My seminar introduces briefly the most common types of social work histories each based on a different tradition of thought and social theory in the context of their time. The aim of the lecture is to help to problematize uncritical understandings of history and to open up the importance of our national/regional interpretations of the past, and history of social work for the construction of our professional identities at the present. The reading materials aim to give an additional idea of the state of research in social work history in some of the European regions. In sum, the lecture provides thoughts for social work researchers why to promote historical insight in any theme under study. The underlying assumption is: history is not only in the past but also at the present.

Discussion Exercise for small groups (choose 1, and 2a or 2b):

1. What is the dominant interpretation of social work history like in your country?

2a How do you (in general in your professional field, and on personal level) understand where you are coming from as a social worker? Is there a difference?

2b Is there a vision of the future of social work? What is it like; Is it national, local, personal or something quite different?

Recommended readings by Mirja Satka:

1) Paradigms and Politics: Understanding Methods Paradigms in an Historical Context: The Case of Social Pedagogy

Author: Lorenz, Walter

Source: British Journal of Social Work, Volume 38, Number 4, June 2008, pp. 625-644(20)
http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/oup/social/2008/00000038/00000004

2) The Present Finnish Formation of Child Welfare and History

Authors: Satka, Mirja; Harrikari, Timo

http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/oup/social/2008/00000038/00000004


Author: Waaldijk, Berteke

http://www.socwork.net/sws/article/view/272/465
Alternative address for the first two articles:


Additional, voluntary reading for post-socialist social work interested (a book):

Paradigms and Politics: Understanding Methods Paradigms in an Historical Context: The Case of Social Pedagogy

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Summary

This paper treats the case of social pedagogy, which is an important but widely misunderstood member of the social professions, as an example of how only by exploring the historical roots and trajectories of methods paradigms can we hope to understand their contemporary, cross-national and cross-cultural relevance. It locates the rise of social pedagogy as both a method and as a set of social policy institutions in the historical context of the development of the German nation state with its particular relationship to a corporatist, conservative model of the welfare state. This illustrates not so much a singular development under particular historical circumstances, but the intricate interrelationship between social policies and social work methods which are a feature of this profession in all societies. By analysing the dynamics of this close relationship with social policy, which gave rise to the ambiguous reputation of social work as a semi-profession, the conditions of a theoretical engagement with contemporary social policy developments can be determined with much greater clarity. This is necessary, for instance, in relation of the rising importance of social care in the UK—a development which appears as yet under-theorized. Parallels and differences to the social pedagogy paradigm can only be discerned against the background of the analysis of the respective relationship to social policy. This, in turn, underlines the necessity for professional social work, under whatever title it is practised, to critically observe and contribute to the shaping of social policies in order to regain the professional initiative.

Keywords: History of social work, social care, social pedagogy, methods, welfare regimes
Introduction

Social work in Europe remains a highly complex and diverse phenomenon. Neither the increase of contacts and exchanges between course providers in the wake of the ERASMUS programmes nor the efforts of the European Union to harmonize this professional group, which still causes notorious problems concerning the equivalence of qualifications, or the pressures of the Bologna Process have resulted in the standardization of titles, curricula and methods. On the contrary, new titles and branches are emerging and the boundaries to other professions become more permeable instead of being more rigidly defined (Lyons and Lawrence, 2006). All this is happening despite the notable strengthening of the academic grounding of the group of the ‘social professions’, as the field can loosely be referred to collectively in Europe. There has been a drive to consolidate its training courses and structures at university level, with opportunities being created for postgraduate studies. Ph.D. studies are now possible within the actual confines of the respective disciplines of the social professions themselves and Ph.D. candidates are under less pressure to obtain their doctorates in ‘bordering disciplines’ such as psychology or sociology. A consortium of European universities is developing the first European module for inclusion on doctoral programmes across countries (Otto and Abeling, 2007). Research projects within the social profession disciplines compete successfully with those from other disciplines for research grants from prestigious national and European funding agencies (Lyons and Lawrence, 2006). And, yet, it has to be asked whether these introspective academic developments can consolidate the identity of the social work family of professions or whether more attention has to be paid to external processes influencing identity formation—factors that lie outside the control of the traditional instruments of professional self-definition. The social professions are particularly susceptible to social policy influences, which, while not determining the shape and direction of training, create a context that is often regarded as constraining but that, in reality, represents an inalienable part of the identity-shaping and purpose-defining process of this profession.

It will be argued that historical reflections on the nature and development of this relationship are a means of regaining a sense of professional initiative and political commitment, given current social and political conditions in Europe. The necessity to do this will be illustrated through historical reflections on the relationship between the emergence of social pedagogy and key moments in the history of social politics in Germany. These historical and conceptual developments can serve not only to promote a better understanding of social pedagogy as a method which is now being taken up with greater interest in the UK, particularly in relation to residential childcare (cf. Petrie et al., 2006). They can also provide a historical
paradigm for the complex relationship between methods and their socio-political context. Methods cannot be transferred simply from one context to another and newly emerging methodological paradigms, such as that of social care in the UK (which appears to have affinities to social pedagogy), need to be examined carefully as to their political significance in different historical contexts and not just their practical use. The validity of a method cannot be determined just in terms of its potential for intervention, but needs to be evaluated also in relation to the social policy messages and functions it transmits implicitly or explicitly. Teasing out the contents–context relationship of methods in specific historical contexts from a comparative perspective is an invaluable tool for the context-specific critical examination of methods in general, as this promotes more comprehensive, person-in-context-oriented forms of intervention. Historical reflection in this sense becomes an immensely practical tool for social work (Lorenz, 2007).

The paradigm of social care in contemporary British social work requires exactly this kind of examination. For non-UK-based observers, it poses a number of questions. Does the term refer to a field of practice which encompasses social work as its ‘professional arm’ (Higham, 2005), without implying a clear distinction in methods, or does it signal the emergence of a parallel professional field of practice characterized by its own methodology, akin to social pedagogy (Hughes, 2002) and hence possibly in competition with social work? Does the demise of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) and its replacement by General Social Care Councils across the UK signify a change at the level of methodological orientation or reflect a political down-grading of social work? A statement issued by ‘Prospects’ (the UK’s official graduate careers website) states ‘You could say that social care encompasses virtually any occupation that helps people overcome obstacles in their life, with the exception of those that require a detailed understanding of the physical sciences’. It goes on to say, ‘For statistical purposes, the sector tends to be slightly more narrowly defined as social work (itself increasingly regarded as the assessment of care needs and commissioning of provision) and includes what might be regarded as personal care functions, including some educational and community-based healthcare roles’ (Prospects: www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Explore_job_sectors/Social_care/as_it_is/p!eXfeac (accessed 17 November 2007)). The relationship between social work and social care in the UK has so far been subjected to little in the way of systematic conceptual scrutiny, despite the increased use of the term ‘social care’ in conjunction with social work. Scholars tend to use it either as a collective term for the field of social services (‘social work and social care’) (e.g. Ferguson, 2003) or as a way of distinguishing social work from a health sector that progressively extends to non-medical services (‘health and social care’) (e.g. Long et al., 2006). An analysis that would clarify its relationship with social
work from a theoretical perspective, in analogy to those studies which gave, for instance, community work its professional identity, is not yet discernible. The danger is that, in the absence of such theoretical reflections, social policy pressures will, de facto, determine the direction of future methodological developments and compound the reductionism implied in the above quote. The following historical reflections on the conceptual complex of social pedagogy in the German context are meant not as a comparative study as such, but as a stimulus for such an interrogation of social care.

Development of the social professions in Europe

The social professions in Europe overall have their origins in the fundamental transformation processes that confronted societies with the advent of industrialization and the political revolutions that replaced feudalism with political systems based on democratic procedures. The ensuing social changes threatened to bring about a state of almost total uncertainty, best exemplified by the French Revolution of 1789, which was widely regarded as heralding the destruction not only of an old political, but also of an obsolete social order without being able to institute a legitimate new order that could command widespread consent. The ambiguity of those political events, which spelled at once freedom and emancipation as well as terror and oppression, found its equivalent in economic processes, with capitalism creating opportunities for unprecedented wealth and, at the same time, bringing abject poverty and exploitation in the course of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, the changes amounted to a fundamental paradigm shift in the way integration and solidarity were understood. In this regard, Durkheim’s (1984) analysis has lasting relevance when he speaks of the replacement of mechanical by organic solidarity, meaning that, in pre-modern societies, social bonds were accepted as given, whereas, in modern societies, bonds have to be created, maintained and legitimated. The state in the form of the nation state consequently assumed the role of having to organize social order rather than simply representing it, although the way in which the state should tackle this task became the subject of deep political divisions on party lines in Europe (Baldwin, 1999).

The integration of increasingly complex, capitalist, industrialized and at least rudimentarily democratic societies represented at once a political, a cultural and an intellectual-technical challenge. The frame of reference within which these efforts were organized was provided by the nascent European nation states within which distinct political, cultural and intellectual traditions began to crystallize, notwithstanding the obvious cross-national exchanges (Mommsen, 1990). The basic orientation of these political cultures, which fermented in the transition between traditional and modern societies, placed primary organization responsibility for social
integration either on the individual in the liberal tradition, upholding the value of freedom, or on the state in the social democratic tradition, with an emphasis on equality and rights, or on civil society in the tradition of conservative corporatism, organized around notions of cultural identities and moral obligations. In any case, the nation state provided the organizational framework of social services and the different political ideologies impacted on the particular mode of service delivery by the modern social professions. These traditions proved remarkably durable, even under the current levelling pressures of globalization (Lorenz, 2006). From this observation cannot be inferred a direct causal connection between government politics and social work methodology, but the interplay between intellectual streams and strategic policies has been given insufficient attention in the evaluation of social work’s role and professional potential. A comparative outline of some salient historical features which characterized the early developmental phase of social work as the dominant, though by no means exclusive, mode of social service delivery in the UK and of social pedagogy as an equally dominant model in the context of Germany shall therefore cast some light on those links.

Development of social work in the UK and social pedagogy in Germany

It is widely accepted that for the later development of social work in all parts of the UK, the work of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in England, founded in 1869, was highly influential. It set out to systematize, discipline and, to that extent, place on a rational scientific basis the actions of philanthropic charitable support to people in socially precarious situations (Payne, 2005). The significance of this departure is two-fold. First, the stimulus to the development of recognizable methods came from the practice side. Pioneers within the COS movement analysed, in the manner of deduction, existing forms of charitable giving and concluded that ‘indiscriminate almsgiving’ was only a temporary help and in the longer term the cause of ‘pauperism’ (Bosanquet, 1973). Second, these efforts to systematize charitable giving took place in the domain of civil society, and here in female circles. In parallel with this, the (male-dominated) settlement movement sought to physically bring the divergent middle and working classes closer into contact with each other. Behind these efforts clearly lay a middle-class fear of ‘the mob’—the disorganized working class caught up in industrialization and urbanization, considered a constant source of unpredictability and social unrest (Stedman-Jones, 1971). The COS approach was formally modelled on the Elberfeld System in Germany, which is held to be the first model of co-ordinated charity on the basis of explicit assessments of each client’s circumstances. It was set
up by the municipality of Elberfeld or Wuppertal in 1853—a newly industrialized town in the Ruhr area of Germany, which had suffered rapid social changes as a result. It meant that respectable male citizens of the town had to do rosters of duty in visiting families who were receiving charitable assistance and check whether the money given to them was used appropriately.

By contrast, the British route to systematic diagnosis and intervention remained ultimately a ‘private affair’, which notably did not involve the municipality (Lorenz, 2007). Opposition to the COS approach in the UK came from the Fabian Society, which indeed demanded public measures against poverty on the strength of various empirical poverty surveys intended to challenge and disprove the theory at the base of charitable work. In the eyes of the Fabians, the COS attributed to individuals the responsibility for their demise and hence set out to ‘educate’ them, albeit indirectly, through the exercise of moral pressure that exhorted people in need to show responsibility in resolving their problems (Jones, 2000). Fabianism, in contrast to socialism, relied on a step-by-step rather than on a revolutionary understanding of societal change, in the process of which the material divisions of society could be gradually lessened and a reasonably stable balance between rich and poor would ensue (Briggs, 1961). The pattern set by Elberfeld in Germany, however, combined individualized attention with public control, setting a paternalist conservative pattern.

