

Social Work Between Oppression and Emancipation. Histories of Discomfort and Inspiration in Europe.

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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’¹In 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

¹ Marie Kamphuis, *Wat is social casework?* Alphen aan de Rijn: Samson, 1973. See also: Anoushka Boet and Berteke Waaldijk, "Start Where the Client is: Marie Kamphuis and the Professionalization of Dutch Social Work (Netherlands)" in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Waaldijk and Hering (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 45-53.

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 be inspiring and it can be discomfoting, 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

² Walter Lorenz, *Social Work in a Changing Europe*. London, Routledge, 1993

³ Berteke Waaldijk, *Het Amerika der Vrouw*.

⁴ Kuhlman, "Gender and Theory in the History of German Social Work: Alice Salomon, Herman Nohl and Christian Klumker (Germany)," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Hering and Waaldijk (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 95-105. *ibid*.

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.⁶ 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 2011.⁷ 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 Krauss⁸, the Polish Helena Radlinska⁹ Marie Kamphuis¹⁰ and Mentona Moser¹¹ and Alice Salomon¹² 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

⁶ S. & Waaldijk Hering B., *Die Geschichte Der Socialen Arbeit in Europa 1900-1960: Wichtige Pionierinnen Und Ihr Einfluss Auf Die Entwicklung Internationaler Organisationen* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2002).

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

⁸ Bussiek, "Hertha Kraus: Quaker Spirit and Competence: Impulses for Professional Social Work in Germany and the United States (Deutschland)," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Hering and Waaldijk (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 53-65.

⁹ Lepalczyk and Marynowicz-Hetka, "Helena Radlinska: A Portrait of the Person, Researcher, Teacher and Social Activist (Poland)," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Hering and Waaldijk (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 71-9.

¹⁰ Boet and Waaldijk, "'Start Where the Client is': Marie Kamphuis and the Professionalization of Dutch Social Work (Netherlands)," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Waaldijk and Hering (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 45-53.

¹¹ Hering, "A 'Soldier of the Third International': The Social Activities of the Swiss Communist Mentona Moser (Switzerland)," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Hering and Waaldijk (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 89-95.

¹² E. Kruse, "The First International Comparison of Social Work Training. Alice Salomon's almost Forgotten Study from 1937." in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. S. Hering and M. L. Waaldijk (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2003), 129-39.

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 from 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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

¹³ Waaldijk, M. L. & Hering, S., *Guardians of the Poor: Custodians of the Public Welfare History in Eastern Europe 1900-1060* (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2006). *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, ed. Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005)

¹⁴ Kristina Popova, "Traces of Rayna Petkova. in Search for a Balance between Social Control, Profession and Charity." in *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, ed. Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005), 37-75.. Hering points this out in Waaldijk, M. L. & Hering, S., *Guardians of the Poor: Custodians of the Public Welfare History in Eastern Europe 1900-1960*.

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.¹⁵ 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 developed¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ 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

¹⁵ Izabela Szczepaniak-Wiecha, Adnieszka Malek and Krystyna Slany, "The System of Care for Abandoned Children in Poland 1900-1960. the Development of Family Forms of Care." in *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, ed. Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005), 179-97.

¹⁶ Szczepaniak-Wiecha, Izabela, Adnieszka Malek, and Krystyna Slany. "The System of Care for Abandoned Children in Poland 1900-1960. the Development of Family Forms of Care." In *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, edited by Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte, 179-97. Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005.

¹⁷ Julia Gradzkova, "'Nurseries have Brought Up Children'. Maternity, Gender and Social Work in Soviet Russia in 1930s to the 1950s." in *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, ed. Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005), 75-91.

¹⁸ Barbara Nelson, 'The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen's Compensation and Mother's Aid', in Linda Gordon L. (ed.), *Women, the State and Welfare*, Madison (WI) 1990. Donzelot, Jacques. *The Policing of Families*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1979.

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 Gradszkova, Iarskaia & Romanov do not take the absence of the term as proof that there was no social work. They studied 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

¹⁹ Cheschebec, "Nationalism, Feminism and Social Work in Interwar Romania: The Activities of Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960): Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, ed. Hering and Waaldijk (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2003), 35-45.

²⁰ Skocpol, Theda. "Soldiers, Workers, and Mothers: Gendered Identities in Early U.S. Social Policy." *Contention* 2, no. 3 (1993): 157-83.

²¹ Melita Richter-Malabota, 'Life and Times of Tatiana Marinic' in *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, ed. Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005).

²² Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov, "Institutional Child Care in Soviet Russia. Everyday Life in the Children's Home 'Krasnyi Gorodok' in Saratov, 1920s-1940s," in *Need and Care — Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare*, ed. Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005), 91-123.

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 argues²³ 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. Gumpinger 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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).

²⁴ idem and M. Gumpinger, "Volkspflege. Sozialarbeit Im Nationalsozialismus." *Soziales_kapital* 1, no. 1 (2008).

²⁵ Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation Im Nationalsozialismus : Studien Zur Rassenpolitik Und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986).

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

²⁶ G. Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State," *Signs* 8, no. 3 (1983), 406.

²⁷ Gumpinger, *Volkspflege. Sozialarbeit Im Nationalsozialismus*.

²⁸ Berteke 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.²⁹ 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.³⁰ 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 an other 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'.³¹ 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

²⁹ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "'Brain Work for Women': Women, Social Science, and the American Welfare State in the Progressive Era" (Rutgers University, June, 8th, 1990).

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

³¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 2nd print.. ed. (Durham etc.: Duke University Press, 1996), XIV, 237.

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

³² Berteke Waaldijk, "Colonial Constructions of a Dutch Women's Movement: 1898," in *Differenzen in Der Geschlechterdifferenz: Aktuelle Perspektiven Der Geschlechterforschung*, ed. K. & Paul Rottger H. (Hamburg: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999), 286-99. and Anne McClintock, "'Imperial Leather: Race, Cross-Dressing and the Cult of Domesticity,'" in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory : A Reader*, ed. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 635-666.

³³ Spivak speaks ironically of white men saving brown women from brown men in: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Nelson C. & Grossberg L. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271,313; 4.

³⁴ Waaldijk, M. L. & Grever, M., *Transforming the Public Sphere: The Dutch National Exhibition of Women's Labor in 1898* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2004).

³⁵ Berteke Waaldijk, "Een Kijkje in De Plaggenhut. Visualisering Van Bevoogdend Burgerschap Tijdens De Nationale Tentoonstelling Van Vrouwenarbeid," in *Een Vaderland Voor Vrouwen/A Fatherland for Women: The 1898 'Nationale Tentoonstelling Van Vrouwenarbeid'* in *Retrospect*, ed. M. & Dieteren Grever S.H.M. (Hilversum: Verloren, 2000).. Also see Drenth, Johanna Maria Lambertha van and Francisca Maria de Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power : Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 296.

³⁶ For connotation of women and the social see: Denise Riley, "Am I that Name?" : *Feminism and the Category of "Women"* in *History* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, [etc.]: Macmillan Press, 1988), 126. and Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979), 243.

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 multiculturalism 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

³⁷ Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India : The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), xiii, 366 p.

³⁸ Berteke Waaldijk 'Social workers and the problem of maternalist condescension' in: Marian van der Klein & Rebecca Plant (eds.) *Maternalism revisited.*(forthcoming) New York: Berghahn 2012

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 discomfiting and inspiring. It is discomfiting 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

³⁹ Gail Lewis, *Race, Gender, Social Welfare: Encounters in a Postcolonial Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

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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