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ERIS Journal - Summer 2019

Editorial

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Editorial

What are the current challenges that confront social workers in heterogenic societies and how can the evolving theories of social justice and human rights contribute to the development of knowledge for practical application within social work? The realities of migration societies and the accompanying issues of equality, rights, and ethics have recently resulted in an intense level of critical public discourse within journalistic, educational, political and academic circles. Fundamental questions that have arisen from these debates formed the basis of the international ERIS conference on Social Justice and Diversity that took place from the 8th to the 10th October 2018 in the University of Applied Sciences in Dornbirn, Austria.

This issue of the European Research Institute for Social Work (ERIS) journal explores the themes of the conference, presenting papers which focus on issues of diversity and the nature of the social work response. The papers examine issues of aging, gender, class and migration. Each paper involves a different focus, with authors retaining diverse perspectives and conceptual frameworks for their analysis. However, a common theme is the extent to which social work can be an engaged, politicised profession which is active in seeking social justice or if statutory regulation restricts social work's capacity to be a human rights profession.

Andrea Fleckinger's contribution, *Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence: How to Prevent the Risk of Secondary Victimization* takes as its starting point the prevalence of gender-based violence across European countries. 22% of European women have experienced intimate partner violence and the lives of one in five children are affected by the issue. These figures pose a conundrum, as the role of the child protection social worker requires that the needs of the child are maintained as paramount however the dynamics which result in practice can lead to victim-blaming as workers perceive women as inadequate carers and protectors of their children. Fleckinger uses the concepts and theories of secondary victimisation to uncover the unconscious biases and professional conflicts which the work engenders. She explores the deep-seated concept of the 'good mother' and 'good victim' as the common conventions of womanhood into which social workers can fall if daily working practices are conceived narrowly.

Miroslava Tokovska, Michal Kozubik, Peter Jusko's paper *How Can Suicidal Behaviour in the Elderly Be Prevented? A Scoping Review of the Visegrad Group Countries* addresses an under-researched area facing social workers and social care workers working with older people. Scoping the ethical, moral and legal issues impinging upon suicide in older people in Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary the paper provides new information concerning prevalence and some early indications of possible good practice. Dealing with older people facing crises of health, mental health and changing identity requires new knowledge and training. The paper recognizes this and places this in the context of core social work skills of sensitivity and empathy to address "a tragedy affecting families and communities". The paper addresses suicide in the V4 countries specifically although the issues affect social workers in a much wider spread of nations.

Anna Suppa, Isabelle Steiner, Peter Streckeisen's article is titled: *Energy Transition and Environmental Justice: Effects on Vulnerable Groups and Implications for Social Work.* In tackling climate change, Switzerland is

investing in the refurbishment and improved energy efficiency of old housing stock. The paper points out the unintended consequence of this agenda in placing such housing beyond the financial reach of existing, poor tenants. Energy efficient retrofits serve to exacerbate existing multiple oppressions among poor people: poverty, poor health, and stigma. Despite this, poor households have significant practical knowledge and expertise concerning energy-efficient behaviour and planning. This expertise is ignored by the middle-class voices which colonise energy debates. The authors argue that social work action – if the profession accepted a 'green mandate' – could reduce the distance between these groups, help develop improved services and add key expertise to the environmental discourse.

Of all the papers in this issue, it is perhaps Katja Neuhoff who addresses the issue of the extent to which contemporary social workers are instruments of state control most directly. Her paper, *"Participation in Deportations – Red Line for Social Work"? Learning to 'walk the talk' on Social Work as a Human Rights Profession*, sees social work as occupying fractured terrain in relation to government responses to refugees in Europe. Echoing Fleckinger's stance that there is no position of neutrality in relation to activities which serve to oppress minority groups, she sees the process of sensitisation to human rights issues as beginning in social work education. Starting at this stage and informed by the will of existing professionals new entrants to the field can be fitted to challenge

the "restrictive administrative action" of daily practice and law.

The value of experts by experience is echoed in Gunther Graßhoff's review of *Participatory Social Work: Research, Practice, Education* (Granosik, Gulczyńska, Kostrzyńska, Littlechild (Eds.), 2019) where the reviewer poses the question "how can coproduced knowledge be disseminated for wider groups" so that so that social work practice and government policy can be informed by people who are currently excluded from the system.

Individually, these articles offer a fresh perspective on topics which are of themselves interesting to contemporary social work. Taken together, they confront academic and professional social workers with themselves: what is the role and function of modern social work and how do we perform that function while remining true to the core values of the profession. By encouraging a reflective and critical approach to existing well-meaning social work interventions contemporary practitioners are invited to explore the dynamics of discrimination, neutrality and compliance in modern societies of migration. In particular social workers operating in the fields of gender, older people and refugee work are presented with challenging questions concerning expertise, education, hidden oppression and client ethics.

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Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence: How to Prevent the Risk of Secondary Victimization

Andrea Fleckinger

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Abstract
OBJECTIVES: The paper focusses on gender-based violence and child protection social work practices. Despite its high prevalence, gender-based-violence is often treated as marginal in child protection social services. The purpose of this article is to discuss possible forward-looking methods and techniques for child protection social work with survivors of gender-based violence. THEORETICAL BASE: The theoretical base is defined by adopting a feminist perspective, incorporating key aspects of the critical theory of patriarchy and the modern matriarchal studies. METHODS: The article provides a theoretical discussion based on the results of a qualitative research, which analysed the dynamics of secondary victimization in the relationship between mothers who survived gender-based violence and child protection social worker interlinked with the results from international research. OUTCOMES: The paper aims to focus attention on a complex issue. It uncovers some blind spots and highlights how motherhood and victimhood can be interpreted as risk factors, which increase victim-blaming attitudes. SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS: The article attempts to contribute to the current debate on this very important and widespread social issue, combining practical experience with broader theoretical considerations. Further, it opens the discussion on strategies for child protection social work practices, which might help to prevent dynamics of secondary victimization.

Keywords
gender-based violence, secondary victimization, child protection social work, social work practice, survivors, gender-based violence

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence against women is frequently treated as a marginal issue in child protection social work practices in spite of the fact that, according to the statistics, it is an issue that is widespread across all social classes, and not only in European countries. According to the most recent data for Europe, 22% of women from EU member states have experienced physical or sexual violence by their intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (European Union fundamental rights agency, 2014), while the UN figures show that, globally, one out of three women have experienced physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner (UN Women, 2018). Moreover, both psychological and economic violence should also be added to these data. It is difficult to find reliable data specifically on the links between gender-based violence and child protection social services. According to an Italian study carried out by the Autorità Garante per l'Infanzia e l'Adolescenza, Terre des Hommes e Cismai (2015), one out of five children are supported by child protection social services because they have experienced violence. Furthermore, in a fifth of these cases witnessing gender-based violence was the main reason why the child protection social worker was called in.

Given this contradiction, the specific dynamics and correlated risks for survivors are often unknown and hidden behind supposedly more important issues that child protection social workers have to deal with. This article aims to highlight the complex needs which child protection social workers have to meet when working with women who have survived gender-based violence. It also attempts to uncover the deep-set attitudes and partially unconscious moral concepts which, quite unintentionally, may lead child protection social workers to blame the survivors of gender-based violence (Gracia, 2014). The concept of secondary victimization provides an effective way to describe and explain these dynamics. Applied to an empirical study carried out in 2017 in northern Italy (Fleckinger, 2017), which focussed on the relation between survivors of gender-based violence and child protection social workers, it was possible to highlight two key factors which increase the risk of victim-blaming attitudes. Further, the qualitative research project revealed some blind spots and described how certain work practices can turn into punitive measures with negative effects on women and children. Together with the results from international research, a discussion on protective elements will be facilitated.

This article focuses on strategies for child protection social workers to prevent victim-blaming attitudes. Consequently, approaches to improve the quality of child protection social services will be discussed and specific methods and techniques examined from different points of view. The article therefore attempts to contribute to discussions of this very important and widespread social issue, combining practical experience with broader theoretical considerations.

DEFINITION OF THE KEY CONCEPTS

First we should clarify the key concepts and terms used to ensure a uniform interpretation and understanding of the results and implications discussed in the article. It is vital for readers to have an accurate understanding of the meanings of the concepts explained below to ensure the greater insight and knowledge required, at least as a basis for further discussion.

Gender-based violence against women

The terminology used when talking about violence against women is not standardized and different words are used to describe the same phenomenon, although the meanings of the related words are not identical. I examined the different terms used and attempted to grasp the different nuances of meaning attributed to the different terms used to describe this social issue, such as violence against women, intimate partner violence, domestic abuse, etc. I also compared the main terms used in Italian and German, such as maltrattamento in famiglia, violenza contro le donne,

häusliche Gewalt, Gewalt an Frauen, etc. I found both advantages and drawbacks to these different terms used to describe a complex issue. This extensive reflection on the different terms used, and especially the contribution by Dr. Barbara Tardón Recio at the WAVE[2] conference in 2014, has helped me to choose a terminology which incorporates all the elements I perceive as essential. "Gender-based violence against women" did not obscure the main characteristics of violence in relationships behind an alleged "neutrality", as is the case of "domestic violence" or "maltrattamento in famiglia". "Intimate partner violence" largely refers to violence against women. I therefore deemed it impossible to avoid using the word "women" or substitute this with "partner" or "family". Furthermore, this violence occurs on various levels and the main reasons for the high numbers are linked to the patriarchal value system used to organise societies and the role of women therein. The frequency of violence against women in relationships can be only explained by analysing the social system, which assigns a value to women as inferior and therefore disadvantaged because of their gender. This explains the importance of the "gender-based" part of the term and brought me to the conclusion that "gender-based violence against women" is the clearest term I could find to describe the social phenomenon I wanted to investigate.

Secondary victimization
"Secondary victimization" is a concept related to criminology and describes different states a person may go through if she or he experiences a potentially life-threatening situation (Campell, Raja, 2005; von Mayenburg, 2009). Transferred to gender-based violence against women this means that primary victimization occurs at the time the violence per se occurs, in those cases where the woman is the victim of the situation. She is exposed to the violence carried out by the perpetrator and attempts to protect her life in different ways. On the other hand, secondary victimization occurs later, at the time when the woman decides to talk about her experiences of violence, this being a highly sensitive moment and often decisive in terms of future directions and decisions. The woman is in a highly vulnerable situation and extremely sensitive to the responses she gets. Her interlocutor's reactions play a crucial role, even more so when this person is in an important or powerful position, such as a child protection social worker. If the reactions of the interlocutor blame the woman by shifting the responsibility for the violence from the perpetrator to her, she might feel, once again, like the victim of a situation from which she cannot escape. Her attempt to be heard or helped has failed, leading to feelings of guilt and shame. There is also a third phase of victimization, called "tertiary victimization". This describes the time when the woman alters her perception of herself and accepts her victim status as part of her identity. This alteration in her self-concept can have several negative consequences for her life and it is much more difficult to reverse. However, this article concentrates on the dynamics of secondary victimization because handling such situations with greater awareness can provide survivors of gender-based violence with considerable and sustainable support.

Survivors of gender-based violence
Although I use the term "secondary victimization" to describe the specific dynamics of this phenomenon, I decided to avoid labelling women with the term "victim". My practical experiences over 10 years as a social worker at a women's shelter have taught me a lot about the power of words and especially how labelling someone a "victim" can result in critical judgment. On the other hand, labelling a woman as a "survivor" can help her to retain a positive attitude, as it implies she has done something to survive violence, often for several years. Furthermore, the term "survivor" is not merely useful to avoid a negative label but actually provides a more accurate idea of what the woman and her children have gone through. Every woman who has survived gender-based violence, frequently for several years, has developed certain essential survival strategies that can

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[2] For further information about the conference and network see: www.wave-network.org

often only be understood by exploring the specific dynamics of the relationship. For these reasons, hereinafter I will use the term "survivor" when talking about women and children.

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Just as social work practice does not happen in an empty space, similarly research on social work practice and the discussions on theories, methods and techniques cannot take place without consideration of the impact of the society in which it is happening. In order to enable the readers to have a complex comprehension of the results and the further discussions, it is important to embed the article in a broader context.

An essential aspect in achieving this goal was to reflect further on the system of the society where the research took place taking a broader on look on international debates. International research shows that problematic relations between child protection social workers and mothers surviving gender-based violence are widespread and global (Freymond, 2003; Bourassa et al., 2008; Lapierre, 2008; Melchiorre, Vis, 2013); in the USA (Johnson, Sullivan, 2008; Lapierre, Côté, 2011); in Australia (Cooley, Frazer, 2006); and in Europe (Crawford, Liebling-Kalifani, Hill, 2009; Keeling, Wormer, 2012; Gracia, 2014). The impression given is that, a parallel could be made between the similarities dynamics of gender-based violence have throughout societies based on patriarchal values, and the problematic responses of child protection social workers.

On that basis, I focused on a common feature shared by the societies in question, which I found in their patriarchal system. Without denying the differences to be found within these societies and being aware of the risk of oversimplification, some essential common elements can be observed which allow us to classify a society as "patriarchal". According the critical theory of patriarchy (von Werlhof, 2009), a patriarchal society can be described as being "*characterized by war, state formation and reign as system, religion (esp. monotheism), the subjugation of women and their culture, hierarchically arranged social classes, exploitation, generational conflicts and environmental problems*" (FIPAZ, 2019:online; translated by the author).

Furthermore, patriarchal society is also characterized by three pillars which depend on and interact with each other. Essentially, these are androcentrism, anthropocentrism and mental and global imperialism. Androcentrism refers to the idea of men as the ideal for human beings as only they have a clear mind which enables them to think rationally and logically. On the other hand, women are linked to nature and defined as emotionally weak and missing the key abilities to make reasonable decisions. This point of view is strongly linked to the concept of anthropocentrism, which is fundamentally the belief that human beings (i.e. men) represent the peak of creation and, adding a hierarchical logic to this concept, human beings are therefore allowed to dominate nature. Consequently, women also have to be dominated by men because they are linked to nature and seen as incomplete. In addition to these two pillars of every patriarchal society is the missionary approach; i.e. mental and global imperialism or the belief that they, and only they, possess the real truth. That is why patriarchal societies tend to conquer and suppress other societies by adopting an imperialist attitude. (von Werlhof, 2009; Göttner-Abendroth, 2011; Federici, 2015).

The findings of modern matriarchal studies (Göttner-Abendroth, 2009) and critical theory of patriarchy (von Werlhof, 2009) have helped me to understand the hidden powers and dynamics of patriarchal societies. Since Italian society can also be described as patriarchal, a critical analysis of the underlying value system was essential in order to understand the narratives. The analytical perspective gained from these theoretical concepts supported my analyses of the relations between child protection social workers and women surviving gender-based violence (Strasser, 2001; Göttner-Abendroth, 2011; Keeling, Wormer, 2012; Shqungin, Allen, Loomis, et al. 2012; Federici, 2015; Tazi-Preve, 2017).

Child protection social work

Child protection social services often refer to the convention of the right of the child (Un General Assembly, 1989) when they start to describe their field. We can summarize that the focus is to protect children from abuse, neglect, and harm, and to support them to further improve their rights of having a family, education and a healthy development. The implementation of these goals represents a huge challenge for child protection social workers because families can be described as a multidimensional and complex system with different demands and needs. A singular child protection social worker can hardly handle all of these various aspects and the possible multitude problems. Therefore, an increasing importance is given to a strong professional network with experts from different areas.