Two general observations derive from these historical details; one is that, in the UK, social intervention was largely considered, at least initially, a private task, centred on individuals, their moral improvement and on rescue not only from destitution, but also from the effects of the Poor Law and the very institutions the state itself provided within this ideological framework, such as the workhouse, prison and deportation, which stood as deterrents in the background. In Germany, a similar educational task developed within a public framework, which spurred methods to transcend individualism—for better or for worse. Second, this implicit educational methodology on which these approaches converged in both countries, which aimed at changing the behaviour of the poor, represented ultimately the application of rationality. It sought to limit affective impulses, on the part of the giver as much as on that of the receiver, with reference to the rewards of ‘sensible’ behaviour. Both countries, however, came to diverge later over the ways of achieving this state of rationality, with the UK choosing, on the whole, the path of psychoanalytically inspired casework whereas, in Germany, a ‘sensible public’ had first to be educated collectively to this aim.

In the search for more effective methods of intervention, replacing the ultimately quite ineffective moral approach, the explanatory and therapeutic model of Freudian psychology pointed a way forward. It acknowledged that people often do not behave sensibly, but it held on to
the guiding principle of rationality by extending its reach epistemologically and therapeutically into the realms of the unconscious. The emphasis on the universality of this rationality, based on scientific insights, was absorbed so rapidly and effectively into UK and US social work theory, because of its political neutrality. Continental European practice models tended to emphasize less the scientific and more the communicative and emancipative aspect of psychoanalysis (Lorenz, 1994).

This early paradigm of case work had always an affinity to the political ideology of liberalism which had already gained prominence in the UK in the early nineteenth century and which had favoured the development of an enterprise culture that spearheaded the capitalist exploitation of industrialization (Payne, 2005). Its success, in turn, was the product of the technological application of natural science, which had already prospered in the Britain of the Restoration and had laid the foundation for the industrial revolution. In an arrangement closely resembling the later political culture of liberalism and curiously presaging British pragmatism today in that it favours a ‘what works’ (‘evidence-based practice’) approach, Puritanism coalesced with natural science as the pursuit of progress in seventeenth-century Britain. Scientific endeavour was protected by Royal benevolence as long as it assumed total political neutrality:

In order to gain royal recognition, protection and support, and thus to become institutionalized and incorporated into Restoration society, the scientific movement had to demonstrate its conformity by renouncing all cultural, social, political and educational goals and claims that could be regarded as subversive of the new dispensation or could lead to conflict with the regime (Strydom, 2000, p. 111).

This historical detail helps to explain also why the split between the COS and the Fabians could be overcome, particularly in the training of social workers at the Fabian’s bastion—the London School of Economics. The Fabian ideas of reform could be constructed as complementary to individual casework within a general framework of rational improvements of social and individual deficits that this tradition assumed take their course almost automatically once freedom of development is secured. No general, organized public education process of society was required.

These developments in the UK contrast at several levels with those that characterize the origins of welfare and the paradigm of social pedagogy in Germany. While industrialization was much delayed in that country, by comparison to the UK, it nevertheless began to show its economic successes and also its divisive social effects mainly after the founding of the second German Empire in 1871, engineered by Bismarck as the Chancellor of Prussia. His politics orchestrated a war against France to unite the separate German small states under Prussian leadership. As a newly created nation state, Germany was confronted with two fundamental problems of integration—social integration in terms of class divisions and cultural integration because
although the new state used a common language, it contained deep cultural divisions and its citizens, divided by religion and strong regional affiliations, had yet to be committed to a set of common cultural reference points. Nation building therefore took, in the typical Bismarckian conception — a dual approach of giving the state a strong practical and also a symbolic function. Creating unity had to be a collective rather than an individual affair, although the state’s cultural dominance and political power had to be carefully balanced against the cultural interests of civil society and its traditional organizations, which, while being roughly as independent as in Britain, were brought into a closer allegiance to this state (Briggs, 1961).

In terms of welfare measures, this political approach resulted in the first state legislation of any country that secured social rights and guaranteed a minimal, insurance-based social protection, first in the case of industrial illness and accident and expanding gradually to illness generally, unemployment and old age. Bismarck’s conservative politics generally answered the demands for social protection made by the Social Democrats, whom he had simultaneously barred from parliament. Bismarck did not devise a state insurance system but limited the role of the state to that of directing private insurance companies to perform to legally prescribed standards (Hennock, 2007). Hence, a ‘third way’ approach between, or rather in opposition to, both liberalism and socialism shaped the political culture of Germany right from the beginning. It was symbolized by the term ‘subsidarity’ as the system of mutual obligations between ‘smaller’ and ‘larger’ units of society in exactly the manner later also favoured by the Catholic Church in the Encyclicals Rerum Novarum of 1891 and Quadragesimo Anno of 1931 (Pius XI, 1931). This move amounted to a conservative conception of the state as an organic unity within which differences were not to be eliminated, but brought to a functional synergy for an ideal ‘common good’ exemplified by the state. Given the cultural diversity of Germany, in combination with these politics, it is therefore understandable that, here, the state came to play a strong cultural and educational role expressed in emotive symbols, at times personified in references such as fatherland, Heimat or Vater Staat.

These political developments formed the subsoil for intellectual currents such as German idealism in contrast to British empiricism and pragmatism. Typical for this intellectual climate was the insistence in German universities during the latter part of the nineteenth century on the recognition of the humanities (‘Geisteswissenschaften’) as of equal rank with natural sciences and as the proper domain of disciplines like history, psychology and, later, sociology. Understanding the human world, as Schleiermacher (1768–1834) had taught and Dilthey (1833–1911) elaborated in his ground-breaking work on hermeneutics, was not a matter of scientific detachment, but of hermeneutic involvement in life and became thereby a continuous learning process (Palmer, 1969). This intellectual constellation favoured the particularly German reception of the ideals of the Enlightenment.
which recognized not only the emancipatory promises of modernity, but also its challenges and dangers. This tradition deals with the central question confronting all societies in the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity, from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft (Tönnies, 2002), not just from an empirical perspective or by means of appealing to a new sense of morality as Durkheim himself did. It concerns itself with the means and methods through which the integration of modern societies could be brought about. Through these reflections and in this intellectual climate, the creation of ‘the social’ becomes almost automatically a pedagogical question—a matter of instituting a pervasive education project. Modern German society after the unification of 1871 had only a chance of surviving and overcoming the threats of cultural fragmentation and social disintegration by making a collective effort to rally around a cultural project, by taking on the task of ‘forming itself’ continuously and hence making ‘formation’ (Bildung) a task in which every single member of society has not only a right, but a duty, to participate. Pedagogy becomes the concept symbolizing the cultural reproduction of society, in parallel with Bismarck’s state social policies. It does this both at the collective level, in which the values, rules and laws regulating the relationship of individuals to each other have to be attended to, explained and put into practice to enable progress, and at the individual level of socialization into this lifelong process of formation, which implies emancipation and adjustment at one and the same time.

**Social pedagogy as a concept and as practice**

The term ‘social pedagogy’ became the expression for this social mandate and the comprehensive role of education (Kronen, 1980). Only at a secondary stage, at which the practical translation of these basic concepts into concrete institutional measures is considered, does the school (in line with other educational institutions) come into view as the central carrier of this project. Pedagogy, as such, is always more than schooling, is always the totality of lifelong educational processes that take place in society, from informal learning processes through which a child acquires basic social skills of language and behaviour, habituation in family and cultural or leisure associations to formal learning in schools, apprenticeships, universities, adult education institutions and autodidactic projects. When the first Youth Welfare Act of the Weimar Republic—the seminal RJWG of 1924—opened with a section asserting every child’s right to education (Erziehung), much more was meant than the guarantee of a place in a school. It asserted the right of the child to participate as a citizen in the overall processes of forming a society as a community of ‘learners’ (Rauschenbach, 1999).

The international genealogy of such fundamental community-oriented pedagogical concepts and their exponents has frequently been traced
At an immediate practice-oriented level, it stretches from Rousseau and Pestalozzi to Fröbel and Montessori, to include also figures like William Morris and John Dewey—certainly a broad spectrum of European and American exponents. At the level of academic reflection, however, the coining of the term ‘social pedagogy’ was confined initially to Germany. There, the debate on the role of pedagogy in modern society went far beyond considerations of ‘pedagogical experiments’ like the Kindergarten, the children’s home or the village institute. The emphasis on the ‘social’ in pedagogy opened up a perspective on the societal role of pedagogy beyond particular educational institutions and became thereby the intellectual site for the deliberation of what, in Germany since the late nineteenth century, was termed the ‘Soziale Frage’—the social question: how to collectively confront growing inequality, disintegration and disaffection in industrialized, urban and secular German society without resorting to Marxist revolution. This question was framed as concerning all sectors and classes of society, not just the paupers, and the term ‘social’ had assumed the meaning of this all-encompassing perspective and responsibility. An association of social scientists founded the ‘Verein für Sozialpolitik’ in 1873, to which later leading figures like Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber belonged. While their social analyses posed the question, social pedagogy attempted to supply the answer or at least the framework for answers. It found this in the conceptualization of the relationship between individual and society. Karl Mager (a school pedagogue) is widely credited as having first coined the term in 1844 (Hämäläinen, 1989; Kronen, 1980; Lorenz, 1994) so as to emphasize the societal aspects of educational processes which were under-conceptualized in earlier pedagogical frameworks such as those of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and the philanthropists in general. Sozialpädagogik as a new disciplinary field explored the linked tasks of preparing individuals for communal and societal life and, at the same time, bringing society as a community to orient its culture and social life towards the personal developmental and social needs of individuals. It thereby became a central reference point of pedagogical and social policy debate in the context of an incipient German welfare system. In this political environment, with its pervasive signs of crisis, it is not surprising that the fundamental ambiguity at the core of the concept gave rise to its future polarized development. A ‘left wing’ sided with the elements inherited from the Enlightenment that emphasized the right of every human being to develop his or her potential to the full, thereby stressing the duty of society to create the conditions for this to happen. A ‘right wing’ was more interested in preserving the stability of society as a whole through universal education and other efforts to provide the co-ordinated means of adjusting individuals to those universal societal goals of the collectivity. Many of the pedagogical ideas generated in this social climate left a lasting legacy in ‘radical’ educational thinking abroad that advocated lifelong (William Morris, see Anderson, 2002),

(e.g. Lawton and Gordon, 2002).
community-oriented (John Dewey, 1966), self-directed (Schön, 1983) and politically ‘conscientising’ (Freire, 1995) learning approaches which retain their actuality and appeal today.

In Germany, the ultimately Hegelian thought of regarding the state as the embodiment of reason and the dialectical synthesis of conflicting positions infused most positions on social pedagogy strongly. Even where Gemeinschaft was posited as a task and a project yet to be realized rather than a given reality or an inheritance to be preserved, there was always a tendency to substitute the state for this ideal of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991). As a consequence, pedagogical projects not just of formal education, such as schools and universities, but also those of informal learning in kindergarten, youth clubs, sports and leisure associations, and, to an extent, movements of adult learning and self-improvement developed a tendency to become committed to serving the interests of the nation. Emancipation could thereby easily turn into totalitarianism. Potentially, each facet of the broad spectrum of social pedagogical initiatives which originated in the Germany of the outgoing nineteenth century, and not just schools, gradually came to be judged according to the benefits it brought, not just for the participants, but for the nation to be built—the fatherland. The strongest criticism levelled at socialism and its civil initiatives was that it produced ‘vaterlandslose Gesellen’ (fellows without ties to a fatherland) (Groh and Brandt, 1992).

