Vepřková, 2016:38).

Although these payments are legal by definition, some of them give the impression of fraud. This applies to fees for services such as waste collection or cleaning in the common areas that the landlords failed to provide (Hajská, Pixová, Hurre et al., 2013:49; Vepřková, 2016:38). Also, inconsistencies in the annual account of water and heat deposits or absence thereof were reported. Either the landlord demanded payment of arrears that he fabricated (ASZ, 2016b:79) or did not return the amount overpaid (Vepřková, 2016:38). Some landlords were said to require extra payments off the book under the threat of eviction (Kafková, Sokačová, Szénassy, 2012:78), or to withhold a security deposit (Radostný, Štěpánková, Vališ, 2015:52), or refused to return the tenants' property after they evicted them under false pretenses:

*"We encountered cases where former residents reported that their deposit was not refunded. The owner allegedly justified this by claiming that the residents had damaged the furnishings, which the informants deny. This led some of them to file a criminal complaint"* (Pelikánová, Šmol das, 2013:33).

### Tenancy contracts

Tenancy contracts are another important factor of housing insecurity and forced mobility. Landlords may condition the contract by special fees, both refundable and non-refundable. A deposit standardly equal to one or more monthly rents is to be returned unless the tenant fails to pay rent, damages the dwelling or furnishings, or in hostels, violates the accommodation rules. Since tenants are unable to save up for a standard deposit, some landlords prefer "admission" fees, which are typically lower (Dvořáková, 2017:16). Much higher fees were also reported and sometimes raised suspicions of fraud, as this quotation suggests:

*"A company represented by a [lawyer] moves socially vulnerable people from [the region] into partially renovated apartments and even collects a fee of CZK 50,000 to 80,000 from tenants for a fixed-term contract, depending on the size of the apartment. New tenants do not realize that the contract has time-limited validity and trust the verbal agreement, which assures them of permanent housing"* (Socioklub, 2009:12–13).

Three types of contracts are offered: lease, sublease, and accommodation contract. They are primarily distinguished by the range of tenant rights and obligations of the parties involved, and rental period. They also entitle the tenant to different housing benefits. Briefly, while the lease contract usually provides long-term rental period, the most tenancy protection and the option to draw both types of housing benefits, the accommodation contract offers the least. However, the differences between these contracts may be manipulated. To allow for an easier eviction, the accommodation contract can be used for regular apartments where lease or sublease contracts are more suitable. Contrariwise, landlords can provide the lease contract in hostels where the accommodation contract is typical (ASZ, 2018:36; Konečná, Konečný, Hájková et al., 2018:26), the motivation being to allow the drawing of a housing allowance. The cost of greater protection against eviction, guaranteed by the lease agreement, is then eliminated by a short-term rental period.



Contracts are usually provided for maximally one year – often one to six months – and repeatedly renewed until not. Provisions favoring landlords then include short or missing notice periods, high default charges or the requirement to issue unlimited power of attorney for the landlord to negotiate with official authorities. Some of these provisions were deemed entirely illegal by the officials interviewed, but the tenants often are not able to effectively verify the validity (Hajská, Pixová, Hurrle et al., 2013:50–51; Charvát, 2019:12). This also applies to the “ban” on permanent residence. Whatever the reason, the practice makes drawing a housing allowance impossible (and drawing other benefits more difficult) and thus reduces the income of some tenants (Hurrle, Kučera, Trlifajová, 2013:82).

Some contracts are clearly fraudulently concluded when the technical condition of the rented property is falsified. Apparently a common practice (cf. Dvořáková 2015b:18; Korecká, 2016:44), some landlords make tenants sign a contract that falsely declares the technical condition of the apartment as good, as shown in this quote:

*“During fieldwork [...] we met three different people who had been cheated by the same person. The scenario was always the same – after paying the deposit, it turned out that the house did not meet the requirements as promised, including the electrical wiring. When the tenants complained, the landlord threw them out and did not return the money”* (Radostný, Štěpánková, Vališ, 2015:52).