In this respect, it should be pointed out that the present paper focusses on one specific aspect of child protection social work, which is the issue of gender-based-violence and the correlated risk of secondary victimization. This does not mean that in those families where gender-based-violence occurs, there might not also exist further issues and problems relevant to secure the wellbeing of the children. However, recently it has become a matter of common knowledge that the effects of witnessing violence for children are similar to those of direct violent experiences (Cooley, Frazer, 2006; Johnson, Sullivan 2008). Consequently, also the demand of specific knowledge on the dynamics of gender-based violence for child protection social workers increased reciprocally.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Although this article focuses on implications and the development of supportive methods and techniques for child protection social work practices, I would like to provide a short overview of relevant international research as well as on the research project on which it is based. The Canadian study of Bourassa et.al (2008) showed that child protection social workers often consider gender-based violence as out of their mandate. Consequently, their interventions are very diverse, as they have no clear guidelines. The focus of the study of Johnson and Sullivan (2008) was on practices in child protection social services. The researchers describe how patriarchal stereotypes influence the interventions of child protection social workers and may lead to hold mothers responsible for the actions of the perpetrators. The results articulated by Keeling and Wormer (2012) are similar. The researchers describe the practices of child protection social workers and illustrate how certain interventions recapitulate the perpetrators' behavior.

The starting point for my qualitative research project (Fleckinger, 2017) were ten years of practical experience as a social worker at a women's shelter, where I had to mediate several times the difficult relationship between child protection social workers and mothers seeking help. The qualitative study tried to get a deep understanding of this often difficult relationship. A feminist methodology was chosen with the aim to overcome possible androcentric and/or anthropocentric assumptions often linked to discussions on gender-based violence. I started with a preliminary field study combining several informal exchanges with my colleagues (staff members from women's shelters) with more structured interviews with a colleague and two women who had survived gender-based violence and had been blamed for it by their child protection social workers. Based on the results from this preliminary research the interviews with child protections social workers were structured. The main area of interest for my research was to understand, through the accounts of child protection social workers, the risk of secondary victimization for mothers who had survived gender-based violence and, if possible, to isolate examples of best practice.

The study involved a purposeful sample of seven child protection social workers who were ready to be interviewed and gave their written, informed consent. The problem-centred guided interviews (Schmidt-Grunert, 2004) with child protection social workers were divided into two parts. The first part consisted of questions about the individual background of the child protection social worker. The second part started with a case study, a vignette of a fictitious family situation where the child protection social worker might encounter in their work. The interviews were highly

productive and could be analysed from different perspectives by adopting an inductive approach. Significant for this paper is that further investigation showed that the occurrence of secondary victimization can be linked, primarily, to two factors: the expectations regarding motherhood and the expectations regarding the victims or survivors. Survivors of gender-based violence therefore have to deal with a twofold risk of secondary victimization. Below I will illustrate how these two risk factors can be observed in practice.

Before starting with the discussion on the implications for the practices of child protection social work, it is important to map out the working conditions of the child protection social workers who participated in the research (Fleckinger, 2017). Regarding the interviews, all social workers described their workload as too heavy. Working 38 hours a week, they have often to deal with 42 families. One child protection social worker described this pressure in their daily work routine as a nearly impossible task *"we can't do it… there are more and more cases… we act like firefighters"* (child protection social worker (CPSW) B). Another child protection social worker regrets the fact that *"there's no time to focus on the positive aspects and to promote and strengthen them"* (CPSW C). It is important to bear in mind these working conditions since most of the views provided by the women and colleagues interviewed in the preliminary research are not particularly positive.

I would also like to stress that this comprehension of the working conditions of child protection social workers should not be seen as an excuse or justification for victim-blaming attitudes but rather it should be seen as a necessary element to develop a deep understanding of the complexity of such situations. It is crucial to understand that working with survivors of gender-based violence requires being emotionally available, and there is a great need for time to reflect.

One interesting consequence of the lack of time can also be observed by the number of families related to gender-based violence that child protection social workers have to deal with. The child protection social workers interviewed stated that cases were assigned at random, without following any classification system. Conversely, the data analysis showed a difference between the child protection social workers working fewer hours a week and those working more hours a week. Those who work fewer hours deal with more families where gender-based violence occurs (averaging 37.69% of the families) than those who work more hours a week (averaging 8.76% of the families). Moreover, professional experience also tended to increase the proportion of families where gender-based violence occurs in a social worker's workload. Given the small number of child protection social workers interviewed, it is not possible to make a universally valid statement. Nevertheless, the impression is that working fewer hours a week might have a positive effect on the quality of the work, enhancing the child protection social worker's assessment skills. Additionally, greater professional experience might also improve the quality of the case history recorded, given the often hidden dynamics of gender-based violence.

THE GOOD MOTHER

Starting with the concept of a good mother, it is necessary to focus briefly on the ideal of motherhood and how this is reified in our society. Generally, it is important to bear in mind the fact that there are no fixed aspects that represent a good mother. On the contrary, the image of motherhood varies in accordance with the socio-cultural changes and accepted values in society (Banditer, 1991; Macdonald, 2009; Federici, 2015). As mentioned before, the common feature observed in the societies in question is their patriarchal social system. That is why it was important for me to understand the image of motherhood within the patriarchal order. In brief, we should note the importance of the big changes in values and in the economic and familiar system occurring during the shift from an egalitarian society towards a patriarchal one (Göttner-Abendroth, 2011). Although this article cannot hope to describe such changes with the necessary precision and complexity, I would like to review the most significant and then concentrate more on today's expectations regarding motherhood.

The emergence of the androcentric concept, which subordinates the role of women, connected with the desire to accumulate as much private property as possible, meant that men needed heirs (Mulack, 2006; Göttner-Abendroth, 2011). This reassessment of genetic relationships, essentially the introduction of patrilineal genealogy where the father must establish a hierarchical order within his family, led to a traumatic rupture in the familiar tradition of how knowledge is passed on, previously from mother to daughter and granddaughter (Tazi-Preve, 2017). This had negative consequences for solidarity among women and was brought to a climax with the greatest femicide in history, the "burning of witches" in the early modern period (Federici, 2015). The systematic deletion and disruption of female solidarity paved the way for the construction of the maternal instinct, with its unachievable expectations regarding mothers (Braun, 1988; Banditer, 1991; Johnson, Sullivan, 2008; MacDonald, 2009). The invention of the "maternal instinct" goes back to Rousseau, was later complemented by Freud, and describes the ideal of the all-sacrificing mother, the all-knowing mother and the nurturing mother/breadwinning father (Braun, 1988; Macdonald, 2009).

The consequences of this ideological construct still influence motherhood, as well as the work of child protection social workers (Brown, 2006). As shown by interviews from international research, mothers are generally faced with higher expectations regarding their mothering capabilities than fathers (MacDonald, 2009; Tazi-Preve, 2017). Johnson and Sullivan (2008) showed how patriarchal ideologies are widespread in the response to domestic violence and how mothers are judged against the aforementioned stereotypes. In summary, these numerous and sometimes unachievable expectations regarding mothering are key to creating the deep sense of guilt accompanied with a general feeling of performing badly (Mulack, 2006; O'Reilly, 2016). Based on the accounts provided by the child protection social workers, colleagues and women interviewed, mothers are held more responsible for protecting their children. Furthermore, one often unconscious demand was for them to place the needs of their children before their own, whereas this was not expected from the father/perpetrator. In fact, one aspect of being a "good mother" was the willingness and ability of the mother/survivor to convince the child/survivor to visit the father/perpetrator. Mothers who refuse to trust the perpetrator risk being accused of turning their children against the father (Strasser, 2001; Kavemann, Kreyssig, 2013).

The following case examples show how the higher expectations regarding mothers can turn into mother blaming attitudes, which exonerate the perpetrator. This very subtle shift of responsibility occurs often, as for example one child protection social worker talked about a woman who was uncertain if she should return to her man/perpetrator or not. In this situation, the child protection social worker explained to her very clearly that if she returns to the perpetrator she will put her children at risk. Further, the child protection social worker added the threat that in this case she will ask the judge for support to ban the woman from return to her home. Contemporaneously, the actor of the violence is ignored, as for instance, a possible restraining order was not discussed. In international research, these attitudes of mother-blaming are called "the invisible man syndrome" (Humphreys, 2008; Lapierre, 2008) and describe how the woman becomes solely responsible for the situation, as she puts her children at risk.

Similar are also the remarks of another child protection social worker, who reported from a case where she clearly told to the mother that her child could not live anymore in this constant situation of violence and indecision of the mother. She stated clearly *"…either you take a decision quickly, or the services will do so…."* (CPSW D). The child protection social worker explained further that the perpetrator was not confronted with a similar demand. These examples show clearly the higher standards of child protection expected from mothers.

Further, this indicate the complexity of the situations and the limited scopes of actions for child protections social workers. A clear confrontation with the perpetrators can hardly ever take place because during a violent relationship the violence against women and children could even increase. Similar attention has to be given to the moment when the woman attempts to leave. The moments

of separation correlate often with an escalation of violence as the high numbers of feminicide show. (Johnson, Sullivan, 2008; Casa delle donne per non subire violenza ONLUS Bologna, 2018).

THE GOOD VICTIM

I would like to start this paragraph with an example from the interviews which illustrates how important it can be to correspond to the ideal of the good victim. A child protection social worker described a woman very positively with the following words: *"the mother is a very able person… you give her a task and she fulfils it!"* (CPSW D). The child protection social worker also described some relevant case details. One year previously, the woman had asked for help as she was experiencing violence from her husband. The child protection social worker helped her to get a place at a women's shelter with her child, and she was still helping her to reorganize her life in an independent apartment. Some minutes after this comment, the same child protection social worker talked about another case where, according to her opinion, she had made a mistake. The situation was quite similar, namely a woman coming to the child protection social worker to ask her for help to get out of a violent situation. Once again, the child protection social worker helped the woman to find a safe place at a women's shelter with her child. The social worker then explained that, apart from the woman's accounts of physical and psychological violence, one time she had also witnessed, for herself and in her office, the man making death threats to the woman: *"if you leave me, I'll kill you and cut you into pieces"* (CPSW D). Regardless of this direct experience of violence, the child protection social worker now interpreted her support for the woman as a mistake. She argued that, after living with her child for just six months at a women's shelter, this woman had built up her life again in a new apartment, managing the father-child contact independently, without negotiating them first with her. *"You're left with the feeling… was the violence real or was it actually invented by the woman?"* (CPSW D). According to the social worker, the account of violence told by the woman was more related to a strategy to get a place at a women's shelter.

The impression given is that, although the violence has been witnessed directly by the child protection social worker, this is not enough to credit the woman's account completely. In fact, once the woman no longer matches the ideal of a passive victim and organizes her own life without negotiating this beforehand with her social worker, the latter also withdraws their support, further reinforcing the perception of the perpetrator. Besides withdrawing support, the child protection social worker even redefines the situation, calling into question the violence that had been clearly identified previously by undermining the woman's credibility. As the interviews show, this is not an individual case. In fact, similar reactions could also be observed in the accounts by colleagues, women and child protection social workers. This fact encourages a critical consideration of how empowerment works in social work practices and poses the question of how important it is for child protection social workers to keep their control over the people they are working with. As David Watson states *"it (empowerment) becomes an activity that managers do to workers and practitioners to clients"… "this model of empowerment clearly allows the powerful to maintain control of the process"* (Watson, 2002).

This risk of losing credibility increases in line with the element of innocence. As international research shows, the axiom of an innocent victim who is unable to take action sometimes leads to misinterpretations of the survival strategies and is used as a basic argument to withhold support from survivors (Moser, 2007; Kavemann, Kreyssig, 2013). To give an example, some women were aware that episodes of physical violence formed part of the specific violent relationship they had. That is why women sometimes contribute actively to the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back", maybe while the children are at school. At first sight this behaviour seems hard to understand, but we may begin to understand it on closer inspection. On the one hand, the woman feels that she is partly in control of a situation which, most of the time, she perceives as

hopeless and, on the other hand, this is also a strategy to protect her children. For non-experts, such actions are quickly interpreted as "something she wanted" and lead to a sceptical attitude, conversely strengthening the perpetrator (Moser, 2007).

HOW CAN THE DYNAMICS OF SECONDARY VICTIMIZATION BE PREVENTED?

In my view, one of the features of social work is a strong commitment to the importance of constant dialogue between theory and practice (Staub-Bernasconi, 2007). As a logical consequence, social work research should therefore be carried out within this constant interplay, which is indispensable for developing further theoretical concepts as well as practical methods. Against this background, my scientific work shall not be limited to merely collecting and analyzing experiences, but rather its findings should be used to improve child protection social work practices. By comparing my results with other research, interesting parallels could be found. The reflections on how to improve child protection social work practices refer particularly to the findings of Johnson and Sullivan (2008), Bourassa et al. (2008), Keeling and Wormer (2012) as well as Brown (2006) in conjunction to the results of my research. Hereafter I will discuss some ways in which more forward-looking methods and techniques might be introduced within social work practices to avoid the dynamics of secondary victimization. Based on the two major risk factors for secondary victimization discussed above, two almost indispensable working attitudes may be described.

A. Being a social worker does not automatically mean being an expert in gender-based violence protection.

At first glance, this statement sounds almost ridiculous and simplistic, although it describes one of the root causes of secondary victimization. As broadly shown by the interviews, child protection social workers did not automatically contact the specialized services when they suspected gender-based violence in a family. Neither did they call the experts in all those family situations where they knew for certain that the mother and children had experienced gender-based violence. On the contrary, as several accounts showed, some child protection social workers believe they are able to judge for themselves whether there is a violent or conflictive situation in a relationship. None of the child protection social workers in question talked about specific training or practical experiences as a basis for having developed such skills. For example, one child protection social worker described a family where gender-based violence was occurring, classifying the situation as highly complex. Furthermore, she explained that, in collaboration with other services, they had carried out a risk assessment regarding the violence and had decided to confront the perpetrator, although none of the aforementioned services have any specialization in handling situations of gender-based violence. Based on their decisions, the social worker was then puzzled by the survivor's unwillingness to confront the perpetrator and subsequently interpreted the survivor's behaviour as a refusal to cooperate.

As international research shows, these often apparently contradictory behaviours by survivors mask elaborate strategies that help them to survive (Moser, 2007). It is therefore essential for practitioners to have extensive knowledge of the often hidden dynamics of power beyond any particular episodes of violence, in order to understand the dynamics behind this.

I would like to emphasize the complexity of this abusive system, starting with the legal framework in force, in which gender-based violence is defined as "… *a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between women and men, which have led to domination over, and discrimination against, women by men… violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women*

are forced into a subordinate position compared with men…" (Council of Europe, 2011:1)[3]. As there are many different factors to this phenomenon, it would be short-sighted or even negligent to ignore the fact that specific theoretical as well as practical knowledge is essential in order to deal with this issue.

Another example comes from the account provided by one of the women interviewed in the preliminary research. She talked about her situation as mother of one child and about the violence she had experienced. Although she had not lived with her ex-husband/perpetrator for 3 years, she was still in contact with the child protection social services to manage the father-child contact. She gave several examples of how her ex-husband still tried to control her life and the pressure she had to handle. In short, the ongoing psychological violence, as well as economic violence, became evident from her account. However, she had not found a way to communicate these other kinds of violence to her social worker *"…she (child protection social worker) understood it (the violence) only as slaps…"* (Women (W) 2). Rather, as she tearfully told me, in the presence of her ex-husband/perpetrator the child protection social worker had said to her that *"… what had happened was my fault and I should forget about the matter once and for all…"* (W2). The woman felt humiliated and ashamed while her ex-husband/perpetrator, only a few seconds after the meeting, said to her *"…you see? No-one believes you!"* (W2). Through this statement, the ex-husband/perpetrator re-established his power over the woman and child, making use of the support provided by the child protection social worker. Meanwhile, the woman felt trapped in a situation with no way out.