The idealism which surrounded the early years of the use of the concept social pedagogy meant also that little attention was paid to the precise methods that could translate the concept into action. When it came to that task, the concept was either translated into a series of institutions, which together represented various sites on which social pedagogy took place (adult education projects, kindergarten, settlements), or as packages of measures that were directed at groups of people particularly threatened by marginalization and exclusion. For a sociologist like Ferdinand Tönnies (1989), social pedagogy represented a movement in which structural social policy measures and informal cultural, educational processes combined and interacted (Schröer, 1999). The practice area in which social pedagogy delivered the most concrete methodological innovations was work with children and, here, Fröbel’s earlier pioneering work in developing the concept and practice of the kindergarten was seminal well beyond the confines of Germany. The strong influence of Pestalozzi and Fröbel, not just at an academic, but at a cultural level meant that German social pedagogy remained child (and secondarily also family) oriented. However, through the combination of its person and social policy-oriented meaning, the pedagogical approach to this day contains an impetus for practice and policy in Germany to overcome the stigmatizing split between general educational facilities for children and those designed for ‘needy’ children or children whose behaviour causes difficulties.
Social pedagogy thereby affirmed, and this is the key characteristic distinguishing it from social work, that it is not primarily ‘deficit-oriented’. It regards all children, and indeed all human beings, as, on the one hand, in need of educational guidance for the full development of their potential, more explicitly obviously in youth and in crisis situations, and, on the other hand, as capable of always developing themselves further, provided the requisite resources are available (Hamburger, 2001, 2003). Social-pedagogical approaches flourished in sectors that, in the English terminology, would be classed as care and nursing, in the sense of ‘nursery nursing’ and ‘residential care’ (*Heimerziehung*), leading to, at times, radical and highly political models of ‘reform pedagogy’ in residential children’s institutions (Bernfeld, 1973). Particularly in Austria in the 1920s, this movement aimed at a combination of Marxist and psychoanalytic ideas that explored liberating, democratic forms of socialization within model institutions, to make them pedagogical paradigms for the transformation of social norms and practices in society as a whole.

**The further development of social pedagogy ideas**

It took an injection of pragmatism, forged in international exchanges of practice experiences, to bring the German discourse on social pedagogy to consider and develop methods of equal standing in the non-residential field and in work with adults. This pragmatism was inspired by the bourgeois women’s movement and, in Germany, found its first expression in the social work textbook *Soziale Diagnose* by Alice Salomon (1926)—the founder of the first German school for (female) social workers (Kuhlmann, 2001). While this was ostensibly modelled on its US counterpart—the work by Mary Richmond of the same title (Richmond, 1917)—Salomon’s textbook nevertheless contained more references to community as the intellectual horizon within which social work methodology should locate itself. In contrast to the prevailing (male) notions that this community was represented by the German nation state, Salomon appealed to women as the carriers of a sense of total social responsibility that transcends national boundaries. Women as mothers have, according to Salomon, a natural ability to form inclusive social entities, which she calls ‘*Volksstaat*’ (people’s state)—a classless society to which social work has a duty to contribute very directly (Salomon, 1919; cf. Lorenz, 2006). In this sense, Salomon represents the crossover point between the paradigms of social work and of social pedagogy, even though she herself felt more committed to the former.

Salomon developed her methodological deliberations after the end of the First World War when Germany faced its second challenge of nation building in a highly polarized political climate. The polarization affected also the use of the term ‘community’ (*Gemeinschaft*). The fundamental question
was whether its potential for integration should remain at the level of symbolic ideals such as the cultural meanings of a folk notion of community or whether it required tangible political structures in the form of the state. Community became the central reference point for the further development of the social policy dimension of social pedagogy in the work of Hermann Nohl (Bollnow, 1980)—a philosopher in the tradition of Dilthey who was hugely influential in that after-war period in Germany. He regarded social pedagogy both as a set of social policies, such as they were defined in the social reconstruction programme of the Weimar Republic of the 1920s, and as a social movement. The social policies of the Social Democratic government aimed at consolidating the corporatist, Bismarckian approach but in a less nationalist framework. They sought to improve the social insurance schemes and strengthen the rights of citizens, and particularly of children, to social solidarity and protection, even though the ensuing financial crisis of the Weimar Republic stopped the realization of those schemes in many areas (Hong, 1998), including the ‘reform pedagogy’ initiatives in residential homes for troubled children. Nohl saw in social movements a necessary pendant to the state’s official policies. He considered movements such as the workers’ and the women’s movements, but also the youth movement, which was particularly vigorous in Germany, as spontaneous responses to the crisis of the traditional social order in industrialized societies and saw in social pedagogy a means of furthering the establishment of a new kind of community based on social obligations (Nohl, 1988).

Usurping the socio-pedagogical legacy?

Was the Nazi state the ultimate realization of this socio-pedagogical project? Nohl’s ideas had at times a bewildering affinity with the Fascist project of combining state and (folk) community. While his own relationship with the Nazi state remained ambiguous, that regime then imposed its very distinct nationalist and racist version of community on Germany, thereby ending the intellectual openness around the term of community which had characterized the Weimar years and usurping the pedagogical legacy. The Nazis gave youth work great official importance, celebrated solidarity among workers, upheld motherhood and selflessness as paradigms of good social behaviour and gave order to unite, to ‘line up’ (‘gleichschalten’) civil society initiatives under a common goal—the consolidation of Germany as a racially defined folk community. On this basis, the German delegation to the Third International Conference on Social Work, held in London in 1936 (Conference Report, 1938), could, for instance, arrogantly claim that many of the pedagogical, community-building plans which were still under discussion in other countries concerning the mobilization of civil society, the creation of a stronger community spirit
and the fostering of self-help initiatives were already a reality in Hitler Germany, at least for the racially privileged ‘deserving’ (Althaus, 1936). Despite this very obvious exploitation of social pedagogy for political ends, most social professionals who had not lost their positions on racial or political grounds either failed to reflect on the political implications of their work of social pedagogy or enthusiastically subscribed to its ideological programme. This widespread blindness towards the political context and the ensuing separation between social pedagogy as a set of methods and as a social policy framework contributed, in retrospect, to it becoming discredited. The humanist tradition of social pedagogy was effectively abandoned and social services became embroiled in selection processes for the most inhumane purposes on account of the presumed value neutrality of pedagogical practice (Lorenz, 1994; Schnurr, 1997; Sünker and Otto, 1997).

In view of these experiences, it was understandable that the programme of social reconstruction in post-Fascist Germany, as in the rest of war-devastated continental Europe, symbolized a new methodological beginning. British and US-led social reconstruction programmes under the aegis of the UN chose to achieve this through instituting a positivistic, politically neutral conceptual framework of social work. The methods trio of casework, group work and community work shared the aim of rendering clients self-sufficient and socializing them in democratic competences of participation and self-determination. The social pedagogy movement, academically depleted in Germany by the Nazi persecution of its critical members (Wieler and Zeller, 1995), remained in abeyance even though, among US social work educators operating in post-war Germany, there were refugees from Fascism like Gisela Konopka, who, in exile in the USA, had contributed their social pedagogy knowledge to the development of social and group work approaches.

Social pedagogy reborn

The renaissance of the social pedagogy model in Germany happened in the wake of the events of 1968. These brought about, among many other issues, a fundamental questioning of the Fordist approach to welfare of the immediate post-war period, with its functional, rational and ultimately paternalist flavour into which the ‘imported’ social work model had fitted. New social and political movements demanded immediate participation by citizens in processes of social transformation, placed questions of personal and collective identity at the centre and, above all, raised historical questions concerning the responsibility for the systematic oppression of women and minority groups and for the holocaust. In this intellectual climate, the academic discipline of pedagogy became a rallying point at German universities for the critical reflection on the relationship between
individuals and society. In relation to pedagogy in schools as well as in social services, university degree courses were implemented designed to overcome the image of a ‘service’ function delivering personnel to norms set by the agencies. With the introduction of the first degree courses in social pedagogy in 1970, student numbers exploded (Rauschenbach, 1999). The confrontation with the social work paradigm, on which most social work educators had been trained, frequently through studies in the USA, became not just a methodological dispute, but a comprehensive socio-political programme.

A central figure in this transformation process was Mollenhauer—a primary school teacher who eventually became professor for General Pedagogy and Social Pedagogy at the university of Göttingen and who, in his work, elaborated on the humanist tradition of pedagogy (Niemeyer, 1998). He had to steer a difficult course between the universal claims of pedagogy to represent the totality of processes of social integration that had proved their totalitarian leanings and the institutional, pragmatic reduction of social pedagogy to ‘everything that is education but not school or family’ (Bäumer, 1929, p. 3). He wanted to de-institutionalize pedagogical thinking whilst keeping it committed to immediate practical tasks arising from people’s attempts to cope with difficult life situations. This brought him to use the term ‘Lebenswelt’ (lifeworld) in the tradition of phenomenological sociology (Mollenhauer, 1972) as a reference to the coping abilities clients have available to varying degrees in contexts markedly different from the world which professionals occupy and whose values they often seek to impose.

This idea of a ‘bottom-up’ approach became the focus of the most comprehensive and distinct formulation of the modern social pedagogy project through Thiersch. His key publication, Lebensweltorientierte Soziale Arbeit (Thiersch, 1992) (in which the term Soziale Arbeit serves as the umbrella term for both social work (Sozialarbeit) and social pedagogy), aims at rebuilding academic confidence in this discipline by focusing on its distinct methodology, namely the ability to professionally immerse itself in the complex hermeneutic processes which characterize the everyday life (‘Alltag’) of people who are struggling to cope with and make sense of poverty, conflicts and injustice. Pedagogy-inspired intervention must not take its bearings from institutional objectives, but network with and build upon the countless moments of ‘expertise’ with which people demonstrate their coping abilities in everyday informal and non-formal learning processes. Such interventions are not a flight from political action, but, on the contrary, identify political processes, issues of justice and equality, in life-world contexts in which they build social policy ‘from the bottom up’. Social work could and should engage constructively with social policies on a broad front. Furthermore, these conceptual changes levelled the differences between social work and social pedagogy by committing both to a double task while remaining within their respective traditions.
Many academic institutions in Germany could therefore now give joint awards bearing both titles.

However, the consolidation of practice that this conceptual and methodological development set in motion—the combination of personalized assistance with constructive-critical participation in the shaping of structural welfare issues—was once more challenged by social policy developments. Germany, despite its corporatist social policy tradition and the privileged autonomy the big non-governmental welfare institutions had enjoyed under the formula of subsidiarity, began to feel the ill winds of Neoliberalism in the 1990s. This led to the first attempts at restructuring social services according to criteria of efficiency and a sudden fascination with social management as a concept that by-passed the dual tradition. The paradigm of human resource management—the diametrical opposite to humanist pedagogy—took over key concepts that had originated in both pedagogical and social work thinking, such as self-help, civil society initiative and empowerment (Lorenz, 2001, 2005), and subverted them to its political ends. It seems that the optimism with which Thiersch had declared the previous century as the ‘century of social pedagogy’ (Rauschenbach, 1999), on account of the profession’s success in establishing itself solidly in all parts of society, had come to an abrupt end.