However, landlords sometimes break even relatively balanced contracts. In terms of eviction, the most striking case of breach of contract is the unlawful premature termination of the contract (Jedináková, Pischová, 2013:39) and the refusal to provide documents required by official authorities. The latter is typically related to drawing housing benefits. The Labor Office insists on submitting invoices concerning housing costs as part of the assessment of the benefits’ proper use. For example, tenants reported that an authorized janitor responsible for rent collection failed to provide proof of rent payment (Dvořáková, 2013:36). Another relevant document is the confirmation that the tenant is debtless. If tenants fail to submit any of these documents, housing benefits may be suspended. Landlords may exploit this dependence to prevent the tenant from leaving, as this quote assumes:

*“The research team met a tenant claiming that she asked the landlord for a confirmation of debtlessness because she wanted to find more suitable housing. Although she has no debt, the landlord refuses to provide the confirmation. It is likely that if she moved out, the landlord would fail to find another tenant. This is the obvious motivation of his behaviour”* (Konečná, Konečný, Hájková et al., 2018:29).

Some tenants have no written contract, which prevents them from drawing housing benefits, and have zero protection against eviction. For the landlords, this means not only virtually unlimited power over tenants but also higher profits through income tax evasion. Both were described thusly: *“[Landlords] rent their houses to low-income families without any written contract [...] In this way, the owners break the law (by tax evasion) and expose the tenants to inconveniences. Since families have no proof of rent payment, they cannot apply for housing benefits at the Labor Office, the housing is paid from their living allowance. In other words, some private landlords keep these households in a desperate economic situation”* (Dvořáková, 2013:76–77).

## Disinvestment

Rent overcharge and problematic contracts often co-occur with disinvestment in rented property maintenance. In fact, the low quality of housing seems to be the most prevalent characteristic of private landlordism, although exceptions exist and municipal housing may be even worse, also from a tenant perspective (Křištof, 2013:9). “Low quality” is a euphemism to describe dwellings as unfit for habitation. The property exterior is dilapidated, plaster is peeling, and surroundings neglected. Entrance doors and windows may be damaged, missing, or replaced by improvised devices. The quotation below illustrates the common practice of passing maintenance costs to tenants:

*“We moved from Krásná Lípa to Ústí [nad Labem], but it didn’t work out for us there. The landlord wanted CZK 6,000 for substandard. There were no door frames, we had to fix it and he even raised our*



rent. There was no bathroom, [the walls] were not plastered at all, covered, the floors were not made, the windows were cracked.” (Hajská, Pixová, Hurrle et al., 2013:57).

Undermaintained dwellings are poorly insulated, sometimes causing moldy floors, walls, and ceilings, or freezing of the water supply or sewage systems (SocioFactor, 2013:44, Šolková, 2015:33). The heating, if working, is often insufficient, as inefficient heating sources such as local solid fuel stoves or local gas heaters are used. When supplemented with electric heaters, the tenants’ financial costs increase dramatically (electricity costs more than gas). Sanitary conditions are even worse if the heat, electricity, or (hot) water supply is stopped due to debts, whether caused by the landlord or tenants. Overcrowding, if present, further exacerbates hygienic concerns, bringing rodents and insects as well as diseases (Jedináková, Pischová, 2013:23; Pelikánová, Šmoldas, 2013:60). Dysentery, jaundice, and pneumonia burden the family budget through payments for medicines and absence from (undeclared) work.

Under these circumstances, neglect of common areas of the house may appear trivial. But the under-maintenance can be critical for feeling safe, as revealed by the following comment: “*There is a scary atmosphere inside*” (Hurrle, Kubíčková, Kopecká, 2015:12–13). Another study clarified how important these feelings are in terms of housing security. Lack of privacy and intense control by the landlords in hostels result in high tension and irritability, which then escalates into open conflict and evictions come as a resolution (Ort, Pospíšil, Ripka, 2016).