Conflict or violence

The aim of this section is to explore further the importance of a clear case record, followed by a correct interpretation of the accounts given by family members. Depending on how a child protection social worker comes into contact with the family, he or she might be faced with the challenge of deciding whether the situation is one of violence or conflict. This clear distinction is essential for all the later phases in the whole process. Only by knowing the specific subjects and issues of the family can a child protection social worker detect the needs on which any further intervention should be based.

More specifically, mediation is often a very powerful and helpful way to overcome family conflict, although mediation is not recommended and even prohibited in situations of gender-based violence, as shown by Article 48 (1) of the European convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: *"Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to prohibit mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes, including mediation and conciliation, in relation to all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention"* (2011).

An analysis of the interviews reveals considerable variety in this respect. More than half the child protection social workers interviewed use mediation in family situations they openly describe as characterized by gender-based violence. Consequently, we might therefore assume that child protection social workers sometimes ignore the law. Fully aware as I am of how harsh this statement might seem, some further considerations should be noted. Throughout the interviews, I could not clearly detect whether the child protection social workers knew about this relatively recent law, in force in Italy since 2014. On the other hand, all the child protection social workers interviewed showed themselves to be very interested in supporting survivors. Therefore, according to my understanding, it is more likely that these results have uncovered an insufficient awareness of the importance of a clear distinction between conflict and violence rather than any conscious violation of the law.

Such lack of expertise should not be used as an excuse, but it should be seen as a blind spot and be used as a starting point for further discussion and practical training. Moreover, I would like to

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[3] The convention of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence I refer to here has now been signed and ratified by at least 33 European countries.

emphasize that, independently of the knowledge of the child protection social workers in question, this does not minimize the risk of negative consequences for the survivors (Kavemann, Kreyssig, 2013). Consequently, as I mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph and due to the complex nature of gender-based violence, we cannot assume that each child protection social worker has the expertise to accurately determine whether a certain situation is violent or not. Neither is it realistic to demand that each child protection social worker should attend specific training. It is more feasible to build up a strong network between services that encourages continuous exchange, even or particularly at the stage of case records.

B. There is no such thing as a neutral position

During the interviews, I continuously came across the concept of neutrality. Child protection social workers often aspire to maintain a neutral position in order to ensure the preferred objective assessment of the situation they have to deal with. This quite understandable attitude, probably valid in many different working situations, must nevertheless be rejected in situations of gender-based violence (Herman, 2006; Kavemann, Kreyssig, 2013). Following the first essential step of a clear case record, as described above, each child protection social worker should realise that there is no such thing as a neutral position. Quite the opposite, as maintaining a supposedly neutral position in situations of gender-based violence could result in secondary victimization. As shown by international research, victim protection can succeed if the professionals in charge stand in solidarity with the survivors (Johnson, Sullivan, 2008). In order to understand this important step, it is essential to understand the complex dynamics of gender-based violence.

Generally, in all situations of interpersonal violence, it is impossible to be a neutral observer, because the perpetrator demands passivity. Whenever witnesses look away, avoid talking about it or acting on it, the perpetrators reinforce their dominant position. They believe that it is not necessary to change their behaviour but rather that this is tolerated or even justified (Herman, 2006). As the aforementioned example showed, a witness minimizing or denying violent episodes or blaming the survivors always justifies violent behaviour. Special attention should therefore be given to the reactions and actions of child protection social workers at such moments because the negative consequences for survivors increase in proportion to the social worker's powerful position as a civil servant.

On the other hand, when an interlocutor listens to survivors, gives them advice and shows empathy, automatically they take up an action position of trying to protect the survivors. Every kind of support, no matter how small, implies the interlocutor believes the survivor and holds the perpetrator accountable for the violence. Regardless of whether this position is open or not, this represents an important step towards effective survivor protection and means that, if I want to protect a survivor, I must first give up my neutral position (Johnson, Sullivan, 2008; Herman, 2006).

Further protective elements

From the interviews and based on the findings of international research, it was possible to identify more examples of best practices. In contrast to the two indispensable working attitudes discussed earlier, these practices do not follow any chronological or hierarchical order; neither should they be blindly followed in each particular situation of gender-based violence.

The protective practices identified (Cooley, Frazer, 2006; Johnson, Sullivan, 2008; Kavemann, Kreyssig, 2013) are:

a)   Believe the mother's account
b)   Confront the perpetrator, and hold him responsible for his actions
c)   Offer support and information about specific services
d)   Protect the survivors from harassment from the perpetrator's relatives
e)   Offer encouragement

f)   Testify in court on the dynamics of abuse
g)   Provide information on the processes and expectations

As shown by the accounts provided by some child protection social workers, these practices already form part of their approach to some extent. By way of example, one child protection social worker stated clearly that she always focuses on the woman and tries to understand her issues and needs. The child protection social worker also explained how important this is *"if the woman is at risk of even more violence... you can't just walk into the family like a tank"* (CPSW B). Other child protection social workers also emphasize the importance of giving information in order to show the woman the options open to her. One of the child protection social workers talked about a case in which she had to protect the survivors from harassment by the perpetrator's family: *"...my report should help to extend the restraining order to the perpetrator's whole family..."* (CPSW F).

Generally speaking, it is important for this list of best practices to form a theoretical background for each child protection social worker, but it is equally important for them to be tailored to the specific family situation in question. For example, sometimes it is not possible to confront the perpetrator and hold him responsible for his actions because the survivors might risk being exposed to even more violence. Furthermore, there are other situations in which, in order to protect the children, it is not always possible to believe everything the mother says, for instance in cases of co-dependence of the mother. This also applies when the children need to be placed with a foster family, a situation in which it might be important, for a period of time, to hold on to some information about the processes involved.

It is therefore crucial that the findings and implications for social work practices discussed in this article result in a greater awareness of the importance of specific training and strong network. However, this should not limit the discretionary powers of child protection social workers as these represent an essential element of good practice.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to throw light on a supposedly marginalized issue in child protection social work practices. It attempted to provide a critical discussion of some attitudes in child protection social work practices, uncovering some presumably blind spots. The paper illustrated that gender-based violence has a high prevalence in child protection social work services. Therefore, specific knowledge of child protection social workers is required as witnessing gender-based violence may provoke similar consequential harm to children as direct experiences of violence.

The article emphasised the similarities in international research and connected them to the risk of secondary victimization mothers who survived gender-based violence might face. The description of the two key factors: the expectations regarding motherhood and the expectations regarding the victims or survivors opened the discussion on implementations for child protection social work practices. Further, the article described some key elements, based on empirical data, which may help to prevent dynamics of secondary victimization. These elements can now be used to enrich theoretical discussions and to help formulate methods and techniques for the daily working practices in child protection social services.

The research has also highlighted several questions that have not been sufficiently answered as yet. More research is therefore required to explore further the various aspects of this phenomenon. In short, it should not be forgotten that gender-based violence against women is a complex issue for which there is no simple or universal solution. The responses can never be simplistic but must be tailored to the various needs of the survivors in order to ensure a safe environment for the children without blaming the mothers. Contemporaneously, the working conditions of child protection social workers should not be forgotten. As described beforehand the pressures in the daily working routine of child protection social workers restrict constantly a broader support of the families.

It has to be added, that discussing dynamics of secondary victimization does not mean to imply a victim-perpetrator dichotomy. There is no argument saying that there are not families where gender-based violence occurs and where the mother might also abuse or neglect her children. Despite this fact, the implications for child protection social work practice discussed above are still valid, but in certain cases, they must be accompanied by additional measures in order to protect the children. This emphasises also that child protection social workers are frequently confronted with multi problem family situations, which need complex responses and specific support.

To conclude, I wish to note that, without the frankness of my interviewees, this research would not have been possible. It certainly represented a big step for the women interviewed to share their stories; but it was also a big step for the child protection social workers to talk so openly about so many details of their working practices, and this cannot be taken for granted. For example, in a similar Canadian study, the researchers did not find such willingness to cooperate as I did (Bourassa et al., 2008). I am therefore very pleased to have been given this opportunity, of being supported in my focus on improving the quality of the methods and techniques applied by child protection social services.

I hope that this article contributes insights and underline the challenges facing child protection social workers, as well as highlighting the sensitive nature of child protection. In conclusion, I would like to stress the utmost importance of time, a constant dialogue between the different services, and a strong network.

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How Can Suicidal Behaviour in the Elderly Be Prevented? A Scoping Review of the Visegrad Group Countries

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: The aim was to explore the tools for suicide prevention which are effective and appropriate in the Visegrad Group countries. THEORETICAL BASE: Suicide is a serious public health issue in Central Europe. In this geographical area, suicide prevention in seniors has not yet been given proper research attention. METHODS: A structured literature search was performed to identify the empirical qualitative and quantitative research articles; the search focused on works published between January 2009 and June 2018. This scoping review reports the findings from 19 qualitative and quantitative studies, four reports by the World Health Organisation, four national statistics from the selected countries. OUTCOMES: Four suicide prevention tools were identified: (1) social media; (2) education by care professionals; (3) early intervention and access to services; and (4) reducing stigma related to mental disorders. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK: The research examined both specific and broader contexts of the national and strategic prevention plans in the Visegrad Group countries and identified major insufficiencies. It is necessary to improve the level of integration of basic social work research and gerontosociology with clinical practice as a prerequisite for improving the prevention of suicide in seniors.

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INTRODUCTION

Senior suicides represent a persisting challenge for experts in psychiatry in Central European countries. High rates of senior suicides have been identified, especially in Hungary; in Slovakia the tendency is rising (Rihmer et al., 2013; Brazinova et al., 2017). This study synthesizes and analyses the current rate of suicides and state of prevention strategies in the V4 countries to improve the insufficient state of knowledge in this area. Suicide rates are highest among the elderly, yet research on suicide prevention in old age remains a much-neglected area. Innovative strategies should improve resilience and positive ageing, engage family and community gatekeepers, use telecommunications to reach vulnerable older adults, and evaluate the effects of restrictions on methods of suicide and medical education in the context of elderly suicide. (Lapierre et al., 2011). Based on a global survey conducted by International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) and the WHO Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse in 2013, IASP national representatives from 90 countries (57%) completed the survey questionnaire, collecting information on national strategies and activities in suicide prevention. In nearly two thirds (61%) of the responding countries, suicide was perceived as a significant public health concern. In 31% of the countries a comprehensive national strategy or action plan was adopted by the government. Among the countries that did not have a national strategy, certain suicide prevention activities were carried out in just over half (52%) of the countries; these included training on suicide risk assessment and intervention (38%), training for general practitioners (26%), and suicide prevention training for non-health professionals including first responders, teachers, and journalists (37%) (Arensman, 2017). Senior suicide is one of the less tackled research topics, although medical practice (pathology) is dealing with such cases with increased frequency (Wærn, 2011; Brazinova et al., 2017; Serafini et al., 2018). Each suicide is a tragedy affecting families and communities; the issue is recognised all around the world. (Ferrari et al., 2014; Brazinova et al., 2017; WHO, 2017). The consequences of voluntary human death are fatal and result in long-term grieving among close family members, but they also affect society (Fountoulakis et al., 2012; Dowches, West, 2013; Ferrari et al., 2014; Arensman et al., 2017; Kohls et al., 2017).

"*Suicide is an act of intentional killing*" (WHO, 2017:17); *suicidal behaviour* is defined as deliberate self-harm; the intention may or may not be death, nor does it always lead to death. The term *suicide attempt* is difficult to define due to the ambivalence of the affected person's actual intention and behaviour (WHO, 2017:18). Besides death as a result of self-harm with suicidal intentions, also those suicide attempts with the initial intention to kill oneself when the affected person later changes their mind, but is unable to reverse their actions, can be included among the data on suicide deaths. The available statistics pertaining to the selected countries provide information on cases in which death-related intentions were impossible to identify (NHIC, 2017; Statistical Information Centre, 2016; Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016; Czech Statistical Office, 2017).

In such cases, it is difficult to distinguish self-harm from true suicidal intentions. Suicidal behaviour includes multiple behavioural aspects such as thinking about suicide, planning suicide, suicide attempts, and eventually, suicide per se (WHO, 2017). As many as 77% of suicides are predetermined by a psychiatric diagnosis or mental disorder. Both males and females react in this way to severe stress and adaptation disorders (NHIC, 2017). The common factor in these difficulties is depression: depressive disorder in combination with alcohol and other substance use (Wærn, 2011; Fountoulakis et al., 2012; Kotradyova, 2016; Sekhri, Sekhri, 2017; Serafini et al., 2018). Other risk factors include abusing alcohol and/or analgesics, personality disorders,

schizophrenia and other mental disorders. Dementia is also starting to occur as a factor among senior suicides; four out of 100 cases were dementia-related, and seven were related to another form of organic personality disorder (Erlangsen, 2011; Wærn, 2011).

Our aim was to focus on the target group of seniors and suicide prevention among them. Researchers studying this target group do not agree on the specifications of the terms "elderly" and "senior". The elderly age is defined as 50+, 60+, or even 65+ (Wærn, 2011; Wu et al., 2014). Due to these disparities as well as the dynamically developing state of the senior population, the available statistics pertaining to the individual countries have been accepted. The number of seniors is gradually rising and both female and male average life expectancies are increasing, affecting the social and health policies in all countries, and also in turn affecting suicide prevention. In its report, the WHO (2014) points out that suicide prevention in individual countries is insufficient. To analyse the research problem, the Visegrad Group (V4: Slovakia, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary) countries have been selected. These countries share Christian traditions and pertain to a single civilisation founded on shared cultural and intellectual values. The V4 cooperates on political and economic levels, all of them have successfully joined the European Union and work towards developing democracy, science, education and culture. The V4 countries are comparable in terms of the analysis and serve as a suitable starting point.

In these countries there is a lack of any summary of senior suicide and effective prevention programmes. Due to the severity of the suicide rate in the selected group of clients (National Centre of Health Information, 2013–2017; Czech Statistical Office, 2017; Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2016; Statistical Information Centre, 2016), the authors have decided to analyse the relevant documents and synthesize the findings into prevention proposals. The available information is not sufficient to answer the question of how suicidal behaviour in elderly persons can be prevented. This research aims to provide a summary of facts and knowledge, start a discussion, and provide practical recommendations.

METHODS

Search methods

The scoping study approach is a type of review which helps quickly identify gaps in the existing literature and points out areas requiring further attention (Arksey, O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010). A web-based literature search was performed to obtain original qualitative research articles addressing suicide in Central Europe, specifically in *the Visegrad group* (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic). Using three databases, SocIndex with Full Text, Cinahl and Cinahl with Full Text and Academic Search Elite, search terms including "elderly, aged, older, elder, geriatric, elderly people, old people, and senior" and "suicide, self-harm, self-injury, prevention, intervention, treatment, and program", and "Eastern Europe, Central Europe, post-communist, post-soviet, and post-socialist", and "Czech Republic, Slovakia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary", "qualitative research, qualitative studies, and quantitative research" were entered in all possible combinations. Further articles were found by manually searching the references in the resulting 33 publications. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Inclusion criteria:

1) The study was conducted using samples from Central Europe, specifically the Visegrad Group countries: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic.
2) The study used qualitative or quantitative methodology.
3) The article was published in a peer-reviewed journal during the period from January 2009 to June 2018. Available national statistics pertaining to each of the selected countries were also used.
4) The articles were published in English and in Polish, Czech and Slovak. The authors can speak these languages.