The fundamental question facing the social professions all over Europe now is not whether they can maintain their hard-won occupational boundaries, not only between themselves, but vis-à-vis the plethora of counselling, caring, coaching and managing activities that claim their stake on an increasingly liberalized welfare market—this battle has probably already been lost, despite the protestations of professional associations. The socially relevant concern turns rather to the question whether the notions of ‘the social’ itself, for which the social professions have traditionally stood, can still have a place in the political agenda of re-ordering social relations according to capitalist principles of individualism and personal enterprise, and whether the social professions collectively promote ‘the social’ (Seibel et al., 2007). These threats, by signalling a new crisis in social solidarity, in many ways bring European societies back to the early days of industrialization when new collective, scientifically grounded ways of tackling disintegration had to be found. In this situation, social work’s and social pedagogy’s stock of historical knowledge and experience is a valuable asset to be tapped. These disciplines can demonstrate their critical, reflexive potential transversally in relation to the different methodological discourses that already exist in Europe and that are newly emerging. This is not a matter of nostalgically warding off all new methods and professional formations. At stake is the intellectual ability of all the social disciplines, regardless of their titles, to relate theories of psychological coping in socially difficult situations as a continuous, lifelong learning process to the analysis of structural preconditions for such self-realization. On this criterion, interventions
with both individuals and groups, in residential and in community settings, have to prove themselves and show that they can reconstitute users of services, young and old, as active citizens with rights and a stake in society as a whole (Böhnisch et al., 2005). The advance of pragmatic, theoretically not yet sufficiently grounded notions of social care in the UK carries the danger of reducing complex learning and coping processes to sets of interpersonal skills without reference back to the wider political issues in which they are embedded. An attempt in that direction with the introduction by CCETSW of the Certificate of Social Service (CSS) in 1974 had once triggered a storm of critique on the part of the social work discipline (Smith, 2003). Compared to that, responses to the moving together of social work and social care have been less pronounced. The history of social pedagogy in Germany demonstrates that, without a thorough, systematic theoretical reflection on the relationship between interpersonal processes and social policy structures, this sector will not only fail to formally professionalize, but fail to deliver an accountable public service that renders people not only more autonomous, but also secures their social and citizenship rights. The social professions are mandated in a very particular way to relate life world processes to conditions at the level of the system, but they can only meet this challenge by thorough and critical analytical work that integrates psychological, social, anthropological, political and indeed historical insights in order to avoid the pitfalls of reductionism and instrumentalization, which the history of the social professions, including social pedagogy, so frequently reveals.

Conclusion

In such engagement lies, dialectically, the chance of gaining independence, initiative and recognition for the profession. Cross-national and interdisciplinary reflections help to sharpen the awareness of the historical contingency and cultural specificity of theories and particularly the inherent tendency of the social work paradigm to disengage from political processes on account of its fascination with value-neutral scientific paradigms, as in the British tradition mentioned above. Social pedagogy in this regard is one largely untapped resource for the English-speaking world and can serve not as a new ‘import’ in the plethora of methods contesting or replacing social work, but as a mirror in which the social work tradition can become aware of its own rich but also contested diversity that already contains many of the same elements as the social pedagogy tradition. But, as the references to the historical development of that paradigm in the German context have shown, very different connotations can attach to methodological concepts, depending on the political context to which they relate, actively or passively. Whether the universal term of ‘care’ can indeed provide a valid conceptual umbrella for the social professions in
the UK can only be decided by a critical analysis of the tensions and indeed contradictions contained in this title, which, for historically minded social workers, represent familiar territory, but territory worth exploring.

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The Present Finnish Formation of Child Welfare and History

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Summary

The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the nature of Finnish child welfare as a strategy of social control. It applies Michel Foucault’s ‘history of the present’ approach to illuminate what is hidden or taken for granted in the present practice and discourse. The article problematizes child welfare in the present and illuminates its current formations by recourse to the past. Since Finnish child welfare has developed in connection with the Anglo-American and Central European discourses of the field, the provided insights are also transferable to international contexts in the contemporary conditions of governance.

Keywords: a history of the present, child welfare formation, genealogy

Our purpose is to reflect upon the recent developments in Finnish child welfare policy and practice, which, among other things, seem to be characterized by a strongly emphasized ‘ethos of effective intervention’ often manifested as early intervention. Similar trends in child welfare are well known in many other European countries (e.g. Marthinsen, 2003; Parton, 2005). We will use an earlier period of child welfare as a resource in our investigation by taking advantage of historical comparison as a method,
but we are not quite limited to that. Since our goal is to critically discuss some of the recently introduced truths, concepts, beliefs and practice strategies in Finnish child welfare literature and policy, we will need a theoretical guide for selecting on what we would like to focus.

Foucault’s notion of governmentality and some of his and his followers’ related methodological work in developing a history of the present (e.g. Dean, 1994) have proved useful in this endeavour. This approach broadens the analysis of political power to the ever shifting conditions of political and non-political actors. According to Foucault, the idea of governmentality has increasingly dominated politics and the regulation of population—the constant concern of nation states, since the eighteenth century. Modern societies regulate their populations by transforming knowledge claims and practices of the new human sciences—the use of power is closely linked to knowledge. As Parton (2005, p. 128) notes, Foucault suggested that the liberal forms of freedom may not be in conflict with, but be dependent upon, the exercise of discipline.

History of the present is a form of analysis associated with the ‘way in which the question is asked today’, and it is based on the assumption that ‘the past does not repeat itself in the present but the present is played out, and innovates, utilizing the legacy of the past’ (Castel, 1994, p. 238). The history of the present is concerned with the archaeological and genealogical construction of discourses. Archaeological analysis refers to the study of how discourses are constructed over a particular historical period; it elucidates the particular form and nature of a child welfare discourse (Skehill, 2004). The process continues by investigating how the particular discourse is connected to its broader social context—its surrounding conditions of possibility (Foucault, 1979). It is a practice of considering how child welfare discourse is enabled and constrained by its surrounding discourses represented in various institutional, intellectual and social influences, which spatially and temporally specific analyses only can provide. It is based on in-depth empirical study to illuminate complex and contradictory practices of particular moments in history; it offers an alternative to progress or critical theories (Dean, 1994). The analytical process begins with a question posed in the present and involves a process of permanent questioning. Therefore, the remaining challenge for the researcher is to apply the general approach to a particular case.

Our historical analyses concerning Finnish poor relief, social work, child welfare and protection (e.g. Satka, 1995, 2003) as well as juvenile criminality (e.g. Harrikari, 2004) over the previous centuries have made us question the assumed similarities in child welfare policies and expert activities, expressed in the discourses of their own time, and in interventions in the lives of the ‘problem’ children of today and those of the early twentieth century—like the idea of empirically well grounded early intervention in children’s conditions as the most promising social intervention. What falls
between these periods is the development and erosion of the Finnish welfare state for children (e.g. Satka, 2003; Eydal et al., 2006).

‘A history of the present’ approach offers a different perspective on existing understandings; the approach opens an interesting point of view to both periods and helps to connect them critically to each other. They can both be analysed as a key moment of a particular discursive formation without an assumption of a taken-for-granted continuity between them. In the earlier case, crime prevention was discursively introduced as an ultimate goal for child welfare practices for the first time, whereas the second moment could be addressed as a new formation of ‘socio-criminological’ discourse in its particular genealogical context. Thus, the following analysis is an excursion into the historical construction of child welfare in the dynamics of punishment and care in child welfare (cf. Donzelot, 1980; Skehill, 2004). It raises, for example, the question of whether there exists a particular set of genealogical conditions that enable the strengthening of this kind of discursive and non-discursive practises.

The nature of child welfare and our method

Child welfare social work has also previously been addressed as a specific strategy of control policies targeted at younger generations. For example, Jacques Donzelot (1980, pp. 96–168) claims that, from its inception, French family social work existed in close co-operation with jurisprudence, medicine, pedagogy, with mothers forming their own specific system, ‘a tutelary complex’, of surveillance and support with its own distinguished practices. What he is referring to here is the combined yet invisible formation of care and control in order to safeguard the kind of childhood that was considered appropriate from the point of view of those in power within the developing nation state. He characterizes the emerging practices as something in which the newest innovations in science and other forms of knowledge become closely combined with contemporary relations of power.

Foucault’s approach to power is complex; he does not reduce politics to the activities of the state, but writes about the broad co-operation between the acts and decisions of the state and non-political actors such as professional and other social experts, like community activists. It is the joint architecture of action and shared ‘play’ that is crucial to the operation of power. Furthermore, the approach draws attention to the range of mechanisms whereby different groups of actors and forms of knowledge are able to regulate people’s everyday lives, thus becoming part of the construction of the lives of children, parents and the current social rules and order of everyday life in communities.

Our analysis has been strained by the following explanation of the main turns in Finnish social control policies and criminal policy in particular
provided by two legal historians: criminal sanctions in particular and social control in general have the tendency to become stricter, when societal divisions increase and cause growing inequality, which, in turn, leads the power elite to experience its status as the focus of some kind of internal threat in the present conditions (Kekkonen and Ylikangas, 1982, pp. 74–5). According to the authors, the general aim of social control politics is to maintain the status quo and to take steps to strengthen their grasp, when it comes under threat.

If we address child welfare as a particular strategy of the exertion of societal control over young, the above explanation is tempting—could it be applied to the social control of children? Since ‘the history of the present’ approach encourages us to problematize the answers provided by previous scholars (Dean, 1994, p. 4), we need to question whether tightening social control and internal threat are related to the presently growing interest among some Finnish conservative political factions, police and civil activists in emphasizing the effectiveness and early timing of interventions among non-elite children and their parents (Harrikari, 2006a). Furthermore, are like-minded ideas about children, childhood and parenting adopted because they characterize problems and identify solutions according to the dominant culture and structures of power (cf. Garland, 2001, p. 26; Jallinoja, 2006)?

We consider history a broad practice rather than a method based on the practice of the problematization of the present by recourse to its past:

Problematisation is . . . the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that brings something in to play of truth and falsehood and sets it up as an object of the mind (Foucault, 1984, p. 18).

We could refer to our method as ‘historical reconstruction’ (Ojakangas, 1997, pp. 28–30), which indicates our interest in uncovering the two formations of child welfare under investigation.

We begin this article by introducing the key moments we have identified as central on the basis of our previous empirical investigations. These key moments include some of the newest discursive and non-discursive practices in child welfare in both their strategic and societal contexts, as well as within the dynamics of functioning that preceded their emergence. Next, following the challenge ‘the history of the present’ poses to the analysis, we will introduce late nineteenth and early twentieth-century child welfare formations as part of the social conditions of their time. Finally, the research task is to question if increasing social inequality is connected to the tightening social control in child welfare discourse and policy in the two invested spatial and temporal contexts, and, furthermore, what the surrounding conditions for the control-minded child welfare discourse to occupy more space are. The article concludes with a discussion on the
nature of the present child welfare as a strategy of social control by recourse to the past.

The present social context and the public concern of children

In the early 1990s, the Finnish economy went through a particularly deep economic recession. As a result, a new type of governance took place alongside the economic, political and societal changes that were carried out. This period has been considered as the key moment in the formation of a new kind of strategy of social control (e.g. Kekkonen, 2003).

Several Finnish studies point out that both the direct implications of the economic depression and the practiced social policy were exceptionally harsh towards families with children (e.g. Sauli et al., 2002). The status of children and the structure of families with children changed; both single-parent families and blended stepfamilies began to appear alongside the traditional two-generation nuclear families (Jallinoja, 2006). The proportion of poor and low-income families increased. Supplements for families with children were cut, while low-income families with children became increasingly dependent on welfare. Basic social services for families with children declined in all areas of social care, ranging from maternity clinics to youth work. However, the economic situation of families with children has started to improve since the late 1990s. The flip side of this otherwise positive economic trend has been the clear weakening of the economic situations of single-parent families and families with many children. One clear indication of this is that the relative number of children living under the poverty line trebled between 1990 and 2004 (Moisio, 2006). In addition, the number of children who are clients of child protective services has trebled over the past fifteen years (Lastensuojelu, 2005).

Social and economic inequality has led to a new type of polarization among families with children. The public concern of children was raised so that distinctions are made in the discussions and discourse in the field between the ‘good’ family values of those families who were able to regain their economic footing after the recession and those families in which the parents ‘don’t know how to parent’, ‘the children are at risk’ and ‘young people are exhibiting unprecedented levels of bad and delinquent behaviour’ (Jallinoja, 2006). The concern about the children and young adults of ‘not-so-good-families’ (cf. Parton, 2006), the moralization of parents and calls for stronger and more effective social intervention aimed at families by the middle-class community activist and media have gone hand in hand with the increases in the registered number of child welfare cases, and the psychological problems of children and young people (e.g. Harrikari, 2008).
The new formation of child welfare and the rise of early intervention

Following this change, there have been calls in Finland for the introduction of new concepts and discourses in child welfare during the past ten years. These concepts, discourses, lessons and techniques have spread quickly and extensively throughout the public discussions and political programmes related to children, young people and families with children, and have started to guide the work of professionals in the field. They have challenged the Nordic principle of universalism, understanding of childhood, of the tactics of dealing with children and families with children, as well as the forms of social control (Eydal et al., 2006).