There are different reasons for disinvestment. If landlords intentionally ignore the maintenance of a rented property for the purpose of maximizing short-run profits, the practice is known as “milking” (Aalbers, 2006:1075). Milking has been explicitly reflected in some documents. Early on, it was claimed that: “[...] *some landlords acquired the properties with the intention of not investing in them but renting to poor tenants*” (GAC, 2011a:23). Milking comprises no maintenance and temporary fixes unless followed by proper ones, both saving landlords’ resources. For tenants, this means housing insecurity in several ways. Increased expenses and tension between tenants have already been mentioned. Territorial stigmatization (Wacquant, 2007) further reduces one’s chances on the rental market, as those living in “blemished places” are disadvantaged beyond ethnicity (GAC, 2009b:12–13; 2011b:16).

## Coercion

The documents contain a broad spectrum of coercive practices. Whether aimed to pacify or exploit tenants, the practices are clearly connected to the rental business. Especially at hostels, strict rules are often enforced. The tenants have to bear regulations such as CCTV systems (Bedřich, 2015:14), ban on hanging around in front of the building (Pelikánová, Šmoldas, 2015:25), ban on visits or keeping visitors’ ID cards at the entrance, allowing visitors to walk around the building only accompanied by staff (Jedináková, Pischová, 2013:25), and restrictions of children’s movement in the hostel (ASZ, 2018:38). Violation of the rules may lead to termination of the lease but also to financial penalties. One hostel manager was described to rule “with an iron hand”, which meant that he fined tenants for such transgressions as not closing the door to the second floor or not turning the lights off in a shared bathroom (Dvořáková, 2015b:17).

While some of the measures may be understandable owing to safety concerns, others may not. Such is the case of entering the dwellings without the tenant’s permission. An illustration of the flagrant privacy violation was described as follows:

*“The landlord and researcher went to the apartments. The landlord knocked on the door. However, he did not wait for a response and opened the door. Embarrassment arose as one of the selected tenants was just changing her clothes, having returned from work. Later, during the interview, the landlord entered the apartment even without knocking. The woman’s reaction suggested that this is nothing special and such behavior is the order of the day”* (Konečná, Konečný, Hájková et al., 2018:34).

Coercive practices are frequently associated with debt collection. Debt repayment can be enforced by threatening to stop the electricity or water supply, to institutionalize children, and by threats





of violence (Člověk v tísni, 2005:90; Pelikánová, Šmoldas, 2013:33; ASZ, 2016b:30). More subtle coercive practices were also identified, including stigmatization of debtors by making their names public in communal areas and by marking their dwellings (Radostný, Štěpánková, Vališ, 2015:16). Debts can be also repaid by work, including sex work: “[...] *there are certain ways to placate the landlord to wait when the rent is due; different voices repeatedly claimed that he could be appeased by the company of a young girl*” (Hurrle, Kučera, Trlifajová et al., 2015:28).

Debts usually result from unpaid rent or utilities, or usury by which some landlords expand their portfolio of services offered to tenants (GAC, 2009b:26). In any case, the existence of debt not only further reinforces the power asymmetries between the tenant and the landlord and provides an opportunity to increase the landlord’s income through late fees but also increases the housing insecurity and forced mobility:

*“Landlords threaten the tenants with terminating their contract and, in doing so, make most tenants pay their debts; in other cases, they arrange exceptionally high late fees, and [allegedly], use other, informal ways of debt enforcement [...] Interviews in the Locality show that eviction of debtors is not uncommon; however, most families leave the apartments themselves before being forcibly evicted”* (Rákoczyová, Šimíková, Trbola, 2013:19).