Search outcome

The aforementioned searches returned 1,578 articles on the topics of suicide, the elderly, and prevention in total. Based on the fourth criterion *"The Visegrad Group* countries*"*, 1,545 articles were excluded due to duplication or failure to match one or more inclusion criteria. The 33 remaining articles were read in full by all of the authors, and based on their consensus, 19 were considered as successfully meeting all inclusion criteria. Books, chapters, posters, doctoral theses and all articles focusing on target groups younger than 60 years (children, adolescent, girls, young, high school students, school-aged children and specific disease: ADHD, unipolar and bipolar disorders) were excluded from the review.

Figure 1: Systematic review process
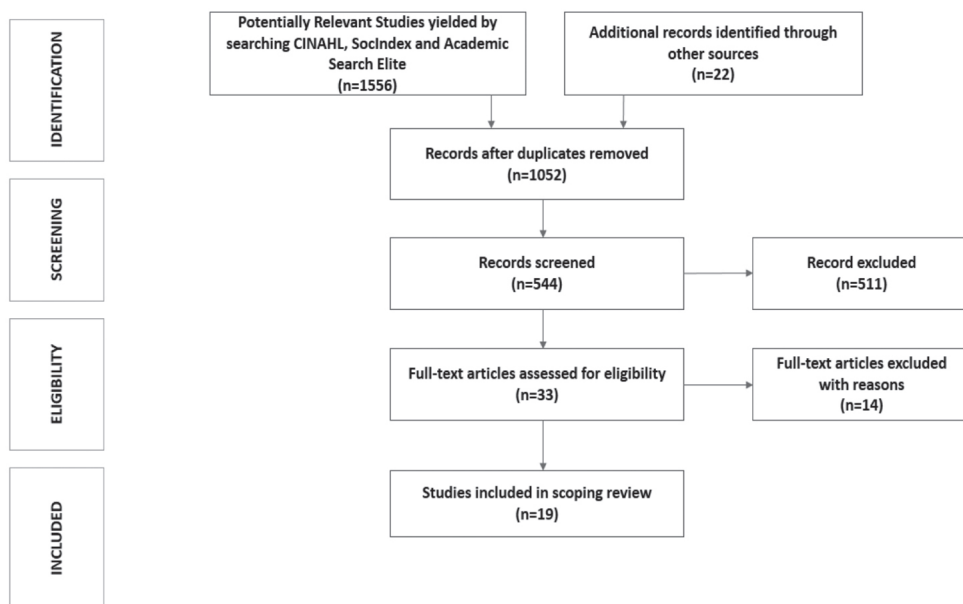
Source: Arksey and O'Malley, 2005

In the course of the literature search, it became evident that the number of relevant articles was limited, and that they were too diverse in terms of their focus and research methods to allow for a feasible formal systematic review. Hence a scoping review (a summary of research findings in the existing literature to identify research gaps) was performed to identify the desirable direction for further research.

Table 1: Summary of the study

Focus on countries	Articles	Total
Slovakia	BRAZINOVA, A., MORAVANSKY, N., GULIS, G. et al. 2017. Suicide Rate Trends in the Slovak Republic in 1993–2015. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry,* 63(2), 161–168.	3
	SMATANA, M., PAZITNY, P., KANDILAKI, D. 2016. *Slovakia: Health System Review. Health Systems in Transition,* 18(6), 1–210.	
	KOTRADYOVA, K. 2016. The Psychosocial Aspects of the Genesis of Depression in Old Age and the Possibilities of Using Group Psychotherapy. *Kontakt,* 18(3), 194–202.	

Czech Republic	MACHOVA, V., PRUCHOVA, D., VELEMINSKY, M. 2010. Sebevraždy seniorů. Některé vnější vlivy a způsoby provedení sebevražd u seniorů. Časopis *Zdravotne sociálnej fakulty,* 4(2), 154–161.	2
	WINKLER, P. 2017. Sebevražednost Čechů je nad světovým průměrem, strategie prevencie ale chybí. *Zdravotnícke noviny,* 66(38), 1–2.	
Hungary	ALMASI, K., BELSO, N., KAPUR, N. et al. 2009. Risk Factors for Suicide in Hungary: a Case-Control Study. *BMC Psychiatry,* 9(45).	3
	BALAZS, J. 2013. Suicide Prevention and Media in Hungary. *European Psychiatry,* 28(1).	
	RIHMER, Z., GONDA, X., KAPITANY, B. 2013. Suicide in Hungary – Epidemiological and Clinical Perspectives. *Ann Gen Psychiatry,* 12(21).	
Poland	MAKARA-STUDZINSKA, M., MADEJ, A. 2015. Samobójstwa wśród osób starszych. *Journal of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology,* 15(4), 189–194.	2
	KOWESZKO, T., GIERUS, J., MOSIOŁEK, A. 2016. Differences in Assessment of Suicidal Tendencies in Men and Women: A Pilot Study. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing,* 30, 77–78.	
Europe (including selected countries)	ARENSMAN, E. 2017. Suicide Prevention in an International Context. Progress and Challenges. *Crisis,* 38, 1–6.	9
	CONWELL, Y., THOMPSON, C. 2008. Suicidal Behavior in Elders. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America,* 31(2), 333–356.	
	COPPENS, E., VAN AUDENHOVE, C., SCHEERDER, G. et al. 2013. Public Attitudes Toward Depression and Help-Seeking in four European Countries Baseline Survey Prior to the OSPI-Europe Intervention. *Journal of Affective Disorders,* 150(2), 320–329.	
	DOWCHES, J. E., WEST, D. J. 2013. Factors Influencing the Increase in Incidence of Suicide and Substance Abuse in Central Eastern Europe. *Journal of Nursing, Social Studies, Public Health and Rehabilitation,* (1–2), 7–20.	
	FERRARI, A. J., NORMAN, R. E., FREEDMAN, G. et al. 2014. The Burden Attributable to Mental and Substance Use Disorders as Risk Factors for Suicide: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. *PLoS ONE,* 9(4), e91936.	
	KOHLS, E., COPPENS, E., HUG, J. et al. 2017. Public Attitudes Toward Depression and Help-Seeking: Impact of the OSPI Europe Depression Awareness Campaign in four European Regions. *Journal of Affective Disorders,* 217, 252–259.	
	MISCHARA, B. L., WEISSTUB, D. N. 2016. The Legal Status of Suicide: A Global Review. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry,* 44, 54–74.	
	WU, J., VÄRNIK, A., TOODING, L. M. 2014. Suicide Among Older People in Relation to Their Subjective and Objective Well-Being in Different European Regions. *European Journal of Ageing,* 11(2), 131–140.	
	ZALSMAN, G., HAWTON, K., WASSERMAN, D. et al. 2016. Suicide Prevention Strategies Revisited: 10-Year Systematic Review. *Lancet Psychiatry,* 3(7), 646–659.	
	Total	**19**
International reports (including the selected countries)	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION. 2011. *Suicide Rates per 100 000 by Country, Year and Sex.* Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.	4
	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION. 2013. *Health 2020: A European Policy Framework Supporting Action Across Government and Society for Health and Well-Being.* Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.	
	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION. 2014. *Preventing Suicide. A Global Imperative.* Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.	
	WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION. 2017. *Suicide Rates, Age-Standardized. Data by Country.* Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.	

National Statistics of the selected countries	NATIONAL HEALTH INFORMATION CENTRE. 2017. *Samovrazdy a samovrazedne pokusy v SR 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017.* Bratislava: NHIC.	4
	CZECH STATISTICAL OFFICE. 2017. *Zomrelí podľa zoznamu príčin, pohlavia a veku v ČR, podľa krajov a okresov v rokoch 2007–2016.* Praha: CSU.	
	HUNGARIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE. 2016. *Statistical Yearbook of Budapest 2015.* Budapest: KSH.	
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION CENTRE. 2016. *Statistics Poland.* Warszawa: GUS.	

RESULTS

Current situation in Slovakia

The senior suicide indicator in the Slovak Republic (the number of suicides per 100,000 citizens within the selected group) is 15.8 for persons older than 60 and 13.8 for persons older than 70; the average suicide indicator in the overall population is 16.8. Since 2012 the number of suicides and suicide attempts has increased. The senior population amounts to 30% of the suicide rate development in the country. In terms of the age structure, the cohort of seniors aged 60 to 69 prevails over seniors older than 70. In terms of gender structure, the suicide rate among males is several times higher than that for females; however, this is also typical in younger age groups (Smatana et al., 2016). An interesting difference was identified in the Slovak senior population: female suicides outweigh male ones. For instance, in 2017 there were 33 senior suicide attempts among men and 49 among women. The most frequently identified motives include internal and personal conflicts, family issues, somatic diseases and bodily damage. Brazinova et al. (2017) and Fountoulakis et al. (2014) also state unemployment in old age and its relation to the prevalence of anxiety and depressive disorders. Senior suicide prevention in Slovakia is insufficient. A nationwide action programme aimed at suicide prevention among this specific socio-demographic group is lacking. Activities performed in terms of psychiatric care could be categorised as secondary prevention. Most seniors who commit suicide or attempt it have never visited a psychiatrist, which emphasizes the importance of coordinated multidisciplinary cooperation between the medical professionals and experts in the areas of social work, psychology, the police and the law.

Current situation in the Czech Republic

Since the 1970s the number of persons deciding to end their lives by suicide has been generally decreasing despite certain local deviations and a short-term increase in the Czech Republic (Czech Statistical Office, 2017). As an example of the decreasing senior suicide tendency in the 60+ age group, the information pertaining to the period of 2013–2016 will be presented. Data from 2009 (WHO, 2011) show that the average suicide indicators (the number of suicides per 100,000 citizens pertaining to the selected group) stood at 22.7 and 4.3 among males and females respectively. As for 2015, the World Health Organization identified significantly lower average indicators in the Czech Republic; 17.7 and 3.9 in males and females respectively. The assumed reasons for suicide among seniors here include mainly social and health issues; primarily worsened social-economic situations related to court orders for property seizure, low pension rates and comparably high costs of living and treatment of somatic and mental diseases play an important role. Social isolation, loneliness, lower quality of life due to the death of the spouse, abuse or neglect by relatives represent further assumed suicide motives (Machova et al., 2010). Prevention of suicidal behaviour and suicides is not systematic; a national suicide prevention strategy is lacking, and no form of comprehensive prevention approach is available. Prevention is available through individual health care and social projects, albeit indirectly. It includes healthy lifestyle activities and primary prevention among the citizens. Winkler (2017) states that coordinated and targeted prevention focused on limiting the means of committing suicide is needed along with

early depression treatment, provision of subsequent care, and an appropriate media-based way to tackle the issue of suicides; all these aspects are considered priorities in the Czech Republic.

An overview of the current situation in Poland
The senior suicide indicator in Poland (the number of suicides per 100,000 citizens within the selected group) is 19.0 for persons older than 65 and 18.8 for persons older than 75; the average suicide indicator in the overall population is 15.6. According to the long-term statistical indicators, the senior suicide rate in Poland is increasing. For instance, between 2012–2014 the number of suicides among seniors in all age groups increased. A pilot study performed in Poland (Koweszko et al., 2016) showed that the findings may provide a clue to suicide prevention in mental health nursing practice. The risk factors in senior suicides included the presence of mental disorders and diseases (e.g. depression), alcoholism, long-term suffering from somatic disease, sudden loss of social or family status, financial deterioration, social isolation, or loss of life spouse (Makara, Studzinska, 2015). Suicides and suicide attempts in seniors are related to somatic, mental and social issues; in Poland these include mainly loneliness, death of close persons, loss of professional or social status, absence of life goals, and violence against seniors. Senior suicide prevention is based on providing overall support related for instance to learning to use information and communication technologies, dealing with moral dilemmas, material deprivation, and day-to-day activities. Seniors need to be prepared for the life changes related to ageing.

An overview of the situation in Hungary
For 2014, the World Health Organization states that the average suicide indicator in Hungary stood at 19.1, although in 2009 Hungary was among the Central and Eastern European countries with the highest number of suicides per 100,000 citizens in the selected group: males 40.0 and females 10.1. By 2015 the suicide indicator had fallen to 25.8 (males) and 6.9 (females). The risk factors leading to senior suicides included social isolation, life events, severe mental diseases, personality disorders, history of self-harm, alcohol and drug abuse. However, the experience with social and economic development since 1990 (long-term unemployment before retiring and socio-economic deterioration) also played a role. (Almasi, Belso, 2009)

In Hungary there is no centralised governmental suicide prevention programme (Rihmer et al., 2013). The decreasing suicide rate in recent decades probably results from advancement in health and social care in Hungary; however, prevention is still necessary. In the last 20 to 25 years the role of psychiatric disorders (mainly depression) in the prevention of suicide and suicide attempts is paid increasing attention in the medical training of psychiatrists and general practitioners. Regular training is organised by four medical universities (Budapest, Pecs, Szeged, Debrecen), the Hungarian Psychiatric Association, the Association of Hungarian Neuropsychopharmacologists and pharmaceutical companies. Although Hungary has observed the biggest decline in suicide deaths over the last 25 years in the world (45%), the suicide rate remains very high (19.1 per 100,000 people in 2014).

For the review, see Table 2. The data pertaining to the Slovak Republic are available only for two age groups.

Table 2: National statistics on suicide in selected countries

Countries	Age	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Slovakia	60 – 69	70	97	82	93	86
	70+	47	76	70	72	75
	Aged + not identified					
Czech Republic	60 – 64	Not identified	138	118	138	111
	65 – 69	Not identified	99	107	106	105
	70 – 74	Not identified	85	99	82	77
	75 – 79	Not identified	58	68	71	72
	80 – 84	Not identified	52	54	72	53
	85 – 89	Not identified	36	37	34	27
	90 – 94	Not identified	18	16	12	11
	95+	Not identified	1	2	–	2
Poland	60 – 64	443	623	762	Not identified	Not identified
	65 – 69	213	337	443	Not identified	Not identified
	70 – 74	137	223	225	Not identified	Not identified
	75 – 79	130	168	203	Not identified	Not identified
	80 – 84	93	134	162	Not identified	Not identified
	85 – 89	79	133	113	Not identified	Not identified
	90 – 94	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified
	95+	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified
Hungary	60 – 64	Not identified	39	29	29	Not identified
	65 – 69	Not identified	12	17	21	Not identified
	70 – 74	Not identified	17	25	20	Not identified
	75 – 79	Not identified	15	16	12	Not identified
	80 – 84	Not identified	13	18	14	Not identified
	85+	Not identified	21	13	17	Not identified

Source: National statistics of selected countries, 2018 (edited by the authors)

DISCUSSION

The findings can be formulated in four points. In this way the conclusions to the findings in the form of senior suicide prevention tools and their effectiveness in the selected European countries will be presented:

Social media and their importance in senior suicide prevention
A systematic review of 30 studies on social media websites regarding suicide prevention (Robinson et al., 2016) showed that social media platforms can reach a large number of users. In this way suicidal behaviour in other individuals can be affected. Lack of control over user behaviour, possible occurrence of suicide challenges and instructions, limited means to evaluate suicide risk, issues related to privacy protection and confidentiality need to be addressed (Arensman, 2017). This also applies to seniors whose computer literacy is limited and who lack supervision and assistance. In the selected countries a single prevention project was organised using social media. Balazs (2013) confirmed that the internet and the media can play an important role in suicide prevention. He further states that suicide prevention provided by the Internet and Media-Based Mental Health Promotion (SUPREME) project aims to develop an internet-based suicide prevention scheme in Hungary. Spreading preventive activities to the adult and senior populations is worth considering

as these target groups are often unaware of the risks and possible rapid deterioration in old age. In some cases, bad experience with social media may result in (successful) suicide attempts.