One of the most central ideological changes in child welfare policy has been that social prevention representing the universalism common in Nordic welfare states alone is no longer considered sufficient as the primary tactic in handling such cases. By social prevention, we refer to the comprehensive systems of state subsidies and social services, which were developed and implemented during the 1970s and 1980s to prevent social problems in families with children (e.g. KM, 1973, p. 86; KM, 1982, p. 67). This tactic was based on increasing public funding for child welfare services, which is in contradiction with the rationale of today. There is, however, no basis for making the claim that this tactic was no longer used. It is, however, certainly indicative of the challenge that the level of public support Finnish families with children receive today is around the European average (Sauli et al., 2002).

As a result of this strategic policy change, social prevention now has to compete with the tactic of early intervention, which has spread throughout social service sectors. The concept made its way to Finland through the implementation of a national crime prevention plan in 1998, which claimed that there was a direct correlation between crime and marginalization, and that society was at risk of developing ‘criminal classes’ in the future (WTSC, 1998, pp. 23–6). The tactic of early intervention quickly gained popularity, although, in social work practice, it was sometimes referred to as early support, not least because the practices of early intervention did not meet the local view of social workers on what qualified social work with children and families is.

By 2003, virtually all municipalities in Finland had drafted their own local crime prevention programmes based on the national model. Under the expert guidance of local police, half of these local programmes set crime prevention and security, related to the risks associated with young people, as their main goal. Local crime prevention programmes are often seen as a continuation of the old social prevention, and have successfully lumped children in with these kinds of communitarian civic movements, many of which have been guided by a conservative and religiously based
pedagogical kind of discourse and have embraced Hillary Clinton’s idea of ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ (see Eskelinen, 2000). At the end of the 1990s, some eighty such projects had been initiated in Finland (Jallinoja, 2006, pp. 154–9). In addition, this new tactic has been the guide in dealing with families with children by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of the Interior, the Lutheran Church and the third sector organizations (e.g. ISP, 2004, p. 44; STM, 2005, p. 4).

In addition to being used for emphasizing social security, the concept of prevention has also been used for implying and justifying the surveillance of public places and the control of antisocial behaviour, namely as a paradigm of security (e.g. Hughes and Follett, 2006). It has begun to be used for referring to the prevention and diffusion of various activities and behaviours. The increased focus on case-by-case prevention, and the concept of incapacitation (Zimring and Hawkins, 1995), which has been manifested in the increased use of surveillance cameras, private security services and police patrols in public places, have, in Finnish studies, been found to be connected to the increased control of young people (Kivivuori and Honkatukia, 2006). In addition to ‘zero tolerance’, the new kinds of techniques, which have begun to be used in Finland over the past decade, include the introduction of public curfews (cf. O’Neil, 2002; Muncie and Goldson, 2006). However, there is currently no legislation related to curfews in Finland, and only 6 per cent of municipalities in Southern Finland have curfews for children and minors (Harrikari, 2006).

The protection of children and the young has been one of the main arguments presented in the public discussion surrounding the implementation of legislation related to curfews. However, this fundamental principle of child welfare practice in the Nordic countries, the right of each and every child to be protected, has thus been threatened by the rationale of various external forces and actors (Harrikari, 2006b; Hollander and Tärnfalk, 2007). This new way of thinking about security in terms of aiming at protecting and ensuring the security of society as a whole, by attempting to control things such as illicit drug abuse and other criminal behaviours with surveillance, control and prevention, has defined the role of the field of child welfare as one responsible for the early detection of problems such as drugs and other risk factors, which might lead to future criminal behaviour (ISP, 2004, pp. 17, 23, 25). At the same time, the self-defined techniques of information and advice services, financial support and therapy used by professionals in the field of child welfare have been criticized as inefficient and costly. The arguments in favour of early intervention, presented in political programmes over the past decade, tend to be morally based, although there has simultaneously been an attempt at cutting public spending (ISP, 2004, p. 64).

This new paradigm of security has also resulted in the appearance of new ways of thinking about the societal positions of children and young people. One of the goals of the local crime prevention programmes is to put
children and young people back ‘in their place’ as obedient and firmly under adult control. As late as in the 1980s, we were still referring to some children as ‘disturbed’ and to some young adults as ‘maladjusted’, which referred to the higher probability of children who had trouble interacting at a young age as the ones likely to experience problems interacting with their peers and other people later in their lives. The references to disturbed and maladjusted children, common in the field of child welfare during the 1990s, were replaced at the end of the decade by terms such as ‘risk groups’ and ‘young people at risk of marginalization’ (Harrikari, 2006a).

Various causes and explanations are still an important part of child welfare, although the focus has shifted to the identification, classification and control of the behaviour of risk groups and other such technical solutions, all of which are part of the thesis of actuarialization (e.g. Feeley and Simon, 1992; Webb, 2006). One of the underlying central notions is a new requirement in the public sector: we must be able to pinpoint various measures and practical solutions to specific problems. And this requires the ability to identify children who are considered most likely to become potential financial burdens on ‘society’ (e.g. ISP, 2004, p. 64). As such, early identification and intervention and various forms of risk assessment are inherently linked to one another; early identification and intervention are techniques of risk management, and they are almost always used in conjunction with a particular perceived risk (cf. Furedi, 1997).

Following in the footsteps of the imported models, the field of child welfare has experienced an empirical shift towards ensuring that its activities and means of dealing with clients are as cost-efficient as possible. Social work practice has gone through an increasingly conscious shift towards using what is referred to as evidence-based practice, which is modelled after its use in the fields of health care and prison administration (Smith, 2006). This is usually done by carrying out positivist research, the results of which are believed to be directly applicable to other local and cultural contexts. In addition, the development of these types of knowledge systems has facilitated the collection of a wide range of information, and the development of best practices of working with actual clients. Practitioners in the field of child welfare are conscious of, and interested in, the dynamics between various risk factors and protective and preventative factors (cf. Arthur et al., 2002), and have begun to develop formulae for the assessment of clients and their situations. There are more established standards for dealing with young people in use in the field of probation and aftercare, but a wish to follow similar procedures in child welfare has already been articulated (e.g. Heikkinen, 2007).

According to our conclusion, we argue that the late twentieth-century transformations in Finnish child welfare can be defined as: the new concepts, measures, techniques and discourses, combining conservative ‘basic values’ and a new type of security reasoning, might reflect not only a new
discursive phase but rather an ongoing, broad national level change in the governance of the child population and their families.

The rise of child welfare as a public concern in the late nineteenth century

Until 1920, more than 70 per cent of the Finnish population earned their living either from agriculture or forestry. As is the case today, the social divide between different social groups was deepening towards the end of the nineteenth century. In rural areas, the breakthrough of capitalism paved the way for landowners to increase their earnings. By the mid-nineteenth century, the net wealth of landowners was five times the average amongst labourers, increasing to fourteen by the beginning of the twentieth century. At the time, Finland was characterized by numerous and relatively powerless agrarian proletariats whose daily maintenance was uncertain and dependent on economic conditions. In addition to the industrial workers, there were other disadvantaged groups whose temporary work contracts and low salaries gave further impetus to the sharpening class conflict, which, in 1918, led to one of the bloodiest civil wars in Europe (Alapuro, 1985, pp. 46–66).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many Finns were moving from the countryside to towns or to rural industrial forestry communities. The move was followed by changes in family structure, towards the nuclear family, in which children were primarily educated by their mothers, after which their education was the responsibility of the public school. However, the new organization was slow to replace the traditional patriarchal education, traditionally controlled by the Lutheran Church.

From the point of view of the ruling elite, society as a whole was becoming unstable and unpredictable towards the end of the nineteenth century. Old moral rules, traditional responsibilities and the organization of everyday life were disappearing in the slow transformation of the society of four estates to a pre-modern democracy. Among other things, this meant that the earlier unknown and collective mass of people was turning into a society of free individuals who had both their own will and a collective one. This being the case, the elite and the relatively new educated groups began to become concerned about the state of the masses as part of the sphere of activities that aimed at creating a social order. Although the working class was heterogeneous, it was plentiful, and thus its strength as an emerging group would exceed all the other social classes.

From the first signs of the changing characteristics of the masses, the educated classes were able to connect with what they had been reading. Very early on, they were able to recognize various social phenomena, and to predict their possible social outcomes according to the examples in the
earlier industrialized nations. When the severe suffering of many people lacking the means to support themselves became evident, the elite recognized in it a possible sign of the workers’ social unrest, or even a potential revolution. In addition, the Senate sent a number of Finnish experts in children’s social matters abroad, to study the latest forms of modern child welfare in countries that were ahead in terms of industrial and social development (e.g. Dahlström, 1890). The experts were often trustees of the political elite who were personally deeply dedicated to finding the ‘root causes of evil’ (KM, 1905, p. 9a) in children. In most cases, they were either religious-minded pedagogues or priests who proposed the implementation of modern child welfare policies in conjunction with their travel reports to the Finnish Senate. When the world’s first Child Welfare Act was passed in Norway in 1896, Finland was in the process of attempting to establish a coherent system of national child welfare.

As was the case elsewhere in Europe, the children of the new, industrial working-class communities worked as their contemporary counterparts in rural households. Some children became involved in thefts and ‘bad manners’ (KM, 1905, p. 9a). This was seen as a potentially dangerous sign by all the four Estates in power, since children’s welfare was considered essential for the future of the nation state. A shared assumption was that children are the future of the Finnish nation. In 1897, each of the Estates argued independently that it was time to modernize the care and control system of the neglected, ill-mannered or criminal children. These proposals, including the suggestion of the Chief Inspector of the Prison Administration that increasing criminality must be rooted out as early as possible in particular institutions (Harrikari, 2004, pp. 129–33), led the Senate to establish a State Committee in 1900 for studying the social conditions of children, and to propose a plan for reforming the entire system of child welfare (Satka, 2003). Simultaneously, the representatives of civil society, in particular the volunteers of the educated class, introduced the Elberfeld system that was targeted especially at families with children living in urban communities, with the purpose of building friendly relations between the poor and the well-to-do (Satka, 1995, pp. 64–5).

The first formation of national child welfare

The State Committee (KM, 1905, p. 9a) introduced the newest ideas in the European discourse of children, and designed a proposal for the implementation of a modern system of the education and treatment of problem children. The Committee defined both who these children were and the kinds of social problems they had, by applying a contemporary discourse of ‘social defence’ that was originally developed by a group of Italian criminologists (see Dahl, 1985; Satka, 1995, pp. 101–3). Its basic belief was that any effective criminal policy must begin with a strategy of prevention. Following the
empirical principle of causality, the belief was that systematic observation and empirical testing would make it possible to predict which children would be most likely to turn to crime. The aim was thus to help modern societies and nation states to protect themselves against the public expenditure of new ‘social ills’, such as increasing criminality, resulting from industrialization. The Italian authors believed it was the empirical knowledge of the root causes of crime in particular, and societal cause—chains of consequences in general that would enable societies to curb this kind of delinquent behaviour and eventually to prevent the development of ‘social ills’ in the same way in which vaccinations can prevent physical illnesses. The underlying belief was that when the recognition of the root causes of criminality in individuals are known, it allows the state to intervene by implementing well focused and scientifically valid preventative measures.

Children were regarded as central targets of the new crime prevention strategy, since, according to the authors of the discourse, intervention in children’s developing morals had been proven to be a long-lasting effective means of preventing future delinquent behaviour. Following the recent Norwegian model of child welfare (Dahl, 1985), the Committee’s radically new assumption was that each child is simultaneously both a developing, unique individual and a potential deviant. The potential occurrence of moral deviancy was to be discovered prior to its actual emergence, by the means of an empirical child study. The Committee drafted an extensive survey covering all Finnish municipalities and their children, and obtained empirical justification for increased concerns about the state of Finnish children, particularly of those living in urban communities. This group of potential criminals consisted of children who were found to be, for example, neglected, illegitimate, educated by parents who were uninformed about the modern requirements of home education or generally ill-mannered (KM, 1905, p. 9a).