Physical violence and threats, including that of eviction, were sometimes stated without specification (Konečná, Konečný, Hájková et al., 2018:34), other times in connection with “disobedience” (Dvořáková, 2015b:21) or media appearances of tenants who dared to speak publicly about their housing conditions (Jedináková, Pischová, 2013:39). Landlords also verbally assaulted social workers and researchers (GAC, 2009a:16; Dvořáková, 2015b:8). Finally, coercion was registered in relation to the recruitment of tenants into landlords’ criminal activities: illegal housing provision, organized prostitution or illicit drug trade. Local tenants were employed to work in the houses designed for the “poverty business” and for illicit drug distribution:

*“According to local informants, the landlords frequently rent to drug addicts in the area, using them either as dealers in their drug trades or as consumers, and also as cheap labor to renovate newly-acquired properties in order to further extend the SEL”* (Büchlerová, 2018:10).

Coercion may have contradictory effects in terms of housing insecurity. Although it surely adds to reasons for tenants to move out, they simultaneously subordinate the tenants to the landlords through the creation of a system of obligations and intimidation (Hurrle, Kučera, Trlifajová, 2013:82). To escape this exploitative relationship, some tenants might appreciate external support, which brings us to the conclusion.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although increasingly commodified, housing is a basic human need, and adequate housing is a condition to which everyone is entitled. In this context, M. Rezaul Islam and Ndungi wa Mungai (2016) argue that forced eviction, which, evidently, uproots people from their homes, destroys their social networks, exacerbates homelessness, perpetuates poverty, and causes psychological injuries, shall be seen as a human rights violation. Following this, we use this concluding section to discuss the implications that our findings may have for social policy and social workers in particular.

The findings presented above were derived from the study of the documents mainly produced by the Agency for Social Inclusion. We analyzed how private landlordism in SELs is represented in the documents, focusing on four categories of practices: overcharging rent and other fees, tenancy contracts, disinvestment, and coercion. Each of them offers a variety of examples that illustrate how landlords may exploit tenants, legally or illegally, and how this contributes to tenants’ housing insecurity, and increases the risk of forced mobility. This focus admittedly excludes the good or, at least, neutral practices that are also present in the data. We deem it justifiable given the harm that the practices may produce.

The findings reveal that private landlords in SELs have an arsenal of tools at their disposal that can gravely impact the livelihood of their tenants. Assuming this is the case not only in the world



of representation but also “out there,” the implications are as follows. Social policy should aspire to strengthen the position of tenants to counter their dependency on “poverty entrepreneurs.” This includes ensuring the availability of social housing, effective debt relief, as well as the reduction of discrimination in standard rental housing. The key significance of structural changes should not give the impression that nothing else makes sense. For example, the Labor Office can increase the housing security of the marginalized through wider use of a welfare benefit to cover the security deposit (Matoušek, Lang, Galan, 2020). Municipalities may start their own social housing programmes (Kocman, Lesák, Bírová et al., 2019), and draw on experience from abroad in dealing with rogue landlords (DCLG, 2012; Vols, Belloir, 2019).

Social workers were the first to recognize rogue landlords in the country, and we believe that they have an important role in addressing the issue. As they are often the only witnesses to tenant exploitation and harassment, they can set this issue onto the agenda of public authorities using the various civic platforms such as local partnerships. Ethnic and territorial stigmatization require specific attention. Anti-Roma stigma often functions to neutralize any suspicion of human rights violation, as poor housing and forced mobility are blamed on the alleged incapacity of Roma to “live normally.” Challenging this stigma by exposing the agency of other actors and structural factors seems to us an important task that also social workers can embrace. Simply put, it means raising the awareness of the fact that it is often the landlords, rather than “the Roma culture” that is responsible, as well as is the state, which fails to redress the housing market failure. An inspiration for how to approach the task of reducing stigma can be drawn from the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (Goldbach, Amaro, Vega et al., 2015).