Educating helping professionals as a tool for suicide prevention
Educating social care professionals in health care aimed at detecting risks, depression and early signs of suicidal behaviour is important to determine the correct level of care as well as treatment recommendations and suicidal behaviour prevention (Coppens et al., 2014). Individual studies pertaining to the selected countries refer to social health care professionals, but other professionals are rarely mentioned. Medical professionals are supposed to prevent suicides by early detection of risk symptoms as well as appropriate intervention. However, in reality, senior care is not only provided by medical professionals. The socio-economic impact and challenges related to the preparation for old age, and adaptation issues related to the transition from home to institutional care are frequently dealt with by social care professionals. Supporting suicide prevention requires improved special training and skills among social care professionals; they need to be able to detect and treat depression and anxiety. Primary care requires a shift in focus to identify potentially suicidal patients suffering from mental issues. In the context of health and social care and social services, mainly social care professionals, instructors of social rehabilitation, care givers, occupational therapists, nurses and other employees provide assistance to the dependent persons. The personality of care professionals is of key importance in their job, but sustainability and improvement of social work can only be achieved through continuous education. Through further specialised training, burn-out syndrome can be avoided and motivation for life-long caring sustained. All social care professionals see caring as a mission; they struggle to support others in maintaining their health, well-being and comfort. A concept of further education for social workers and health care workers in crisis intervention is necessary.

Early crisis intervention and access to services as a tool for suicide prevention
Early crisis intervention represents an important part of the continuum of activities helping to constitute the instrumental aspect of suicide prevention. It is important to employ existing crisis centres and hotlines in this strategy as well as effective mental health care (Brazinova et al., 2017) The institutional aspect of prevention within crisis intervention is represented mainly by crisis centres; their network in the selected countries is available. However, the challenge remains to continue networking and improving cooperation among individual helpers.
Although there is no effective algorithm to predict suicide in clinical practice, improved recognition and understanding of clinical, psychological, sociological and biological factors might help the detection of high-risk individuals and assist in treatment selection (Turecki, Brent, 2016). Solutions focusing on improving the accessibility of mental health services, reforms of legal regulations in the area of mental health, battling the stigma of mental health patients: all of these can significantly affect the suicide rates in the Central and Eastern European countries and additionally help battle substance abuse. In this way suicide prevention in the selected countries can be improved.

Removing the stigma related to mental disorders as a suicide prevention tool
The stigma related to mental disorders may inspire seniors to consider suicide. In the selected countries, there are nation-wide prevention programmes focusing on mental disorders; however, those who actually suffer or have even attempted to commit suicide are often reluctant to seek professional help. Only certain countries include suicide prevention among their health care priorities, and only 28 countries declare that they have a national suicide prevention strategy. Stigma is a complex construct consisting of four social-cognitive processes (i.e. stereotypes, prejudice, misinformation and discrimination); other people may stigmatise an individual suffering from a mental disease or the patients may stigmatise themselves (Cummings et al., 2013). A basic survey in the four selected European countries focusing on public attitudes towards depression

and seeking help is referred to by Coppens et al. (2013) and Kohls et al. (2017); the respondents showed a moderate degree of personal stigma toward depression and a strikingly higher degree of perceived stigma. Although a substantial majority showed openness to seeking professional help, only half of the people perceived professional help as valuable. More negative attitudes were found in Hungary and were associated with male gender, older age, lower educational level and living alone. Moreover, personal stigma was related to less openness to and less perceived value of professional treatment. Increasing public awareness and removing taboos are important objectives in the selected countries if they are to achieve progress in suicide prevention.

Recommendations

A single, central, suicide prevention plan on the governmental level should coordinate specifically-designed and implemented projects (reducing unemployment in pre-retirement age, providing more support for health and social services, decreasing toxicity in homes, controlling exhaust gases, introducing stricter legislation regarding gun control, alcohol and smoking; all of these may decrease suicide-related mortality and other phenomena on all levels of society. Education of the public, effectively-treated mental disorders and restricted access to potential means of suicide all have important roles to play in suicide prevention (Brazinova et al., 2017). The central prevention plan should set up possible objectives of prediction, prevention and intervention on different levels, and actively involve multiple participants.

The review of necessary changes in medical education and social worker training is also an important part of the central plan. Church representatives, teachers and police officers should also be trained, and more scientific research is desirable in the related areas. The topic of senior suicides is closely related to the solution of ethical, moral and legal issues connected with suicide. In case of need, legislation should be changed; public campaigns should be designed and implemented and awareness-raising projects initiated. The World Day of Suicide Prevention has been promoted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the IASP since 2003. The aim of the activity is to raise public awareness of suicidal behaviour, prevention, providing adequate early treatment and care. Further suicide prevention tools include supporting education for health care and social workers along with reforms in the legislation and increasing accessibility of mental disease treatment; working towards removing the stigma and discrimination of the population suffering from psychiatric diseases is also important.

On all levels, coordinators should be appointed and internal cooperation established. To implement this plan, experts in health and social care, politicians, legislators, civic associations and other informal organisations need to be active and cooperate in tackling the issue.

Recommendations for future research

The suicide rate may significantly decrease if early health care is accessible. Crisis teams and hotlines are available in all V4 countries. Identification of pre-suicidal behaviour is the primary step in mental health treatment and help in individual cases. The need to implement nationwide prevention programmes and simultaneous research may possibly eliminate human tragedies in the senior age group. As social work spreads its activities into the digital world, practical assistance and information can be provided by engaged care professionals. However, the key competence represented by training in suicide-related conversations in social work is absent in practice. Maple et al. (2016) state that in their scoping study, 241 articles on suicide were authored by social workers. The results show that there is a lack of social work research on suicide in the population, insufficient knowledge of correct procedures and about stigmatisation. More empirical research examining the types of suicidal prevention tools which healthcare professionals encounter in their practices is highly recommended. Future research investigating whether empirical research parallels the cases and issues identified in this review is recommended. Further research establishing how often and in what contexts suicide prevention programs/tools are useful is also recommended.

Strengths and limitations of the scoping review

The strengths of this study include the scoping nature of the review, adoption of methods, quantity and range of papers included, and its potential contribution to practice, policy, education and future research. This scoping review included stringent screening of studies based upon inclusion/exclusion criteria. There may be other tools or intervention programmes commonly implemented in terms of suicide prevention which have not been empirically tested and were therefore excluded from this review. Limitations may include the decision not to include the "grey" literature (due to the size of the review), and the decision not to use the specific term '*consequence of depression or other mental disease or parasuicide*' in the database search. The decision not to include this grey literature potentially precluded the inclusion of possibly relevant documents.

Conclusion

Suicide prevention is possible and real, but it requires a responsible approach from the health care workers in primary care, and contact with social workers. Prevention is influenced by the knowledge of the care professionals, mainly in the areas of psychosocial support and communication, but also in a sensitive and empathic approach to seniors experiencing a crisis. In the quest for effective suicide prevention initiatives, no single strategy clearly stands above the others. Combinations of evidence-based strategies at individual and population levels should be assessed using robustly-designed research. (Zalsman et al., 2016) Preventing suicide attempts may not be possible in all cases. However, there is theoretical knowledge, available treatments, and preventive strategies which could prevent many and probably most of them.

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Energy Transition and Environmental Justice: Effects on Vulnerable Groups and Implications for Social Work

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: The submitted paper focuses on the energy transition and its social and economic effects on vulnerable groups. It draws on an empirical study on behalf of the Swiss Federal Housing Office. This contribution insists on the necessity to overcome the gap between energy policy, social policy, and housing policy. THEORETICAL BASE: The paper refers to intersectionality theory. It elaborates on the notion of energy poverty and takes into account research on environmental justice and environmentalism of the poor. METHODS: A mixed research approach was chosen, combining qualitative and quantitative methods: exploratory literature review and policy analysis; a quantitative survey among 74 experts; qualitative interviews with 10 vulnerable households and with 5 experts; and expert woprkshops. OUTCOMES: The chapter on empirical findings addresses the following aspects: impacts of energy poverty on the overall quality of life; problems due to

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deficient infrastructure and energy-inefficient housing equipment; discriminatory structures on the housing market; and services offered to persons affected by energy poverty. SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS: The article concludes that a green social work mandate is needed in order to align the energy transition with environmental justice. Recommendations are given regarding energy policy, housing market, social assistance, and services to households affected by energy poverty.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Switzerland pursues the goal of a reliable, independent and environmentally friendly energy supply which can only be achieved by saving energy and using renewable energy. Since households account for a significant amount of energy consumption, various measures focus on improving their energy efficiency and on reducing the energy consumption in the building sector. In Switzerland, more than four fifths of all building renovations are partial renovations. The practice of modernizing old houses every few years is one of the most widespread forms of building renovation (Vonmont, 2016). The economic, social and socio-cultural consequences of such renovation practices vary greatly depending on the target group. For vulnerable groups, partial and complete retrofits represent a major challenge, as the renovated flat's increased rent often exceeds the household budget. Research projects from Germany confirm that this residential displacement affects vulnerable groups in particular, such as single parents, elderly people, recipients of unemployment benefit and students living in shared flats (Schiebe, 2016). In Switzerland as well, demolition, new construction and renovations are used as strategies for lifting housing into a higher market segment (Balmer, Bernet, 2016). This happens at a time when the shortage of affordable housing has become more pronounced in almost all cities: Numbers by the Federal Statistics Office (BFS) for 2016 display that in the five biggest Swiss towns less than 0.5 percent of flats were available on the market; in suburban areas, the rate attained 1.1 percent (BFS, 2017:3).

In Switzerland, we observe a general lack of interest in the impact of energy policy on housing conditions of vulnerable groups, and no data is available measuring how many persons are affected by energy poverty. A recent study commissioned by the Federal Housing Office (BWO) and the Federal Social Insurance Office (BSV) on housing supply in Switzerland (2015) states that *"housing still receives too little attention in social policy"* (BWO, BSV, 2015:3). According to the authors, 83.5% of households affected by poverty and 57.1% of households in precarious situations are not adequately provided for with housing in Switzerland. *"The main cause of the inadequate housing supply is an excessively high housing cost burden"* (BWO, BSV, 2015:1). The authors detail the following five dimensions in order to assess the adequacy of housing supply: housing costs, size of the apartment, quality of living, residential location, and housing security. This study shows that the part of flats advertised with rents below 1000 Swiss francs declined from 29 percent to less than 14 percent between 2005 and 2014 (BWO, BSV, 2015:3). Another study commissioned by the Swiss Federal Office of Housing (BWO) and the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (BFE) on energy-efficient retrofits and their impact on rents (2014) concludes that, from the tenants' point of view, the *"rent increases attributable to energy-efficient retrofits are in the vast majority of cases higher than the cost savings resulting from reduced energy consumption"* (BWO, BFE, 2014:2). As a result, tenants are confronted with a net additional burden. According to authors, higher rents are compensated for by an increase in living comfort. However, the other study mentioned above (BWO, BSV, 2015) shows that *"the higher the share of housing costs in household income is, the greater the risk of being unable to bear the costs even with minor financial losses and thus of losing the apartment"* (BWO, BSV, 2015:60).

Another issue largely ignored so far are the distributional effects of current subsidy policy in Switzerland. The energy transition entails reallocation and redistribution of costs in mobility and housing, as well as subsidies for renewable energy sources. In this regard homeowners in particular benefit from subsidies and tax relief, while tenants often have to reckon with higher rental costs after retrofits. The extent to which inappropriate housing quality can lead to financial burdens, increased rental costs due to retrofits force vulnerable groups to move, and a subsidy policy focused only on homeowners promotes segregation tendencies, are all aspects that need to be examined in the context of energy transition.

In order to better understand the social effects of the energy transition on vulnerable groups, the Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW has conducted on behalf of the Federal Office of Housing (BWO) a study that, first, aimed to analyse the link between income and energy poverty; and, second, focused on the coping strategies of vulnerable groups that are either affected or endangered by energy poverty or have an increased housing cost burden due to an energetic retrofit. This study focused on households affected by poverty and/or dependent on welfare benefits, as well as on households at risk of poverty living at a maximum of 20 percent above the minimum subsistence level. Energy-poor households are households that are characterised by a combination of low income, low energy efficiency and high energy costs. The empirical investigation was oriented towards the following research questions: How do vulnerable groups deal with rising rents or excessive bills for heating and ancillary costs? Do they forgo the satisfaction of other basic needs in order to make ends meet? Are there professional support services helping them to cope with energy poverty?

This article presents core findings of the study and discusses them in a broader theoretical context, referring to intersectionality and environmental justice. This context is unfolded in the following section, before method and findings are presented.

FROM POLICY ANALYSIS TO THEORY

In this part of our contribution, we discuss the following aspects. First, that energy transition in Switzerland lacks any dimension of social sustainability; second, that this failure is mirrored by the fact that Swiss social policy still largely ignores environmental problems; and third, that researchers, politicians, and social work practitioners alike could learn from the literature about social movements linking social justice and environmental justice and the "environmentalism of the poor" (Guha, 2000; Martinez-Alier, 2002).

The missing social dimension

In June 1992, the U.N. Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro proclaimed humanity's goal to find a road to sustainable development. In the aftermath of that conference, a consensus among experts and policymakers was established, that sustainability, in order to be effective and to respect social justice demands, must combine three dimensions: ecological, economic, and social sustainability. Today in Switzerland, the policy of energy transition draws on the idea of sustainability, but the social dimension is largely missing on the agenda.

In Switzerland, the energy transition relies on the Energy Strategy 2050. The strategy mainly focuses on energy efficiency, on further developing the use of renewable energy sources (including hydropower), and on foreign energy policy (for instance, the import and export of energy). The Swiss Federal Office of Energy (BFE) is in charge of application. The BFE (2018) has one organizational unit concerned with energy economy; but there is no such unit responsible for the social consequences of the energy transition. This blank position in the organisation chart reveals a central feature of current policy: Economic aspects are self-evidently considered, but nobody tackles the social sustainability dimension. Furthermore, we can see that the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) has published several studies on the economics of energy policy. It

presents itself as the Federal State's "economic conscience" and insists on polluter liability, market-based instruments, and transparent information. In strong contrast to the SECO's role, there is no Federal Office representing the State's "social conscience" in energy transition.