Children who, on the basis of empirical scientific investigation, exhibited one of these or other poor moral qualities should be treated individually; attempts should be made at preventing or curing social illness by means of a particular method that was to be applied individually, on a case-by-case basis. A four-step process based on ‘a chronology of moral turmoil’ was implemented with the aim of preventing ‘social ills’ in general, and criminality in particular. The process was considered an effective and comprehensive measure. When applied to children, the procedure targeted either the children themselves or their conditions. The first step was advice and counselling aimed at both the children and their parents. If this alone was not enough to correct the child’s behaviour, it was followed by surveillance by voluntary child inspectors, and fortified with the threat of the child being taken into care. The final step and the eventual destination for all children deemed to be criminals were closed state institutions. Their aim was to educate children into becoming upstanding Finnish citizens (Satka, 1995).
Another basic belief was that this kind of unacceptable behaviour was likely to increase and become worse without societal intervention. Consequently, the general conception was that the earliest possible intervention was best, for both society in general and these children in particular. The idea was that this would enable society to offset the future costs of dealing with adult criminals. And, most importantly, early intervention would protect society against rising crime rates (KM, 1905, pp. 9a, 15).

The new discourse in general, and the procedure for treatment in particular, helped to specify the practical preventative measures that would be used when dealing with those who had proved difficult to raise with traditional disciplining. It also specified that it was the role of child welfare practitioners to determine which children were in danger of becoming involved in criminal activities. It also provided guidelines for treating them in accordance with the individual moral characteristics of the child. The reformers strongly believed that the new formation made it possible for the state to improve considerably the governing of children, the future adult population.

Discussion: the present dilemmas of child welfare

Many have been concerned about the strategies of child welfare that emerged since the 1990s, stating that these strategies do not either meet the needs of children or respond to the principles of children’s rights. Instead, the focus of interest is in the assessment and management of individual children, in particular, from the point of view of risks. Therefore, investigations that help to uncover the present truths and add to our in-depth understanding of the contingencies of power have enlightening potential. A history of the present approach has proved useful for unearthing the particular genealogical conditions that both enable and constrain the discursive space and practices related to caring for versus controlling children.

We discovered similarities in the two investigated spatial and temporal contexts. At first, the social control of children has been made more effective. The control-minded child welfare discourses seem to be able to gain more discursive power when they appear in the context of an overall liberalization of the economy and the change that follows in the strategies of governing people’s family life, and childhood in particular. It is a moment when new issues of concern emerge as a result of changes in the economic conditions of families. Hence, many people have become uncertain either of their daily maintenance or of their social status, like the middle class has become afraid of losing its social or economic positions, and there is a feeling of threat of falling down socially. Our interpretation is that it is the uncertainty (cf. Parton, 2005) and sense of insecurity that make these groups anxious to find means for counteracting the experienced threats (Jallinoja, 2006).

Both periods are associated with the appearance and use of religious-minded discourses related to the ongoing moral and strategic shift in
governing. Both discourses include an omnipotent belief in education and an attempt to revert back to the generational relations that were common in the past. Furthermore, they are characterized by a strongly individualized interpretation of children’s social problems, an unwavering belief in simple, rational-scientific solutions to them by means of effective early intervention, and a strong belief that these practices would ultimately save money by helping to ensure a safe and healthy childhood for every young person.

It is the linkage of power and knowledge that comes into the picture here. In the nineteenth century, new and powerful techniques of knowledge production were introduced, such as statistical research methods, in addition to the idea of causality, whereas in our time, computer-based data administration enabled innovations in the means of social control. Furthermore, the new concepts and techniques of voluntary or professional judgement and, in particular, a strong belief in their efficiency in terms of future (cf. Patomäki, 2007) enabled, and continues to enable an intervention in the life of an individual child with knowledge-based, systematized procedures.

During both periods, the deconstruction of economic regulation has provoked both the third sector and public policies to adhere to the discourse of control as well as to promote practices that realize it in ‘the social sphere’. Those in power—except the elite in criminal policy—have not been interested in child welfare. The investigated discourses represent children either as in need of protection or as exceptionally ill-behaving individuals. In spite of the different positioning of children, the overall aim in both temporal contexts is to place children under the supervision of adults, when the religious-mindedness is combined to the realistically, essentially and positivistically oriented socio-criminological discourse adopted from international, Anglo-American sources. Both the religious-minded civil movement and socio-criminological discourse underline criminality as a social problem. Thus, fighting against criminal tendencies and crimes turns into a phenomenon resembling mechanic solidarity (Durkheim, 1984), and it consists of collective conscious and a pressure towards uniformity, as well as an atmosphere that underlines punishment as a means of promoting these qualities. In brief, religious-minded conservatism offers the moral ethos, whereas the socio-criminological discourse introduces the means for its practices. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the discourse was social defence that positioned children as a social danger. At the turn of the millennium, Finns adopted the Western safety discourse, which positioned children as risk. In both discourses, there is an inbuilt threat of the ‘growing criminal class’ that will become expensive in the future.

When applied to the social control implemented in child welfare, the argument that the periods of intensifying social control in the Finnish criminal policy would be connected to increasing social inequality and the threats it raises among those who hold power and thus begin to react by the means of harshening sanctions (Kekkonen and Ylikangas, 1982) needs further elaboration in the light of contemporary conditions of
governing. By summarizing the two moments under study, we find that, to some extent, the thesis of increasing social inequality and the following sense of threat are connected to the tightening social control towards children, but we need to ask further: what are the forms of social control in the present Finnish child welfare?

The most important change in the joint field of child welfare and criminal law is that social workers have been made responsible for reporting all suspected child abuse cases to the police, which has led to the intensification of criminal control over parents. In this regard, the thesis is tenable. In particular, the sanctioning targets ‘risk families’ with multiple problems, in the weakest economic situation, who have suffered most from the decrease of income transfers and available services. However, the most significant changes in the control over children, young people and families with children do not concern criminal consequences, but the much wider, invisible and more difficult-to-control ways in which the mechanisms of power function. First, this is about the ethos of intervention, which eludes judicial procedures and progresses on the surface of multi-professional collaboration. Second, this is about the construction of an extensive strategy for the prevention of crimes, which regards breaking the law as a problem (cf. Garland, 2001), and whose discursive techniques, such as risk evaluation, early intervention and curfews, extend to all the institutions governing families and children, and turn into a tactic that permeates the whole of society. This, in turn, reinforces the status of the police as the experts on matters concerning children and families. Simultaneously, child welfare, its goals and means absorb concepts from criminal policy and, quite furiously, child welfare becomes one of the key strategies of crime prevention.

In the widely spread neo-liberal conditions of governance, some of our questions or findings might also be transferable to other contexts. Knowing that child welfare took on many forms in the past helps us to understand the complex and contradictory nature of child welfare as a balance-seeking activity between care and control in a particular spatial space. Our genealogical analysis implies that neither child welfare nor the position of Finnish social workers held much discursive power in the 1990s. More particularly, it was eroded by the discourse of new public management, which, among other things, has legitimated ignorance of the meanings of history by arguing that the ‘only permanent matter is change’. This circumstance is widely shared among European social workers, and, therefore, all contributions that help to raise further questions about the present nature of social work, or about the forms of governing child population, are a resource not only for the present, but also for thinking about the child welfare policies and practices in the future.
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1 Introduction – start where the client is.

Social workers who work with clients are used to asking about the past. They enquire about the personal history of the client. They try to find out how the problem their client deals with has developed. This allows them to ‘start where the client is’1 In that sense an interest in history is a ‘natural’ thing for social workers, just as all other professionals who deal with people they have to know and understand something about ‘what happened until now’. History however is more than the individual facts that compose a person’s past. History is also knowledge that goes beyond the individual; it describes how specific events can be understood in larger contexts of historical development. For social workers there are several ways in which knowledge about the past can be usefully expanded beyond understanding of the life-stories of individual clients.

I want to distinguish two types of such historical knowledge and show how they are connected in professional practice and ethics of social workers. The first is knowledge about the macro historical developments that have contributed to the challenges that the client faces. History of poverty and unemployment may help to understand the financial problems of a client. Histories of gender oppression and family relations can help to understand aspects of domestic violence. Histories of migration and Diasporas will allow a social worker and the clients to connect individual problems to larger global developments. Such forms of insight can be empowering, can help clients and social workers to express their experiences, to think of causes and consequences, and to define spaces for agency.

The other form of historical knowledge social workers for social professionals is awareness of the history of their own profession. Whether one deals with debts, unemployment, family violence, child abuse or loneliness it is useful to know from what practices, from what traditions, modern social work interventions stem. Being aware of predecessors who helped people deal with such problems provides professionals with insight in some of the limits and in some of the possibilities in social work. To know about traditions of condescending charity, the practices of disciplining welfare agencies, or political choices made by social workers in the past, they all help to reflect on the margins of professional intervention today.

Such historical questions can help social workers deal with the interaction between their profession and macro historical developments: on whose side were social workers in the struggles of the poor, emancipation movements of women and ethnic minorities, what was

their role migration, did they contribute to the design of social policies. As Walter Lorenz has argued in *Social Work in a Changing Europe* it is crucial to include the European dimension in order to say something about the stance taken by professionals in historical periods of dictatorship, persecution or genocide.\(^2\) This knowledge can by inspiring and it can be discomforting, often it is both.

Both forms of historical knowledge have been taught at schools for social work since the early phases of professionalization in different parts of the world. The first schools of social work in Berlin, Amsterdam, New York, to mention a few, included classes in social and economic history in their curriculum.\(^3\) Students preparing for a career in social work learned about shifts in social composition of population in cities, about poverty and unemployment. Prospective social workers also learned about the origins of their field by listening and reading to stories about social work pioneers in their own country. Celebrating the first efforts at professionalization helped teachers to discuss the requirements of modern social work.\(^4\) They learned about the prehistory of social work in organized charity, religious social services, and friendly visitors, the Elbefelder system, self help associations and socialist projects to counter poverty. The history of the profession had an international orientation and provided historical knowledge that helped social work students to imagine beyond their national history. Social work students learned about social conditions and development of social services in their own country and about international developments. American students learned about the German history of social work pioneers. Dutch students read about English ‘Toynbee-houses’, all students learned about pioneers in the scientific charity movements. These two types of historical knowledge expected from social workers differed. One addressed the history of social problems, the other the history of social work profession. But they interacted – by learning about social work pioneers in other societies, social workers reflected on their profession and on the conditions of their practice.\(^5\)

Today at the beginning of the 21C, such a need for reflection on the conditions of professional social work is more needed than ever. Not only has professionalism developed into a transnational corpus of expertise, that social workers cannot afford to leave unnoticed, but the problems clients face are part of transnational histories. Globalization has deeply and permanently changed the character of social problems, and any form of professional work will come across individual problems that can no longer be understood in strictly national terms: clients and their problems are impacted by migration, global economic developments in employment, technologies that leave national boundaries far behind them. Individual lives are impacted by such transnational developments. Social work as a profession can no longer be seen as only the inheritors of national traditions of providing social assistance. Transnational histories of colonialism, war, imperialism, fascist and communist occupations, but also transnational movements for emancipation, such as the women’s movements, anti-colonial

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\(^3\) Berteke Waaldijk, *Het Amerika der Vrouw*.


\(^5\) For an early overview of social work education in different European, American and some Asian schools see Salomon, Alice. *Education for social work*. Zürich : Verl. für Recht u. Gesellschaft, 1937
struggles and resistance against totalitarianism have changed the clients, and they have changed the ideals of social workers.

In this article I want to discuss some of the international comparative research that has been conducted on the history for social work professionalism in its interaction and connection with macro-histories of political and social history: war and persecution, democracy and dictatorship, globalization and migration. I will start with a description of results of a research project network on history of social work, especially the SWEEP project on social work in central and eastern Europe 1900-1960, that has opened up a wealth of histories of social work in a wide range of political systems, ranging from the Habsburg empire, emerging democracies, authoritarian and corporatist repression, fascist dictatorships, communist single party rule, different shades of socialist governments. I will also summarize results of social work under the Nazi regime in Germany and in some occupied countries in Western Europe. The next part of this review of published results addresses findings of history of social work in colonial and postcolonial contexts: the role of social services in multi-ethnic European societies resulting from postcolonial migration and globalized economies.