Moreover, social workers may act as initiators and mediators between public authorities, landlords, and tenants in order to reduce the power asymmetry existing in landlord-tenant relationships, prevent forced mobility and improve rental and housing conditions. Community social work seems most appropriate where housing insecurity is a shared experience (Gojová, Gojová, Burda et al., 2019). Also, in compliance with the current Social Inclusion Strategy and its emphasis on “active citizenship” (MPSV, 2020:52), the objective is to empower tenants to defend their rights. This entails that tenants are able to recognize when the landlord violates their rights, speak up, and seek help if necessary.

That this all will not always be easy is shown in the quote used in the paper’s title, a remark made by a resident of a SEL with regard to inhabitants of another SEL. Based on reading the analyzed documents, it appears that the public perception of the tenant-landlord relationship is skewed in favor of the latter. It is not only public officials or other property owners, but also other residents who seem to approve of landlords’ harsh control of tenants, of “treading on them” (Vepřková, 2016:40), rather than wanting to hold them accountable. Social workers should be aware of this dynamic and actively work with the possibility of identification with dominant categories and systems of classifications on the part of those who suffer from them the most.

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## Paul Michael Garrett: *Dissenting Social Work: Critical Theory, Resistance and Pandemic*. London: Routledge, 2021

Although it will be repeated in the summary, at the very beginning, I must write that Paul Michael Garrett's book *Dissenting Social Work: Critical Theory, Resistance and Pandemic* is definitely worth reading. Whether the reader appreciates the philosophical knowledge, is "seduced" by the author's erudition and style or, on the contrary, finds his perspective too radical, too Marxist, s/he will be forced to reflect on the place and social-historical role of social work. It is that minor (or major) change of consciousness, it seems to me, that is the essential aim of the book. Perhaps similar to Garrett's work, the purpose of this review is to encourage reading and reflection, or rather discussion, as social work should be more collective. Before that, however, it is worth suspending all associations with Marxist variants of social work, many of which have grown up, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, sorely afflicted by "practical Marxism".

I will therefore not summarise the individual chapters so as not to deprive readers of the pleasure of discovering them. All the more so because Garrett's language and style have literary qualities, and somewhat puzzling chapter headings encourage reading (The postal worker always rings twice; Marxism: The 'spectre' haunting the social work classroom; Proletarian Nights: Contradicting elite expectations). In the next part of this review, I will rather focus on reconstructing the key category for the book, that is *dissenting social work*.

Social work was born as a practical activity or applied science oriented towards the transformation of existing reality. Neither the period of its creation, similar in various countries, nor the fact that it was composed mainly by women was accidental. This new direction of activity was created either at the crossroads of sciences (Radlińska) or in the interdisciplinary perspective (Salomon), regarding the multidimensionality and diversity of human life and social problems.

Relatively weaker theoretical activity concerned situating social work in philosophy. Although such works appeared, they were rather an addition than the mainstream of the social work discourse, although that activity touches the human being in a fundamental sense and, consciously or not, is based on philosophy. Moreover, as a relatively external reference point, philosophy might be the only effective cognitive tool to identify and weaken social work's subordination to dominant neoliberal discourses. Garrett, apart from the aforementioned links between social work and philosophy, does something more. He shows that philosophy not only can provide a ground for social work, but that it is about social work, takes up the subject of social work. That is not always direct (as, for example, in Marx's philosophy), sometimes it requires interpretation (e.g., Levinasian philosophy transported into social work by Zygmunt Bauman p.160), but as a result, philosophy becomes part of social work in static (point of view) as well as dynamic (initiation of awareness changes) terms. I am opposed to most of the publications that have recently been produced en masse and in haste, with the ambitious aim of capturing the pandemic reality of the last year at any cost. Although the author refers to the pandemic in the subtitle and introduction, and he refers to it in several other places, fortunately, this is not another "covid book". Undoubtedly, it has a timeless character, and the reflections it contains, inspired by great philosophical systems, will always be an excellent impulse to reflect on one's own action or research in the field of social work.