To summarize, the broad picture shows a missing link between energy policy and social policy, whereas the energy transition is firmly linked to economic policy. The consequences of this state of affairs are manifold. Most notably, the energy transition sets economic incentives not only for house owners and real estate firms (subsidies for energy retrofits), but also for a large spectrum of firms investing in the greening of capitalism, whereas tenants go away empty-handed, and investors are not given incentives to make socially sustainable decisions. It is fair to say that the energy transition has pushed the development of various business sectors, some of them new, others not. In this perspective, state agencies, non-profit organisations, and private firms collaborate intensively, for instance by developing labels designed to certificate the green character of buildings, development processes, or municipalities. The two most important labels in Switzerland are Energy Town and 200 Watt Society. These labels offer the opportunity for policymakers and investors to show how green-oriented and responsible they are; unfortunately, they do not include any concrete and effective criteria targeting social sustainability. At the end of the day, this can lead to the development of new residential areas that are very green, but also socially highly exclusive, as has been shown for the Erlenmatt neighbourhood in Basel (Statistisches Amt Basel-Stadt, 2016). Hence, there are some reasons to think that in Switzerland too, the current greening of cities goes sometimes hand in hand with the displacement of disadvantaged populations: a process called green gentrification by Gould and Lewis (2017).

From income poverty to energy poverty to intersectionality

If Swiss energy policy crucially lacks "social conscience", unfortunately the reverse is also true. Social policy in Switzerland has not yet really developed the idea of a green mandate. Poverty, for instance, is still fundamentally boiled down to income poverty. There have been some steps taken by the Swiss Federal Statistics Office to develop a concept of multiple deprivation or multidimensional poverty in the 1990s; the on-going Europeanisation of statistics and the adoption of SILC (Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) in Switzerland has not necessarily pushed these steps any further. To be sure, we now have public statistics about housing conditions in Switzerland, notably habitable surface, moisture, traffic noise, and neighbourhood quality. But in the various fields of social policy environmental questions are hardly ever addressed. Hence, the absence of social policy in energy transition does not primarily result by exclusion of some players by others; rather is it the case that social policy protagonists show only little interest for energy policy.

At a time when much social policy debate evolves around controversies on benefit cuts, we consider it important to introduce new concepts instead of limiting ourselves to persistently repeating positions already known by everybody. In this perspective, energy poverty is a promising concept. It addresses a specific problem which is not entirely new, but one that gets clearly worse under current dynamics in urbanism, real estate, and housing. Whereas in the Anglosaxon world, energy poverty (or fuel poverty) is not really a new topic, the German-speaking countries are not familiar with this concept until now (see Grossmann, Schaffrin, Smigiel, 2017). Most often energy poverty is defined by the combination of the following three factors: low income, bad energy efficiency (of buildings and household devices), and rising energy costs. Energy poverty focuses the excessive burden of energy costs for disadvantaged households, but it cannot be reduced to income poverty notably for two reasons: first, because of differences regarding energy efficiency, one and the same income can be sufficient or not for a household when it comes to secure energy provision; second, differences in basic energy needs (between healthy persons and sick persons; between children and adults; between the young and the elderly; and so on) produce a similar effect. Statistically, energy poverty is best measured with a so-called low income, high cost (LIHC) approach (see Schreiner,

2015). However in Switzerland currently, available data does not permit a clear-cut measure of how many persons, or households, are concerned (Suppa, Muri, Kubat et al., 2019:14–15).

In any case, our contribution focuses a qualitative understanding of energy poverty. The problem should not be reduced to merely economic dimensions, but include a whole range of aspects producing deprivation and/or discrimination of vulnerable groups. For instance, Bouzarovski (2018:4) insists that energy poverty must be analysed within a broader infrastructural and institutional context; focusing narrowly on the house and its inhabitants is not enough. Likewise, Grossmann (2017) proposes to conceive energy poverty in terms of multiple deprivation and intersectionality. It is plausible to expect that in many cases the disproportionate energy burden represents only one of several dimensions in housing deprivation (others may be: traffic noise, deficient neighbourhood infrastructures, and/or want of habitable surface). At the same time, various social groups suffer specific forms of discrimination, making things worse. Grossmann (2017) therefore has elaborated an analytic model we find quite inspiring. Basically this model focuses the reciprocal action between the following three dimensions: categorical attributes influencing the social position of households (gender, age, ethnicity, health, family form etc.), discriminatory structures of social systems (most notably, housing market and energy provision), and policies impacting on pre-existing social inequalities (like social benefit systems, (missing) communal housing provision, or subsidies offered for energy retrofits).

Environmental Justice and the Environmentalism of the Poor

This contribution highlights the crucial importance of energy and the environment for social justice. For social policy and social work in German-speaking countries, connecting these issues and developing a green mandate today still represents a relatively new task. We think that politicians, researchers, and practitioners alike can learn a lot from experiences in other countries and continents. Bouzarovski (2018) shows that discussions about energy poverty have been more and more set on the agenda of European policy in recent years; they are not restricted to a few countries (England, Ireland) anymore. In the United States, the battle for environmental justice, especially in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, has been unfolding since the 1980s already (see Chavis, Benjamin, Lee, 1987; Bullard, 2005). The fight against environmental racism first criticized the often very unequal distribution of environmental problems (like waste, pollution, noise, and traffic) in urban neighbourhoods, predominantly black or white. But in the context of urban renewal, the attention is more and more shifting towards the distribution of environmental goods (like access to parks and water front) and the displacement of vulnerable groups in the process of urban greening (Gould, Lewis, 2017). In any case, the debate about environmental justice must take stock of both sides, negatives and positives.

Another difficulty in this endeavour lies in the widespread belief that ecological conscience and behaviour is mainly a middle class, or even an upper class, issue. Many experts think that disadvantaged people have problems more urgent than the environment, and that poverty-stricken persons do not know how best to save energy, and so on. Attacking such prejudice, studies about environmentalism at a global scale (Guha, 2000) and environmentalism of the poor (Martinez-Alier, 2002) show many examples of poor people's movements defending their natural environment without necessarily using a (Western) ecological terminology in order to develop their claims. In these movements, ideas about social justice are often closely related to a practical philosophy of sustainability regarding the coexistence of human beings and their environments. In this context, reference is most often made to movements in the Global South, like Via Campesina (Desmarais, 2007) or indigenous people's movements (Hall, Fenelon, 2009). However, social work scholars and practitioners in the Global North can draw on such findings and start with the premise that households affected by energy poverty should be considered as practical experts when it comes to living with scarce resources on a day-to-day basis. In order to be fully able to explore this perspective, it is important to analyse everyday practice and coping strategies of households affected by energy poverty.

EMPIRICAL STUDY

The one-year research project, which began in October 2017 and ended in October 2018, relied on the following methods of data collection and analysis: Given the prevailing research gap in Switzerland[4] on the topic, explorative literature reviews and policy analysis were conducted from October 2017 to January 2018. The study of coping strategies by vulnerable groups, on the other hand, required a methodological approach that allowed basic connections to be disclosed in a hitherto unexplored field. Therefore, a mixed-method design with quantitative survey and qualitative interviews was chosen. Based on the principles of openness and communication, qualitative social research is best suitable for research on everyday knowledge and forms of action (Flick, 2006). But taking into account the fact that research access to vulnerable groups can be difficult, interviews were also conducted with experts and an expert survey was passed. Expert workshops were held in order to further validate the empirical findings.

Online survey: To evaluate the extent to which adequate assistance programs are available for vulnerable groups 74 experts were consulted by means of an online survey. The online survey, which was conducted in the period from February to March 2018 was sent to counselling centres working in the field of housing, social welfare and debt counselling. Among other things, the online questionnaire should investigate the extent to which vulnerable groups are confronted with energy-efficient retrofits and how these lead to an increase in rents, which strategies those who are affected apply to offset higher rents or energy costs, and which advisory services there are for those affected. The following 5 cantons were selected for the counselling services in order to ensure the best possible representation of large cities and national languages: Zurich, St. Gallen, Bern, Vaud and Ticino.

Interviews with affected households: Due to limited project duration and financial resources, only ten households could be interviewed. Access to households was gained through counselling centres. Interviewees were paid a fee. The interviews lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours. The interviews were conducted between May and July 2018. Regarding the selection of interviewed households, attention was paid to the broadest possible representation of different population groups. Seven households received full or additional social assistance, and three lived in precarious conditions. Five households were Swiss citizens, and five were foreigners. Concerning the family status, the surveyed households comprised three single couples, one couple without children, four families and two single women.

Interviews with experts: The interviews with 5 experts disclosed further examples of energy poverty and qualitative insights into the support services to be investigated by the online survey. The literature review and policy analysis carried out at the beginning of the study allowed the researchers to identify the interrelated political fields that are central to the topic of energy poverty. A key factor in the selection of experts was the coverage of experts working in these relevant fields. The interviews were conducted with representatives from the energy sector, social services, housing consulting, energy consulting and research. The interviews focused, among other things, on the relationship between the policies involved in the topic. The interviews lasted 1 hour and were conducted between May and July 2018.

Analysis of data: To analyse the data, the grounded-theory methodology (Glaser, Strauss, 2010) was applied. Furthermore, the intersectionality approach and governmentality theory were also used as interpretative concepts. The intersectionality approach made it possible to focus on relevant structures that extend beyond households and housing situations and to capture various exclusion mechanisms, to which vulnerable groups in particular are exposed. With the help of

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[4] Currently, there is a lack of statistical data that would allow the definition and measurement of energy poverty throughout Switzerland or a breakdown of the distinction between "energetic" and "normal" retrofits. As a result, no comprehensive statistical data can be provided on energy poverty in Switzerland.

the concept of governmentality[5] (Foucault, 1991) it was possible to investigate the intertwining of power and self-technologies. As a result, the study disclosed that vulnerable groups are often confronted with a double deprivation: They lack resources, on the one hand, and they are urged to do further savings by dominant discourse and social service counselling, on the other. This can result in people integrating policy demands into their self-technologies in ways damaging their personal well-being. Due to energy inefficient equipment and despite high self-control in energy consumption, increased heating costs can for example lead to the fact that social welfare recipients spend an increased amount of their basic goods to pay for energy costs and thus partly renounce some of their very basic needs. Furthermore, increased energy consumption due to inadequate equipment and high costs can lead to a progressive resignation process. Often people affected have very little influence on housing equipment, or they experience that applications to repair the damage remain unsuccessful.

This study offers a highly innovative content and convinces with its focus on affected households. Thanks to a lifeworld-oriented approach, it allowed to identify the joint consequences of social, housing, and energy policy on a hitherto unexplored target group, and thereby identified mechanisms of social inequality. In the following section, the main findings are presented.

FINDINGS REGARDING ENERGY POVERTY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The results confirm that households affected by retrofits often have to look for a new home; they are in line with the findings of the study by the Federal Housing Offices (BWO) and the Swiss Federal Office of Energy (BFE) mentioned above, that tenants hardly benefit from the lower energy costs expected as a result of energy retrofits (BWO, BFE, 2015). It is striking that vulnerable groups are saving on basic needs in order to pay for energy costs or to compensate for higher rent costs. Cost savings on food, clothing, leisure and mobility are the most frequently mentioned. Vulnerable groups are also developing selective heating and lighting practices to save energy costs. For example, individual rooms are not heated all the year, technical appliances such as TV or computers are used as light sources, or clothes are washed by hand. People affected by energy poverty show a strong sense of self-responsibility and self-control in everyday practices. But due to their low income, vulnerable groups have only limited scope for action to effectively reduce their energy costs, which can result in psychological and physical impairments.

The empirical findings make visible that vulnerable groups live at the intersection of various categories of inequality and discriminatory structures of social systems. Income poverty, debt, bad health, stigmatisation by public authorities and energy suppliers, and discrimination in the housing market all play a certain role. The following presentation of findings focuses on four aspects of this complex reality: the impact of energy poverty on some aspects of overall quality of life; the additional costs of deficient infrastructure and energy-inefficient housing equipment; discriminatory structures of the housing market and inadequacies of social policy; and the services offered to people affected by energy poverty.

Impact on some aspects of overall quality of life

Energy inefficient homes can lead to permanent stress and illness: The inadequate housing equipment leads to various coping strategies, which in turn can impair the ***quality of life***. The lack of quality of living in everyday life is becoming a permanent issue. This is manifested, for example, by the fact that small repairs and investments are constantly due, or that unfavourable

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[5] The governmentality concept insists on the relations between power technologies and self-technologies. In this perspective, government and power are not merely external pressures on the subject. Rather, they are internalised and contribute to subjectivation, i.e., the constitution and performances of individual subjects.

living conditions such as bad smells, aesthetic defects or inadequate insulation are accepted over a longer period of time.

The lack of energy can affect **health** over time, especially if the temperature regulation of the home is fundamentally inadequate: *"And then the first year I was sick and the kids were sick because the apartment was cold. Yes, and I don't know if it will be the same this year. (…) I was always cold. Then I always had to put on a jacket or something (…). It was cold, even at night"* (family C[6]).

In order to compensate for this, respondents sometimes resort to unconventional means. Thus one of the asked persons reports that she uses the cooker and/or boiled water, in order to bring the dwelling in the cold season on a bearable temperature level.

Saving as a permanent issue leads to **conflict**: For example, one affected person reports that her pubescent daughter is extravagant with the flow of electricity or deliberately takes a long shower to provoke the single mother. The high sensitization of the household for handling energy and energy costs becomes visible here. This example also could be seen as a gender-specific phenomenon in relation to the unequal distribution of responsibility in dealing with energy consumption. The mother primarily expects her daughter to behave responsibly with regard to energy consumption. She does not expect the same from her son.

It is not only in this example that the mother ultimately assumes **responsibility**: she enforces rules such as putting out lights and saving water against resistance in the family, sensitises everyone involved in the household to the connection between consumption and costs, and informs herself about further savings opportunities by subscribing to a consumer protection magazine.

The unequally distributed responsibility for specific gender also applies to children: *"Yes, my daughter also pays attention to energy consumption and that no electricity is wasted. My son is a little more naive in that sense. And he forgets it sometimes"* (single mother B).

Electricity and rental costs can become the cause of **debt** dynamics: Even for households with an average income, electricity bills are often composed in a non-transparent way; but they are usually easily affordable. For vulnerable groups, however, these bills can trigger fear and insecurity. Energy costs here are relatively large expenditure items and therefore represent risk factors for the budget: *"I can only remember the electricity costs in the old apartment. That has sometimes exceeded my budget. Because sometimes almost 500 francs came at once. And although I might have had to pay the bill in two months, the deadline was a little longer. It was nevertheless quite violent. (…) Well, that was always a horror when I got the bill from the electricity company (…). The invoice always had a deadline of two months. And then I knew I had to save somehow, somewhere else. (…) With clothes and a little bit on food, maybe"* (single mother B).

Savings in basic needs, such as clothing and food, often remain the only options for coping with financial stress.

The uncertainty about cost composition leads to **powerlessness**: It is obvious that these incalculable budget factors lead to stress. Since it is unclear where and how the affected households can save energy costs, the incalculable and non-transparent electricity bill becomes an experience of being at the mercy of this cost factor.

Those affected try to save energy without knowing whether the measures are having an effect: *"Every month it's two francs more. I don't know what the reason is. (…) I am always trying to save less instead of more. Why more, two francs, I don't understand"* (family C).

Despite this experience, the accuracy of the service charge statement is often not doubted, as the bottom line says that you get money back[7]. The reimbursement is attributed to one's own economical behaviour, while additional costs are interpreted as an insufficient change in behaviour.

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[6] Terms refer to the current living situation. All interviews were conducted with individuals.

[7] In Switzerland it is common for the tenant to pay an amount in advance each month. The owner draws up a detailed annual statement of account. If the payments on account are less than the actual costs, the tenant must pay the remaining amount. Overpayments on account will be refunded.

The lack of knowledge about the composition of ancillary costs leads to restrictions in the agency of households.