My underlying argument and assumption of this summary of findings of historical research is simple and limited but important. Social workers operate daily in societies shaped by the disasters and by the triumphs of the past, they work with clients whose lives, whose parents’ lives and whose expectations are shaped by this past. In order to provide assistance to these clients, it is crucial that social workers are aware of the way their own professional ideals and practices have been shaped by these pasts as well. The professional ideals of social work have developed in contexts of inequality based on class, race and gender. They have bloomed in democracies and totalitarian regimes. Social workers have in different circumstances behaved differently; some resisted, other assisted racist political regimes. Some were cogs in a machine of repression; others combined social work with struggles for survival, liberation and freedom. The remains of these choices continue to play a role in professional ideals – we’d better address them.

For social workers in the 21C, the histories and memories of the political entanglement of social professionals in regimes they had not chosen, offers metaphors to think about one’s own responsibility in dealing with private individuals for agencies that design a policy for social services. When does assisting an individual client turn into disciplining the client into behavior expected by the state? When does distinction between deserving and undeserving clients into criminal discrimination? How do professional ideals about independence and neutrality relate to the duty to support the client?

2 European histories of social work.
In 1994 Walter Lorenz published a path breaking book on social work in a Europe. He argued that in order to understand the role of social workers in the late 20th Century, knowledge about their role in different parts of European history had to be taken into account. Several scholars have explored these histories. A crucial moment was 2001 at the Conference for social work in Mainz, when a workshop was organized that was dedicated to historiography of social welfare in Europe between 1900-1950. As a further exploration of the possibilities of transnational perspectives on history of social work, the workshop was a success. Over twenty papers were presented and resulted in the publication (both in English and in German) of a
collection of essays.  

The participants in the workshop agreed to continue working together and on a focus for further research. The Network for Historical Studies of Gender and Social Work was established in 2001 – and celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2011. Several lines of research have resulted from this Network. First the meaning of the fact that in all European countries about which expertise was present, women played a crucial role in the establishment of social work as a profession. It became clear that the international ideals of the women’s movement had contributed to the internationalization of social work debates of possibilities of a new profession. Women established schools, and created transnational networks. In Berlin Alice Salomon argued that women should be prepared for a professional attitude towards social services they provided. The participants in the network published several biographical studies of women active in the advocacy and promotion of professional social work showed how women profited from the possibilities of international connections. Crucial figures, such as the German Hertha Krauss, the Polish Helena Radlinska, Marie Kamphuis and Mentona Moser established international networks of professionals who worked in national contexts but who referred to each others’ work, translated it and travel and participated in international conferences and organizations. Without this international network of women, social work in different national contexts would never have developed so strongly.

A second theme that was taken up by the network was the ‘European connection’. Through the work of the network, it became clear that there had been active networks that brought together aspiring and ambitious social workers throughout Europe, and especially that there were histories of social work pioneers in central and Eastern Europe that were ‘waiting to be


7 Coordinated by Sabine Hering and Berteka Waaldijk, the network was made possible by the practical coordination from University of Siegen, especially Dagmar Schulte.


written’. What backgrounds had produced women like Princess Cantacuzino in Romania, Alice Salomon in Germany, Radlinska in Poland and the US, to mention only a few? The scholars concluded that in order to understand the historical importance of such networks, more knowledge about developments of social work was necessary. Several historical lacuna were identified, the history of social work in Central and Eastern Europe, the history of social work and fascism and the connections between European colonialism and social work. In this article I will take up the results of research on these themes and argue that they provide crucial insights for reflective practices of social workers today and in the future.

3 Social work in Central and Eastern Europe 1900-1960.

One of the problems in retrieving European histories of social work was that memories and histories of social work had almost disappeared in countries in Central and Eastern Europe. These countries had often been part of several imperial entities before WWI, the Habsburg empire, Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. They went through uncertain political times in the interwar years, were either occupied by Nazi Germany or joined this regime in WWII, and many fell under the power of Soviet Russia after 1945. The official ‘absence’ of social work as a professional identity in most socialist countries made it difficult to reconstruct histories and memories of practices of social work during these different regimes.

A project to recover these histories, SWEEP resulted in studies of the way social work as a profession had developed in nine countries form Central and Eastern Europe. The project resulted in several books in several languages and showed how diverse the history of social work professionals could be. While in all countries projects to assist the poor, to provide individual and collective assistance, to set up training and education projects, to improve quality of housing and child care were organized, it was by no means clear whether one was justified to call such practices pre-histories or the ‘invention’ of social work. In this the histories of the ‘invention’ of social work from the older practices of both charity and self-help resembled the better documented development of social work in other parts of Europe. In other aspects there were differences. As Popova (2005) and Hering (2002) point out, social work practices in the country side were relatively more important in less industrialized parts of central and eastern Europe. While in Western Europe Protestantism made its impact, in other parts of Europe the influence of Islam, and Orthodoxy were also present. Jewish and Catholic traditions played a role in almost all parts of Europe. Although not all countries in western Europe were fully developed democracies, in the years before WWI the formation of democratically governed nation states in central and eastern Europe was less advanced. Tracing social work origins in Poland means looking for social work in a nonexisting state. Croatia and Slovenia were part of the Habsburg empire, Latvia part of Tsarist Russian empire. This implied that social workers worked in different contexts of governments. Social workers


sometimes used their professional ideals to engage in nationalist movements for political independence. In Poland social work in the form of helping families of prisoners, training of young women in child care and housekeeping was part of the nationalist movement fighting Russian and German occupation of Polish territory. The impact of the transnational Catholic Church strengthened this. Training and helping the peasant population, educating children, supporting families of arrested or killed nationalists was a practice that was also seen in other times and places. In Slovenia and Croatia that later belonged to Yugoslavia, the complicated histories of resistance and partisan movements deeply impacted the pioneering social work institutions. Social care for children of partisans, assistance for mothers raising their children in times of war, support via orphanages, new forms of professional work were developed.

However the new profession did not always choose the side of the oppressed and the unfree. For Bulgaria Popova and Angelova pointed out how forms of educating the poor, organizing welfare in peasant villages, training women to mind their children, could also be part of authoritarian states trying to modernize their country. The same happened in Romania as Cheschebec and Rachieru show. Authoritarian regimes in the interwar years used social policies and welfare to strengthen their hold the country. In the interwar years Russian communists organized forms of social welfare directed at bringing the population to accept and support communism. Gradzkova describes how nurseries were places where the state raised its children and how family advisors were part of the system.

The research made clear that the ideals of liberation and empowerment of clients have not always dominated the professional practices of social work. As had been pointed out by historians of social work in Western Europe and the US, social workers often are part of disciplining practices. The possibility to provide conditional help and only provide assistance for those that behave in accordance with the regime, or to help only those who are considered worthy citizens offers an enormous power to states that provide welfare. It makes social workers crucial agents. The language of professionalism could be, and has been exploited by governments that required a disciplined population. Especially when one looks at the impact of social services for women and children, the ambivalence of emancipation and disciplining became very clear. Helping poverty-stricken mothers to find gainful employment by training them as domestic servants, as happened in the interwar years in Bulgaria, Russia and in Croatia, is one example. It was not only helping them to survive, it was also a way of


telling poor single women that domestic labor or nursing was their destiny & best employment.

Not only the objects of social work activities were thus included in the range of the state, but the professionals who organized such projects on behalf of the nation-state became embedded in public existence. For women this offered a special opportunity. In most countries they were not seen as full citizens, and their opportunities for gainful employment were limited to social domains. While they as a rule were not part of armed forces, working as a nurse, a teacher or a social worker was one of the ways they could connect to the newly independent nation-states. The evidence collected suggests that for women in Central and Eastern Europe, as their counterparts in western Europe, Scandinavia and the US, often saw a career in social work as a road into emancipation and public participation. In some cases it implied possibilities for education otherwise forbidden, in other cases it allowed upper class women to take up positions of power within the modernizing state. Princess Cantacuzina in Rumania, who played a major role in establishing welfare agencies, education for women and girls, is an example of this opportunity to combine social ambition of women with conservative nationalism. 19 —

Given the frequency of war, occupation and resistance, the social care provided for soldiers, partisans and their families comes as no surprise. It also makes the historian of social work think about the ways in which the care for the military may have impacted ideals of professional social work. 20 Welfare for military is by definition providing help for those who ‘deserve’ the support of the nation state. It happened in Slovenia, in Croatia, and provided for many women a road into jobs, institutional power. Melita Richter for example described how being part of communist movement and being interested in social scientific contributions to solution of social problems allowed Tatjana Marinic to found a school for social work in socialist Yugoslavia, based on her communist support. 21

Although circumstances for professional social assistance are quite different, the distinctions made between those who deserve support from the state and those who don’t and reminds scholars of the 19C distinction between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor. Since the term ‘social work’ was hardly used by communist regimes, it has often seemed as if no social work activities were conducted under communist rule. Scholars such as Julia Gradskova, Iarskaia & Romanov and do not take the absence of the term as proof that there was no social work. They studies and interviewed women who as part of medical system, in children’s homes and in women’s organization provided advice for mothers in distress. 22 They find continuous traditions of providing assistance in material, housing and help with children. The term social


work was not used, but from the description of activities it becomes clear that in other countries such a term would have been used. In this sense SWEEP opened up not only the history of social work in central and Eastern Europe, by showing how many practices contributed to the development of social assistance, new questions about Western Europe can also be asked: what forms of interaction between state or public professionals and individuals who needed help.

4 Social workers under Nazism

Within Europe, addressing the history of fascism, and in particular German Nazi regime, is an inescapable task. The holocaust and war that resulted from Hitler’s rise to power in Germany has had deep impact on all European countries. The suffering and the resistance connected to these historical events in many countries still is the pervasive image for the past, the dangers of racism. Although Nazism is firstly and mainly remembered as a military and violence based form of state power, historical scholarship has pointed out how the complete totalitarian take over of the state also implied that ‘peaceful’ professions became involved in criminal racism. At an unprecedented scale state authorities intervened in the private lives of citizens. Distinguishing between those worthy of the Aryan empire, and those races who did not deserve to live, or those who as subordinate races should serve the German empire became the deadly characteristic of all policies. Domains that had been female prerogatives, such as giving birth and raising young children became object of state scrutiny. Nazism decides who might live and who would be killed. The difference between worthy and unworthy became deadly. For those reflecting on the role of social workers in undemocratic regimes, the studies of social workers in Nazi Germany are of the utmost importance. Not because they are an exception in European history, but because the mechanisms in which they were caught are not unlike the mechanisms that operated elsewhere. As the political system that organized the genocide that resulted in a world at war and in the occupation of most of the European continent fascism defined the deadly possibilities of absolute state power in the 20C. How did social workers behave in a context where the distinction between deserving and undeserving was redefined in a way that resulted in the holocaust.

Historical studies on history of National Socialism and social workers in Germany have produced different important studies. Schnurr argues quoted by Marianne Gumpinger, that professionals in social and medical institutions were indispensable in spreading and practicing Nazi racist exclusion and preparing destruction. Their language and expertise to assess families, to classify individuals as worth or unworthy helped prepare for genocide. Gumbinger explains how social work, public charity (Fürsorge) remained a domain that was one of the few places where women could make a career. While socialist and Jewish social welfare projects were closed, public, catholic charity, the Red Cross continued and was incorporated in Nazi rule. A crucial study on gender and Nazism and the role of medical and health professionals in Nazi Germany has been conducted by Gisela Bock on forced sterilization. In this we see how little it takes to turn knowledge about social problems into a tool of destruction and genocide. Bock carefully traces how legislation that forced parts of the

23 S. Schnurr, Sozialpädagogen Im Nationalsozialismus: Eine Fallstudie Zur Sozialpädagogischen Bewegung Im Übergang Zum NS-Staat: Juventa, 1997).


population to be sterilized continued eugenic arguments from the 1920s, how the distinction between worthy and unworthy poor was transformed into a racist argument, making mothers the main object of the ‘social work’ of eugenics.26 Bock describes how Nazi policies invaded the woman’s sphere of childbearing, and how decision whether she would have children was no longer hers, but depended upon racist legislation that prohibited childbearing for Jews, Sinti, Roma and psychiatric patients. In these eugenic policies, several professions played a role, social workers, doctors, lawyers, nurses were involved in its execution. It gives pause to think how professional ideals of using knowledge about social problems to assist individual clients could turn so suddenly into instruments of killing. Images of healthy families used in sterilization campaigns did not differ that much from images invoked by social workers. The German tradition of charity and poor relief had seen a long tradition of connecting voluntary social visitors as the outpost of the government. The Elbefelder System consisted of women visiting poor families twice a week to check their moral development, and to establish whether they were worthy of support by government funding. 27 Although Nazi ideology was anti-feminist in its urge for women to stay at home and bear children, social work professions remained a female occupation, and professional ambition did lead woman social workers to accommodate their expertise to the racist requirements of the new state.