But let us start from the very beginning, from the exact title, because *dissenting social work* has many meanings and – as the author realises very well – can be understood and used in different ways. This peculiar play on words will be used more than once by Garrett to make the reader ask critical questions, which is, in fact, the realisation of the title of the work. Even a non-native speaker of English, as I am, can see that, although undoubtedly many subtle nuances of language are lost.

*Dissenting social work* “is viewed as an approach intent on developing critical habits of self-questioning”. (Preface, IX). Obviously, it is not an approach in the methodological sense, i.e., the concept of a sequence of activities, but rather a liberation of social work from the motive of servitude to great ideologies, mainly neoliberalism or capitalism. This liberation begins with external reflection often inspired by philosophy but does not end with ‘philosophising’ or any philosophical idealism. Instead, the author follows Marx’s belief that significant social change, the transition to a new “epoch”, must begin with a shift in consciousness. The ultimate aim of *dissenting social work* is thus to liberate social work practices from historical, social and economic determinants, which can be seen even in the dominant vocabulary (for example, “welfare dependency”).<sup>1</sup> I might add that the gradual appropriation of the semantic fields of social work by the dominant neoliberal discourse has affected almost all fields of activity, including those which historically, at least in the Polish tradition, were essentially deeply humanistic, collective, and anti-capitalist (social strength, community work). Although I don’t know if Garrett would agree with that, I see here an analogy to Husserl’s phenomenological reduction (*epoché*), stripping social work not only of its numerous entanglements, but also of its “market” identities, in order to reconstruct the practice by discovering its essence (eidos), but already freed from the dominant discourse and integrating (social) workers, because only collective action can make a difference.

In Garrett’s book, the reader will find many more interpretations of the title concept. Thus, for example, *dissent* can be understood much more broadly, in the context of society as a whole, as “what makes society liveable”. In this context, politics, in Rancière’s perspective, is the “organisation of this dissent” (p.99). The title adjective is also referred to the three-layered arrangement of social spheres by Hannah Arendt (private-public-social), resulting in the distinction of seven dimensions of dissent (p.145). *Dissent social work* is also shown in a broader cultural context (Chapter 8. Remembering that African, Asian, and Palestinian lives matter), which the author does by referring to Emmanuel Levinas’ Ethics of the Face, in particular the interaction with the “Other” and the “Third”. The theme of intercultural relations is being developed in Chapter 10 (Social work’s Chinese future?) inspired by Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “passive revolution”.

These are, of course, not all interpretative perspectives. Garrett shows *dissenting social work* in the context of nine systems of thought, inspired, among others, by the work of such different intellectuals as the already mentioned J. Rancière, H. Arendt or E. Levinas, but also by K. Marx, M. Foucault, S. Zuboff, and others. There is not much point in wondering whether he interprets their views correctly. In the end, it is not about these names but about cognitive perspectives that make it possible to demystify contemporary social work conditions. I myself have found in Garrett’s work interpretative tropes of the philosophies mentioned above, which I had never followed, and which showed me these systems of thought in a new light.

Of course, any choices can always be accused of incompleteness or imperfection, but I think that this incompleteness can be interpreted as a Derridean ‘difference’ (*différance*), space (emptiness) that allows shifting (deferring) the meanings of what is, i.e., nine chapters written with passion and erudition, but at the same time understandable and accessible.

In some topics, I do not share the author’s interpretation. I see right-wing populism (that we can

<sup>1</sup> A critical analysis of key concepts in social work is developed in another work by Garrett (P.M. Garrett: *Welfare Words: Critical Social Work and Social Policy*. London: Sage, 2018). The book was already reviewed in *Czech and Slovak Social Work Journal* by Barbora Grundělová (No 1/2019).



observe in Poland) not as much as a threat but as one of the ways of organising resistance to the neoliberal discourse by those who do not recognise it. They have ‘the right to populism’, but that doesn’t mean the legitimisation of politicians who instrumentally abused that right. Similarly, although I agree with the critical diagnosis, I see the perspective on the transformation of social work differently. Instead of philosophical, intellectual inspiration in the seclusion of offices, I see the initiating turning point rather in the descent in the grassroots, in taking in parentheses the middle-class interpretative patterns (including those anchored in philosophy), which on a daily basis, like Heideggerian pre-understandings, limit the field and determine the viewpoint of social problems.