The additional costs of deficient infrastructure and energy-inefficient equipment
Deficient infrastructure and energy-inefficient equipment are often a major concern: Vulnerable groups usually live in *flats which are unattractive* to more affluent sections of the population. As a rule, these are flats in need of renovation, where the equipment is already inadequate and the residents therefore have to purchase new equipment more frequently. Cheap, small apartments often *lack standard equipment*. For example, the flat has a cooker, but no oven or a too small refrigerator for a family household. An adaptation of the infrastructure is at the expense of the tenants. In addition, the existing and individually purchased appliances are generally older and therefore not state of the art in terms of energy technology.

It can also be observed that the maintenance or replacement of electrical appliances tends to be neglected by homeowners when refurbishment is planned. In many cases one can speak of an actual *repair moratorium* because something always does not work and the need for repair is constant. This has a negative impact on residential quality and the energy balance. The following quote from a single mother is an example of this: "*So the cooker is madly an old one. (…) And the home owner has not put a new one in, he has simply ordered parts and those that are broken, he has mounted himself. The refrigerator, I think, is a power guzzler. It seems to me that the door doesn't close properly. And when the children then answer the door afterwards and just give a small bump (…), the lights are on. I think that's the biggest power guzzler next to the boiler*" (single mother C).

Repairs often have to be paid for by the tenants in accordance with the legal regulations. If the budget does not allow them to become active on their own, the damage remains unresolved and becomes even worse over time. Non-functioning equipment is a permanent problem, the high costs for which are sometimes systematically passed on to the tenants: "*We always have to give the card to the janitor to top up 50 francs. (…) If you're lucky, it washes. If you're not lucky, the money is still deducted, but you don't wash. (…) And at the end we calculated: It is too expensive for us. Because every month we need more than 150, 200 francs to wash. (…) And then we decided to install our machine in our flat. (…) Pay for everything yourself. They forced us to send their company and install it. And the gentleman took ten minutes and we have to pay 500 francs*" (family B).

Also with regard to the building fabrication, inexpensive living space often has *energy-inefficient equipment*. This also leads to additional costs for the tenants: "*The kitchen and bathroom are very cramped, everything is old. Especially in the toilet there is no heating. (…) In winter, because it has only one window with single glazing, it gets bitterly cold there. (…) We have two gas ovens, one is here in the living room, the other in the entrance hall. And with these two we actually have to heat everything with gas and of course that only works if we leave all doors open*" (couple without children).

The result of outdated technology that requires repair is higher energy costs that cannot be reduced. This can lead vulnerable groups to get indebted. The problem is further exacerbated by a *lack of price-predictability*: if the above-average energy consumption is not fully covered by the ancillary costs paid in over the year, it therefore must be paid all at once with the final invoice. Numerous affected persons also report on the costs of the washing machine, the use of which is very expensive.

The burden of energy costs puts those affected under constant *pressure to save money*. If they cannot cope with this, they gradually lose their autonomy. For example, the inadequate equipment of the home leads to compensation purchases or short-term repair investments and thus to higher costs. These, in turn, have to be weighed against the costs of daily needs. The correlation between poor infrastructure and increased costs for energy consumption, which have to be paid for by households with low incomes, thus exacerbates already precarious living conditions.

The lack of influence on energy costs is a constant challenge for households: Despite far-reaching savings efforts, often *no financial relief* is achieved. This mainly has to do with the fact that

the room for manoeuvre has already been exhausted: *"Especially when the electricity supply is at a standstill again, with the coin meter above all. (…) I find it already expensive, the bill we have to pay for it. The little bit of light we then have. Yes, we always make sure that we have darkness everywhere we don't need it. My boyfriend actually gets on my nerves more because I always have it so dark and no light in the evening and …"* (family A).

In addition, there are ***limited possibilities for action*** if the costs for heating, water, etc. are not calculated individually by the property management, but are distributed as a lump sum among all the tenants or persons in the building. Then the amount of the additional expenses account depends also on the consumption habits of the neighbours, who may destroy the saving efforts accomplished by energy-poor households. This non-transparent kind of the cost account is also problematic in social dwellings and building cooperatives. The same problem applies to costs for renovations. Here too, tenants are often informed too little about the financial consequences, so that an insecurity difficult to influence by one's own acting exists.

Discriminatory structures in housing market and social policy

In some cases, the energy-efficient retrofit means that the affected people lose their homes. The loss of an apartment hits the interviewees very hard, because the hurdles to find a new apartment are particularly high for this target group: The ***housing market discrimination*** that is frequently observed is mainly due to origin[8], low financial resources, size of the household, and other factors. As already shown in other studies (BWO, BSV, 2015), debt and debt-accumulation exacerbate discrimination on the housing market. These forms of discrimination make the search for a new home difficult and the weight of personal preferences low. These barriers make alternative strategies necessary, such as access to the housing market through personal relationships or public procurement.

Vulnerable groups not only live in flats in need of renovation, but also tend to live in ***unfavourable locations***. This in turn results in longer commuting routes and higher costs for mobility. The combination with precarious employment conditions such as shift work can even lead to a situation where, in addition to cheaper public transport, a car has to be purchased to bridge gaps in the night timetable. Discriminatory structures in the housing and labour markets reinforce each other and intensify the challenges in budget planning for the household.

Rent increases due to building refurbishments are frequent: The survey of 74 housing experts showed that the combination of inadequate building fabrication and increased sensitivity to energy efficiency in society as a whole lead to more frequent energy-efficiency renovations, which in turn generally have a negative effect on rents.

Some of the tenants interviewed also report ***repeated layoffs and relocations*** in this regard, because building refurbishment was pending. Often the impending renovation of one's own living environment is perceived as a diffuse threat: *"Personally, it's starting to scare me that everything's gonna be this way. (…) I'm a little worried that you can still afford apartments in the city or elsewhere. If the whole effort is only possible because of the energy, I think it's a bit steep. (…) Now in Stettbach or in such a way one sees only such green dwellings, somehow brown painted, and main thing it concerns energy. But what's the point, what comes afterwards, in the future? Do we all have something then? They (energy-efficient apartments) are becoming more and more expensive"* (single person without children A).

According to the experts, the fear of being pushed further to the periphery by forced exodus is not unfounded. Housing costs are a main item in the budget of vulnerable groups and, according to an expert on social policy, account for almost 40% of the total budget for social welfare recipients. Accordingly, changes in living conditions have a correspondingly sensitive effect. Nevertheless, an expert on housing assistance estimates that, in the case of Zurich, 13 to 14 percent of social

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[8] Both ethnicity and residence status play a role.

assistance recipients exceed the maximum rent reimbursed by the welfare offices and thus pay the difference themselves, so that they can remain in their current living environment. The only alternative is often to move to the periphery.

If the rents exceed the ***housing cost guidelines*** of the Swiss Conference for Social Assistance (SKOS), recipients must look for a new apartment that complies with the guidelines, depending on the social welfare office. This requirement can put people under great pressure, as they have difficulties to find a new flat as mentioned above. They now have to prove their search efforts to the welfare office and can be sanctioned if they are judged to behave inadequately.

Municipalities are often ambivalent regarding gentrification issues: According to the experts interviewed, the housing market is one of the main causes of discrimination and deprivation. The processes of gentrification are not really combated by public authorities. On the contrary, municipalities that have many recipients of social assistance deliberately encourage redevelopment in order to attract better taxpayers to the municipality: *"This is also very clear in the social welfare system, where we are confronted with communities that call on the owners of multi-family houses with letters to renovate their houses so that they can raise the rents. (...) Of course, these are not energy renovations, but that sometimes goes hand in hand with the fact that we call it that afterwards, but in fact it is about hustle and bustle"* (expert on social policy).

The political logic behind this is that vulnerable groups are seen as too costly by public authorities. In the medium term, they should be replaced by good taxpayers via the housing market, which in turn should have a positive effect on the municipality's budget.

Abusive or excessive rent increases remain unchallenged: In the present study, the majority of tenants were not informed about the reasons for the rise in rents after renovation. Energy-related increases are therefore not systematically recorded. ***Private players on the housing market***, on the other hand, tend to maximise profits, which in turn favours discriminatory structures. According to an expert on social policy, this is reflected, for example, in the fact that home owners align the rent with the rent guidelines of social services or even slightly exceed them. In this way, they reliably receive the maximum amount remunerated, regardless of the quality of the leased property. This discriminatory market distortion is usually not corrected by resorting to existing legal remedies. *"It's always difficult. On the one hand, people are happy that they have an apartment. They also don't want to spoil things. And on the other hand, I think you should be able to enforce your rights. Not that what they want can be done with vulnerable groups. (...) I simply always see that this is connected with an enormous expenditure and don't really see what kind of institution could really carry this"* (expert on housing assistance).

The challenge of possibly abusive or excessive rent increases as a result of refurbishments is not systematically encouraged. Finally, the federalism of the social sector makes it more difficult to harmonise the calculation methods used to determine rent guidelines.

If increased rental costs cannot be offset by budget adjustments, it is often only possible to move away. This is a deep cut, especially for families, as the children of school age are torn out of their social environment when they move. According to an expert on housing assistance, higher rents are therefore often accepted, but this is accompanied by additional vulnerability.

This applies in particular to groups of people who have very poor chances on the free housing market, such as people without legal residence status, with a lack of knowledge of the official language, or with entries in the debt enforcement register.

The role of ***non-profit housing developers***: Cooperatives that commit themselves to social housing construction and can attribute housing according to social criteria can remedy this situation. Cooperatives can be an important factor of price moderation in housing markets. However, competition has also set in here, and most cooperatives are not really oriented towards the most vulnerable groups. According to the experts, the public sector (public housing) will therefore continue to be required to provide services in order to supplement the dynamics of the private housing market and improve the situation of vulnerable groups.

Housing cost practice in *social assistance* and assumption of electricity costs: The combination of different forms of discrimination, high ancillary costs due to inefficient equipment and the lack of opportunities to influence them can lead to a worsening of poverty. Since the ancillary costs are the decisive factor here, this dynamic is not necessarily contained by social assistance. In addition to the rent, the ancillary costs are paid in the form of a lump sum. Higher amounts must be paid by the person receiving social assistance.

The high heating costs partly lead to the fact that the basic requirement is misappropriated if the effective heating costs exceed the amount of energy calculated according to the Swiss Conference for Social Assistance SKOS: *"The gas bill is paid from the basic requirement (...) On average, electricity and gas, which I pay myself, is CHF 250 per month. And that's a big factor if you have a basic requirement of less than CHF 1000 as an individual"* (couple without children).

Structural problems are thus individualized: The compulsion to save money at another budget item and get help increases practices of self-regulation and self-control as the following quote of a social welfare recipient represents: *"In an emergency, I go to my social worker and say that I cannot pay it. (...) 'Then you have to save elsewhere' and so on. I mean, you don't have to hear that every time. I just try to settle it myself"* (couple without children).

Services offered to people affected by energy poverty

In the pictures drawn by energy experts of vulnerable groups and their attitudes towards the energy transition, it becomes apparent that certain images exist about *ecological consciousness* and corresponding efforts to save energy. This must be taken into account when developing counselling services: *"If I look at energy agency now, I would say that out of 17 people there are perhaps two or three who are sensitised to the subject (...) And I also don't know what these people identify with the most. If they surround themselves with a lot of electronic devices, then that's the big achievement. (...) Then it is difficult"* (expert on energy).

Often it is not even known how conscious the handling of energy is. To a large extent it is determined by cost pressure. But, and this is an important finding of the interviews with those affected, it is also influenced by conscious ecological reasons: *"What I'm still wondering, but I'm not very familiar with the practice. (...) How rigid you want to be, because other basic needs come first and then you dedicate yourself to them. Not wanting, that's the wrong word. What you look at as a priority (...) now sit down with someone for a day and see when which light is to be switched off. If the material pressure is not so great. If you first look for a job or an apartment"* (expert on housing assistance).

Housing advice: At this point it can therefore be stated that fiscal policy incentives, budgetary policy considerations, and the profit interests of private actors lead to increased refurbishment activity with negative effects on rental price development. These affect vulnerable groups in particular, who have little financial leeway and are therefore often forced into peripheral flats in need of further retrofits and/or run the risk of being affected by energy poverty.

With regard to a socially sustainable energy transition, homeowners are central actors: they decide on rent increases and thus have a decisive influence on the eviction of vulnerable groups. At the same time, they can be responsible for discrimination processes with partially nontransparent or even abusive procedures. Thus, they also represent an important group of actors that would have to be sensitised to the concerns of the target groups in order to avoid the often described emergency situations and powerlessness against the consequences of restructuring. An increased knowledge of the problems of vulnerable groups can play a decisive role in finding solutions to housing issues and can prevent premature dismissals, and thus also be in the interest of homeowners. At the same time, transparent information on renovation intentions enables tenants to develop solution strategies and proactively manage uncertainties.

As a form of mediation between homeowners and tenants, housing advice such as the Domicil Foundation in Zurich, the Casa Nostra association in Biel or the IG Wohnen union in Basel as well as Apollo in Yverdon and Vevey make an important contribution. The study on housing provision

in Switzerland (BWO, BSV, 2015) underlines that there are too few such advisory services. The need for an expansion of advisory services to support mediation between homeowners and tenants, the search for accommodation or abusive rent increases is repeatedly mentioned by those affected. Easy access to such services would also promote preventive measures.

Transparency in energy provision: Measures would also be desirable on the part of energy companies to increase transparency and predictability. It would also be desirable for electricity suppliers to favour a learning effect: *"The sheet only shows what's been happening and the bill at the end. Not where you could do anything: There is a lot of usage, for example. (...) Or there: Well done. Just a note. That the person knows what he has done well and where he could do something better. (...) On the bill, where that's detailed, with so much water and so much electricity. Right next to it: It was well done. You should do better there. (...) Then at least people like me who have no idea how to understand the numbers know"* (family B).

The presentation of the causes of high consumption, savings opportunities and a benchmark as a guide for standard values would increase transparency. In addition to declaring savings opportunities on the bill, electricity providers could develop suitable advisory services and make these services known to the target group.

In order to avoid drastic experiences such as power cuts or the installation of coin counters, a timely clarification of the payment emergency as well as the willingness to pay in instalments and the initiation of a reminder for debt restructuring are of central importance. The interviewees share opinions on the question of the extent to which electricity companies should offer their own advisory services or whether affected households should address themselves to debt advice centres. While some of those concerned approach such difficulties with the support of other advice centres, others consider direct cooperation with the electricity utilities to be sensible.

Support services from non-governmental counselling services: The lack of state advisory services is also confirmed by the fact that people affected seek support from non-governmental institutions, such as aid agencies or church social services, for questions relating to housing, energy and financial administration. For vulnerable groups, support services such as one-off settlement of bills, financial administration and budget advice or triage with other agencies are of particular importance. One-off financial support, which, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity is aimed primarily at people who are not entitled to social assistance, can help vulnerable groups to pay rent arrears and thus prevent housing terminations.

However, the support possibilities offered by non-governmental advisory services are neither nationwide nor do the unblocking organisations have adequate financing possibilities at their disposal to solve constantly increased housing or energy cost burdens. With regard to energy counselling, only a few non-governmental counselling services could be identified in the study that either offer energy-specific counselling themselves or refer those affected to the appropriate agency.