Just as in communist totalitarian rule, women involved in forms of ‘social work’ functioned as the connection between state policies and individuals’ lives. Without such advisors on family life and child care, the aspiration of the totalitarian state would not be realized. Female authorities that could not only give advice on how to bear and raise children, but also endowed with the authority to decide on the right to bear children (forcing sterilization in Nazi Germany, allowing or forbidding abortion in Soviet Union) and there complicity remains one of the heaviest parts of the heritages of professional social work.

While professional ideals could lead social workers to continue working in national socialist contexts, for other social workers, professional ideals strengthened their anti-fascism or anti German feelings. An example can be found in the way the Dutch social worker Marie Kamphuis in the winter of 1941 wrote a pamphlet that used arguments from professional social work tradition to counter the German policies of poor relief. Explaining that trained social workers would never support the Winterhilfe (the German organization of poor relief) because they had learned that ‘just giving’ without exploration of causes for poverty would not help.28 The same strengthening of national arguments by inclusion of the progressive international language of professional social work can be seen to take place in Latvia and in Poland, where upon national independence acquired in 1918, modern legislative schemes for social welfare provision were set up. Much later in Slovenia in 1989, after the fall of communism and upon establishing its own independent state, social workers were involved in designing forms of social intervention.

It is too easy to look away from forms of entanglement and complicity in the genocides in European history. The enormous advantage of including all European histories in studies on the professional social worker is that the unmarked connection between social


27 Gumpinger, Volkspflege. Sozialarbeit Im Nationalsozialismus.

28 Bertekte Waaldijk, Het Amerika Der Vrouw : Sekse En Geschiedenis Van Maatschappelijk Werk in Nederland en de Verenigde Staten (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 1996).
professionalism and democracy, social work and equality and human rights is no longer unmarked. Social workers are not only employed in democratic human rights respecting societies. The professional social worker, has also been employed by different regimes, and within so-called democratic states social workers have participated in discrimination and exclusion. Both contexts, often quite close to each other, are part of European history and the professional has to include these practices when thinking about her obligations and responsibilities. It is important to remember that the countries where professional social work was invented included those which had, at certain moments, authoritarian or fascist aspects in their government. Seeing how important social services for soldiers and their families have been in the development of social welfare in central and eastern Europe, makes transnational historians of social work aware of the fact that social work is never and nowhere only connected to freedom, equality and democracy, but equally often linked to war, destruction and inequality.

Traditionally social services have been provided by private and public agencies for clients who need help to survive in a rough world. In doing this it provided help elements of discipline and punishment are entwined with support for freedom and independence. Theoretical scholars as Foucault and Donzelot have explained how the two sides are basically the same: there is no freedom without discipline, there is no autonomy without being subjected to authorities. Historical studies of social workers help us to deepen that knowledge and to become aware of the specific conditions that make possible and impossible social work.

5 Social work in colonial and postcolonial contexts

The examples from the European past help us to think about social workers in the midst of anti-Semitism and persecution of Roma in Europe, and about their role in the struggles between nationalism and the transnational communism. There is another part of European history that requires critical addressing by social workers, this is the history of European overseas colonialism. Today contemporary social workers are also faced with global connections of European history. In the next part I want to turn to the global colonial histories of Europe that have shaped some of the forms of professional social work. The first historical aspect to be pointed out here is the fact that in the 19C when first forms of professionalization of social work came into being, almost all Western European countries were involved in colonizing projects. For some (UK, France, Netherlands, Belgium Portugal) the imperial involvement meant ruling a global and transatlantic empire. In historical studies of this European imperialism some elements are important for understanding the history of professional social work. I want to mention the work of Ann Stoler here as one of particular interest: she has pointed out that many of the modern forms of governance, where close personal surveillance was combined with explicit discipline directed at the body, and morality were invented by colonial powers in the colonies. She argues that many of the core elements of what Foucault has called panoptical or pastoral power, the power that is based on surveillance of individual behaviour, sexual hygiene has been explored in colonial contexts before it was installed in the ‘heart of empire’. It is useful to remember that many of the descriptions the pioneers of professional social work gave of their prospective clients and their living circumstances resemble the way colonial authorities described the population of


30 Theda Skocpol, "Soldiers, Workers, and Mothers: Gendered Identities in Early U.S. Social Policy,” Contention 2, no. 3 (1993), 157.1

the colonies. The description of poverty, domestic behavior, morality, gender relations of the poor in slums of big industrial cities in Europe resembled the way the indigenous population was described by colonizing powers. Hierarchies of race and hierarchies of class seemed to resemble each other. 32

What is interesting from the perspective of social workers is that the solutions for the problems of the poor in the inner cities resembled the solutions proposed for indigenous populations of colonies. Instruction about proper gender relations, educating women to pay more attention to raising their children, curbing drink and male sexuality to prevent abuse of women and children, protecting women against their husbands, these were the measures deemed necessary for an ‘ethical colonialism’ – the colonizers presented themselves as the saviors of indigenous women. 33 When Dutch women’s movement organized a summer of conferences and exhibitions about women’s future role in the kingdom of the Netherlands, the ‘colonial congress’ was for the largest part devoted to social work in the colonies: protecting girls, countering prostitution, abolishing alcohol abuse. 34 These imperial ambitious women felt they could provide recipes for both domestic and colonial social problems. Projects to bring Christianity to the colonies were called Mission, and projects to save women in the inner city was called ‘domestic mission’ (Innere Mission, Inwendige Zending). 35 In both situations, the colonies and the inner cities women were singled out as the preferred subjects of the elevation of the ‘lower classes’. White middle class women had to take their responsibility in elevating the indigenous population, and they were the subjects of such envisioned interventions: helping training and educating young women and girls seemed the best way to eradicate problems of backwardness in the slums and in the colonies. Social problems became women’s problems, with women’s behavior as both its cause and its solution. 36


Seeing African and Asian populations as objects of social interventions thus brought the problem of racism into practices of social work that aimed to protect women against the misbehavior of men. At the same time women from the colonized population were seen as the bridges to indigenous society. They were exploited as companions and translators, they were hired as domestic workers in houses of colonizers, they were brought to the colonial metropolis to work for returned officials from the colonies. This theme was taken up enthusiastically by western women’s movements that aspired participation in colonial power. My own research on the way Dutch women’s movement advocated women’s increased role in ruling Indonesia and the West Indies, indicates that the idea that middle class women could contribute to the solution of social problems was not exclusively aimed at the colonizing center. Western feminist argued that they could protect the indigenous women.  

37 Trying to become fully fledged citizens in their own country, western women’s movements used their sense of responsibility or solidarity for working class girls at home and colonial subjects in the colonies as an argument to demand voting rights and access to higher education for themselves. As I argued elsewhere: in order to become citizens themselves, they defended the rights of others.  

38 That colonial history is in the past and contemporary society is ‘post-colonial’ does not mean that discourses (practices and languages) of the colonial situation do not continue to have an impact. Postcolonial studies is a field that explicitly studies the way in which colonial hierarchies continue into the present. By showing how imperial pasts of western European countries ‘catch up with them’ is explored in studies that trace connections between contemporary racisms and multiculturality are connected to these practices from the past. In this last European overseas colonialism has always been deeply mixed up with racist assumptions about the superiority of European vis-a-vis indigenous populations. Just as histories of social work in central and Eastern Europe make social workers aware diversity of their background, histories of colonialism can make us aware how experiments with social interventions were not limited to homogenous Western nation-states.

Again I would like to argue that such knowledge about the prehistory of the profession of social work can be directly used in reflections about the task of social workers today. Imperial legacies confront us with the transnational pasts of most nations: almost all European nation states have been part of transnational empires, either as colonies, or exploited parts, or as colonizers and imperial powers. These transnational conglomerates have made race, racism, ethnos and ethnicity part and parcel of all definitions of social problems. These categories continue to play their role in the 21C practices of social services. To conclude this article I therefore now to a description of a research published by Gail Lewis who shows convincingly how the practices of social work in postcolonial Britain are directly impacted by the colonial past. She describes how not only migration as a result of decolonization has had an impact on the clientele of social services in Britain, but also how professional identities of social workers and their descriptions of their work are deeply connected to the racism institutionalized in empire. She describes how objects and subjects of social work, clients and social workers, work with the inheritance of imperialism. The story she tells about practices of a social services in an English city is however richer than a repetition of institutionalized  


racism that can allow black men and women only as clients of social interventions. Lewis describes how the profession of social work opened its ranks to women and men who had migrated from former colonies to England. She shows that not only the hierarchies between clients and social workers are racialized, but also the hierarchies within professional social work. In a story that is all too familiar about women doing the legwork, and men being in charge of budgets and management positions, she analyzes the situation of race. How black families are sent for advice to black social workers, how white social workers are expected to make useful contributions to discussions about black and white families, but how black social workers are seen as ‘natural experts’ on black dysfunctional families. The practice of social work to intervene in family relations is perceived by clients as a continuation of racist interventions during colonialism and slavery. 39

6 Inspiration and embarrassment
The historical research discussed in the preceding paragraphs tells us a lot about the social, political and economic histories that resulted in social needs. Not only industrialization in Western Europe and Northern America resulted in social problems. Social work did not only develop as the response by democratic states to poverty of rapidly growing capitalism. Social interventions as imagined by growing networks of professionals since the end of the 19C also addressed the effects of economic stagnation, colonial exploitation, of war, migration and genocide. Such social interventions were invented in a wide range of societies and communities. Social work is not only the sister of modern welfare states. It has also been practiced in totalitarian states, as an element in racist discrimination and as a form of disciplining populations. This is the case in all parts of Europe.

Therefore it is important for social workers in Europe who meet daily clients who have their roots in such histories, to be aware of the role professional social work can – but not must – play. Social work comes not only from a background in Christian Charity nor is it only involved in helping the poor to become full citizens in democratic anti-fascist and anti-communist states. The other half of social work’s background is within systems that did not regard outsiders as citizens, but looked at outsiders as colonial subjects, as inferior races, as class enemies or ‘unworthy’. This double heritage complicates the historical self awareness of social workers in Europe. Knowledge about the continued impact of colonialism on perception of the social forces social workers to reflect on the prehistories of contemporary migration, racism and xenophobia.

Postcolonial scholars have called for serious attention to the colonial past in order to understand contemporary society. Scholars of communist rule in central and Eastern Europe have called for reflection on the way communism defined expectations of citizenship. Feminist scholars have pointed out how defining the social and its problems was based on gendered conceptions of social problems and gendered expectations about their solutions. Together these bodies of scholarship provide a historical knowledge about the past for social workers. It is intermittently discomforting and inspiring. It is discomforting because it breaks with success stories of professionalization of social services in liberal democracies. Such depressing histories point to the abusive, condescending and racist aspects of social work in the past. Other aspects are however inspiring: they show heroic resistance, objects of social interventions who take upon themselves the agency of providing social welfare. Together

these narratives about the past it allows a much more sophisticated reflection on what it means to enter the privacy of clients who need help. It shows where the risks of such interventions can be located, and what solutions social workers in the past have found to deal with them. It allows the social worker not only to start where the client is, but also to start where the social worker is.

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