This polemic does not change my recommendation in the slightest, because I found the whole book very inspiring. Perhaps this is because it arouses controversy, which in turn helps crystallise the reader’s convictions, whether they follow Garrett’s line or not.

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- attitudes which regard professionalism and humanity as equal criteria of social work quality;
- attitudes which place emphasis on linking theoretical justification of social work practice with its practical orientation on clients' problems and realistic possibilities;
- coherence among all who are committed to addressing clients' problems through social work;
- open, diversity-understanding, informed and relevant discussion within the community of social workers;
- social workers' willingness and interest in looking at themselves through the eyes of others.

## Notice to Contributors

The journal Sociální práce/Sociálna práca/Czech and Slovak Social Work is published four times in the Czech language and twice in the English language each year. The journal publishes the widest range of articles relevant to social work. The articles can discuss any aspect of practice, research, theory or education. Our journal has the following structure:

- Editorial
- Academic articles
- Book reviews
- News / Research notes

### 1. Instructions to authors of academic articles

Editors accept contributions that correspond to the profile of the journal (see "Our mission"). The contribution has to be designated only for publishing in the journal Czech and Slovak Social Work. It can also be a contribution which has already been published in another journal, but for use the text has to be revised and supplemented. The number of contributions from one author is limited to two per year.

### The offer of manuscript receipt and review procedure

The academic text intended for publishing in the journal should be a research or overview essay (theoretical, historical, etc.). For the article to be accepted to the review procedure, the author of the text must work systematically with the relevant sources, explain the research methodology and present a conclusion with regard to the research goal. Because the journal has a specific professional nature, texts are preferred which also contain application aspects where the author explains the relevance of their conclusions in the context of social work.

The review process is reciprocally anonymous and is carried out by two independent reviewers. Student works are subject to a single review process. Academic and student works are judged in terms of content and form. If necessary, a work may be returned to the authors for supplementation or rewriting. Based on the assessments of the review process a decision will be made to either accept and publish the article in our journal or to reject it. The Chairman of the Editorial Board will decide in questionable cases. Please send two versions of the article to the editor via e-mail. The first one may contain information which could reveal the identity of the author. The second version should be the complete and final text.

### Decision to publish

Authors are informed about the result of the review process within six months from the date of receipt of the text/manuscript.

### Manuscript requirements

The text must be written in accordance with applicable language standards. The text letters should be written in Times New Roman, size 12, font style Normal. Pages are not numbered. Footnotes should be placed strictly at the end of the article.

- I. **Front page** contains a descriptive and brief title of the article in English; the names of all authors, biographical characteristics (up to 100 words) and also contact details for correspondence in the footnote.
- II. **Abstract** in English in a maximum of 200 words.
- III. **Keywords** in English. Please use two-word phrases as a maximum.
- IV. **The text of the article** (maximum 10,000 words).
- V. **List of references:** Authors are requested to pay attention to correct and accurate referencing (see below). A text reference is made by indicating placing the author's surname, year of publication (e.g. Korda, 2002) and, in case of reference to literature, also the number of pages should also be specified after the year, divided by a colon. A list of references is to be given at the end of chapters and and it is expected to list the literature to which the text refers. The list is arranged alphabetically by authors and, if there are several works by the same author, the works are to be listed chronologically. If an author published more works in the same year, the works are distinguished by placing letters a, b, etc. in the year of publication.

- VI. **Tables and charts:** tables must not be wider than 14cm. Character height is to be at least 8 to 10 points. In the charts, please use contrasting colours (mind the journal is black-and-white only).

### Quotes and links

Citations and references are given in accordance with ISO 690 (010 197). Representative examples are as follows:

#### Monographs:

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#### Monograph Chapters:

DOMINELLI, L. 2009. Anti-Opressive Practice: The Challenges of the Twenty-First Century. In: ADAMS, R., DOMINELLI, L., PAYNE, M. (Eds.). *Social Work: Themes, Issues and Critical Debates*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 49–64.

#### Magazines:

COLEMAN, J. S. 1988. Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(supplement), 95–120.

BOWPITT, G. 2000. Working with Creative Creatures: Towards a Christian Paradigm for Social Work Theory, with Some Practical Implications. *British Journal of Social Work*, 30(3), 349–364.

#### Online resources

NASW. 2008. *Code of Ethics* [online]. Washington: NASW. [18. 5. 2014]. Available at: <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

### 2. Instructions for book reviews

There is also space for all reviewers who want to introduce an interesting book in the field of social work and its related fields in the journal. We require making arrangement about the book review with the editors in advance. When sending the text please attach a scan of the front page of the reviewed book. (in 300 DPI resolution).

The format of the book review is set from 8,000 to 12,000 characters (including spaces); other conditions are the same as the conditions for journalistic articles. The book review must include bibliographic information on the rated book (e.g. Daniela Vodáčková a kol.: Krizová intervence, Portál, Praha, 2002). Please add your name and your contact details at the end of the review.

### 3. Ethics and other information

Manuscripts are assessed in the review proceedings which comprise 1) the assessment of professional appropriateness by one member of the Editorial Board, and 2) bilaterally anonymous review by two experts from the list of reviewers posted on our website.

The text is assessed exclusively on the basis of its intellectual value, irrespective of the author's race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic origin, citizenship or political views.

The editors of the journal make every effort to maintain impartiality of the review proceedings not to disclose the identity of the reviewers and other participants in the proceedings. The author whose work was demonstrably proved to contain plagiarisms or forged data shall lose an opportunity of publishing in the Journal.

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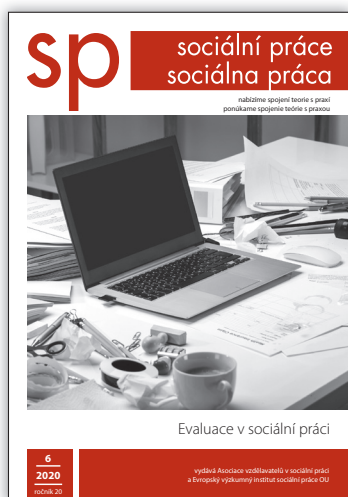
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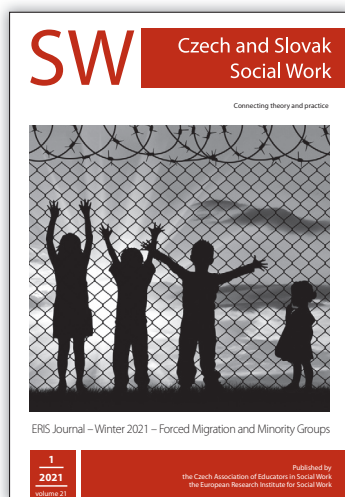
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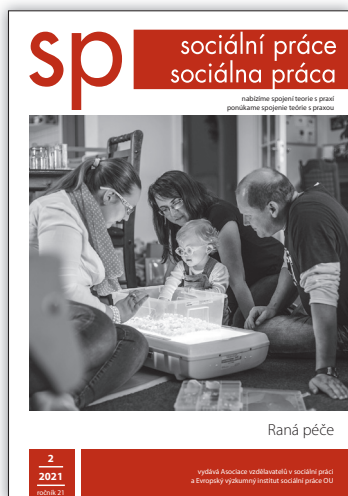
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