Target-group-specif ic consulting: The political statements of parties, politicians and interest groups in the context of the energy transition largely exclude vulnerable groups. These groups perceive above all the normative dimensions of the practices and rules. The resulting loss of autonomy is reinforced by the inability to act in other areas of life. Deprivation consequences are reconstructed and experienced by those affected in their life context: *"I got flyers at home. With the bills and stuff. But honestly, that wasn't so interesting. (...) It wasn't clear either. (...) So for professionals it's great. (...) Not everyone can speak German well or understand German well. (...) the majority of the people do not understand what they write in their letters. (...) Because the people who like to save money. Because the money they could surely need for something else. We have the subsistence minimum. If you only hear the word subsistence minimum, it already hurts. You don't like to say it. It's really below the minimum. This is not a minimum existence. When we talk about quality of life, we are so far away from it (...)"* (family B).

The expectations which are brought to the persons via the discourse on the energy transition are perceived by them as a diffuse pressure to act, which does not take into account the respective

realities of life and leaves hardly any valid options for action. The hurdles to taking advantage of support services are usually high.

It must be emphasised that *self-determined information gathering*, as long as it corresponds to the different resources of the persons concerned, is central and is also used. Persons affected by energy poverty read consumer protection magazines, discuss the advantages of electric cars with their children, and consult the consumption data before buying appliances. Many are also interested in advice. However, if information and services are not adapted to the everyday realities and the capacities of the target populations, this leads to frustration and resignation.

SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Findings confirm that energy poverty cannot be reduced to income poverty and that the energy transition can have problematic effects on vulnerable groups. High energy costs and bad housing equipment can lead people to forgo the satisfaction of basic needs. At the same time, this study provides new insights into coping strategies and practical know-how of vulnerable households making ends meet. It shows that welfare agencies sometimes make things worse, and that there is a lack of support services adequately responding to the needs of people concerned by energy poverty. Given the limitations of the empirical study, findings are mainly of exploratory and heuristic value. Nevertheless, they are useful in order to advocate the integration of the energy issue into theory and practice of social work. For this to succeed, social work professionals should define ecological justice as an indispensable dimension of social justice. According to Schlosberg (2007 in Dominelli, 2012:108), ecological justice would include the following four principles:

1. the fair and equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits,
2. the full involvement of local residents in decisions affecting their environment,
3. recognition of the cultural traditions, knowledge and lifestyle of the local community,
4. recognition of the ability of communities and their individual members to make their own decisions effectively and to assert themselves in their own environment.

Accordingly, one important task of the social work profession could be to bring energy experts into contact with the target population of vulnerable groups and thus overcome the distance between these two groups. Within this framework, the special needs, experiences and capacities of vulnerable groups could be introduced into political debate. Such co-production of knowledge and solutions between stakeholders and decision-makers could also make the strategies developed more sustainable. At the same time, social work in the form of a "green mandate" would also be responsible for ensuring that people's rights to decent housing and compensation in the event of displacement are fulfilled (Dominelli, 2012:180–181).

Finally, we would like to formulate some recommendations regarding the political mandate of the social work profession. At a general level, researchers and practitioners alike should try to help bridge the current gap between energy policy, social policy, and housing policy. For instance, they could propose that social indicators be integrated into energy-retrofit subsidy schemes. With regard to the housing market, a priority must be to fight current discrimination against social assistance recipients by homeowners, real estate firms, and municipalities. The problem of green gentrification should be put on the agenda of politicians and planners, and housing cooperatives could be urged to do more for vulnerable groups than is currently the case. In the realm of social assistance administered by public welfare, social work professionals can defend the principle that rent guidelines must be adjusted in order to guarantee a good housing quality also for poverty-stricken households. Most notably, instead of paying lump-sums the welfare agencies should cover actual energy costs. Moreover, they could do more when it comes to providing legal support of tenants in the case of dismissal or abusive rent increase. Finally, wherever social workers are engaged in services offered to persons affected by energy poverty, they should consider these

persons as experts in the economical use of resources on a daily basis. Counselling should focus on quality of life rather than maximum saving, and services and information must be linguistically and intellectually available to everyone. If our society is supposed to offer a good quality of life to everyone, than the social work profession must further develop its green mandate and make it known not only to policymakers and other powerful actors, but also to the very persons who are most in need of relief and assistance.

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"Participation in Deportations – Red Line for Social Work?" Learning to 'walk the talk' on Social Work as a Human Rights Profession

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES: Social Work as a Human Rights Profession aims at providing a basis and rationale for ethical dilemmas in professional Social Work. The paper aims at demonstrating how to translate theory into practice by exploring the challenges it poses in situations of deportation referring to examples from the German context of discussion. THEORETICAL BASE: Human rights theory, moral-philosophical reasoning as well as the professional theory on Social Work as a Human Rights Profession define the theoretical base of the paper. METHOD: Students as prospective Social Work professionals have to learn how to 'walk the talk' on Social Work as a Human Rights Profession. Hereby, case studies as dense descriptions of individual cases can provide an adequate method of inductive exploration. OUTCOMES: Research has shown that human rights and moral arguments are applicable to cases of impending deportations thereby putting forward good reasons for professionals to take clear position, be present in situations of deportation, and promote further discourse on asylum politics. SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS: Social Work education has to elaborate further, how to work with human rights based approach. Case Studies provide an adequate method to develop a more distinct and decisive perspective within the framework of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession.

Keywords

social work, human rights profession, moral duties, refugees, code of ethics, human rights approach, case-study, European migration politics, German

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BACKGROUND

Worldwide the number of people on the run considerably increased in recent years. By the end of 2017, almost 70 million people were on flight (UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe, undated). Receiving countries were mostly the immediate neighboring countries of the refugee states. In Germany, the number of asylum seekers has decreased since 2016. Compared with 2015 – when Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel declared, *"We can do it"* – the prevailing mood in society and politics changed and restrictions on the right of asylum and residency increased.

According to statistics published by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) on the website of Pro Asyl, in 2016 173,846 applications for protection were rejected as being unfounded or manifestly unfounded. This corresponds to a percentage of 25%. In 3.5% of pending cases, obstacles to deportation (German: Abschiebungshindernis) hindered the authorities to expel the refugees concerned. In 2017, the overall protection rate fell by 20%; at the same time, the percentage of rejected applications for asylum increased to 38.5%. In 2018, the proportion of rejected asylum applications fell slightly to 34.8% (BAMF, 2019:11). According to a request of the Media Service Integration to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the total number of deportations lies at constant level of 24 to 25 thousand since 2016. The number of Dublin transfers doubled in 2016 to 2018 from 4 thousand to more than 9 thousand (Media Service Integration, see above). Pro Asyl's inquiries to the Federal Government show that there are 20,000 deportations for the same period (Pro Asyl, undated)[2].

Currently (May 2019) the so called *"orderly-return-law"* (German: Geordnete-Rückkehr-Gesetz) is being drafted, stating very clearly that not all refugees seeking protection in Germany will be admitted to stay. This law not only envisages a significant tightening of deportation by eroding the principles of the rule of law, but also aims at criminalizing refugees as well as Social Work professional counselling in case of imminent deportations.[3] The draft states: *"Punishable is the impairment of the completion of an existing obligation to leave the country, which includes any hindrance to the execution, such as [...] the delay or prevention of a single deportation measure."* For example, *"Publications of planned deportation dates"* or their *"dissemination to an unknown group of people, such as in a closed newsletter or social networks, or to a foreigner obliged to leave the country"* (all citations: Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, undated:57). According to Pro Asyl, the draft of the *"Orderly Return Law"* is *"inhumane and inconsistent with the rule of law"* (Pro Asyl, 2019).[4] Furthermore, there is a legitimate fear that the conversion to a contradiction rule erodes professional ethical and human rights standards such as the requirement of individual case examination.[5]

All that does affect Social Work professionals working with refugees. They have to position themselves: Is participation in deportations compatible with their professional self-image, which

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[2] The figures were taken from the responses of the Federal Government to the small requests - BT printed matter 18/11112 February 2017, BT printed matter 19/485 February 2018 and BT printed matter 19/3702 August 2018.

[3] On independence and open-mindedness as guiding principles of Social Work counselling given the threat of an imminent deportation, see (DGSA, 2017) Fachgruppe *"Flucht, Migration und Rassismuskritik"*, 2017.

[4] For further Information, see Pro Asyl 2019. For basics on the admissibility of deportation detention (with particular focus on unaccompanied minor refugees), see Cremer, 2011.

[5] As early as March 2017, the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs put pressure on Social Work with refugees (German: Asylsozialarbeit) financed from public funds. The state government made further support conditional on realistically informing refugees about their prospects for staying, in particular about their potential duty to leave the country and the current admission rates. At the same time, the Ministry of Social Affairs threatened to withdraw funds, if Social Work professionals continued to provide extensive counselling (see Muy, 2018).

refers to the equal and indivisible human rights and the principles of social justice? In 2017, the chairperson of the German Professional Association for Social Work (DBSH), Michael Leinenbach, stated *"[b]ecause of its ethical attitude (professional ethics), the profession must not participate in deportations"* (DBSH, 2017:1). According to Leinenbach, professional ethics is *"the centerpiece of Social Work profession"* (DBSH, 2017:1), and prescribes an attitude that distinguishes professional action from *"pure acting on orders"* (DBSH, 2017:1). For Leinenbach, it is evident: *"How Social Work professionals should act in cases of deportations from facilities they are working in does not loom large and therefore does not have to be pursued further. [...] the profession has to take up a stance on deportation and must not participate in deportations. It may well be the case that professionals are involved in deportations as a matter of standing instructions. However, these actions take place outside the Social Work professional framework [...]. In each case, the individual professional has to decide whether to align to these instructions or to measure one's own action and attitude to professional ethics"* (DBSH, 2017:4). Supporting his uncompromising stance, Leinenbach referred to the ethical principles of DBSH: *"respect for the special value and dignity of all people [...] and the rights that result"* as well as *"physical, mental, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being of every person"* that should be respected and defended by Social Work (all citations: DBSH, 2017:3). Overall, his argument remained vague and left the decision on how to act to the individual Social Work professional.[6]

Professionals – current as well as prospective – who position themselves within the framework of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession need further support to analyze pressing dilemmas from a human rights perspective as well as to implement human rights in their daily work, they need to learn how 'to walk the talk'.

METHOD

A difficult challenge that all teaching faces is *"how to prepare students for the world of practice"* (Garvin, 2003:56). That insight applies to the professional theory of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession as any other theoretical stance. Social Work professionals and scientists have been discussing the Human Rights Approach in Social Work extensively for nearly 30 years. The approach has been developed continuously and it has been confirmed as a guiding principle by the international and national (i.e. German) associations of Social Work. However, there is still considerable uncertainty as to how to translate concept and self-understanding of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession into day-to-day practice. Often the human rights approach is confronted with the view that human rights are a good idea but are not suitable for practice. This criticism sees human rights primarily as part of an academic discourse or a distant international law. In stark contrast to this is 'the' practice of Social Work, which has to deal with concrete, individual realities. Against this background, human rights appear as nice ideas in discourse or nice standards on paper. In addition, the relevance of human rights in practice, especially in the German context, is still called into question: Human rights are primarily seen as an issue in countries without established democratic structures; to speak of human rights violations in Germany is deemed exaggerated and as doing human rights a disservice.

This questioning shows that the human rights approach must be 'turned upside down' (Kappeler, 2008) and students as prospective Social Work professionals have to learn 'how to walk the talk' – meaning translating the theoretical concept of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession into human-rights-based practice so that it can be used to bring knowledge and guide action. Teaching

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[6] To be clear, distinct positioning by the professional association and its chairperson is not only welcome but also necessary, and respect for the individual decision in situations of ethical dilemma is the appropriate attitude. Nevertheless, is does not satisfy the complex and partly dilemmatic, ethical justification needed. Apart from that, it is not suitable as a real decision-making aid and justification basis for Social Work professionals in their day-to-day work with refugees threatened by deportation.

a human-rights-based approach has to address the challenges of everyday, professional practice and explore which human rights become precarious in a concrete situation, and how human rights-based solutions can be found. Thereby taking into account that Human rights discourse is an unaccomplished and unfinishable learning history: Human rights are articulated and fought for as answers to experiences of injustice at certain places and times. Human rights issues are regularly the subject of legal proceedings and civil society or political debates and negotiation processes. Therefore, methodologically, a human rights approach in teaching can only be exemplary in the endeavor to train sensitivity for human rights violations and to identify courses of action that respect, protect and institutionally guarantee the equal rights of all human beings.

At that point, case studies come in as instruments of dense exemplary exploration. As paradigmatic case studies can not only bridge the gap between theory and practice (see Kaiser, 1983), but also provide for insight into the 'concrete, individual realities' which Social Work professionals have to deal with. Based on dense descriptions prospective professionals cannot only grasp the specific features of the individual case but also explore general features of the embedded ethical and human rights dilemma. As Case Studies focus on developing theory-based strategies based on an exemplary case, they are particularly useful to analyze complex social settings and the therein-embedded ethical dilemmas.

For matter of a demonstration of how the case-study-method can be used in exploring the features of a human rights approach and what insight can be gained, let us therefore consider the following case:

> On behalf of a municipality, you are responsible for the accompaniment and counseling of refugees. Yesterday you met family T., a couple with six children, aged two to 15 years. A few years ago, the couple took flight from Iran to Turkey and on to Italy with their five children; the sixth was born in Europe. In Italy, the family was registered and taken to a reception center. The family perceived the situation in the reception center as unbearable. There was lack of everything, even sanitation. Apart from that, the family felt threatened because there had been violent clashes between residents every day. As a consequence, the family took flight again and finally came to your city, after they had applied for asylum at the border again. In vain, as the parents excitedly report to you. The authorities have given instruction for deportation back to Italy. They argue that *"difficult living conditions in Italy"* are no hindering reason to carry out the setback. According to the Dublin-System, Italy is obliged to take back family T.; it is not Germany's responsibility as there is no concrete indication that the family's life would be at risk in the event of their return to Italy.
>
> So, as prospective Social Work Professional, how do you perceive the situation and what would you do?

Answering that question, students as prospective professionals would have to work through the following questions: What does a human-rights-based approach demand of Social Work professionals? How and to what extent does participation in deportations contradict the principles of professional ethics and violate human rights? Answering this, students would have to 'walk the talk' meaning mapping the field of moral philosophy and human rights considering what we owe to refugees and whether or not deportations violate human rights.

THEORY

Participation in deportation - contradiction to professional ethics?

What is at stake given imminent deportations is a conflict of the interests of respective refugees to be granted asylum and to obtain a safe residence permit, as against the state's interest in regulating immigration by sending back refugees without any entitlement to asylum, due to national law to their home countries or other states with prior responsibility to help. According to the

Dublin-Agreement, the member state of first entry into the European Union is responsible for examining the asylum claim. This provision aims at preventing refugees from applying for asylum in several member states. At the same time, the Dublin-System assigns responsibility so that refugees are not pushed back and forth between states due to lack of responsibility. Thus, for Social Work professionals, there is a conflict between the two classical "mandates" of Social Work: the mandate of the addressees on the one hand and the mandate of the state/society/employer on the other hand (see Böhnisch, Lösch, 1973).

Silvia Staub-Bernasconi, who has been shaping the debate on self-conception of Social Work for more than a decade (see, for example, Staub-Bernasconi, 1995, 2003, 2009, 2014, in recognition of her work, see Prasad, 2016), claims that Social Work must move on from being a job to becoming a profession. Given situations with conflicting claims, Social Work professionals have to legitimize their actions on their own mandate. This third mandate – in addition to the mandates of the addressees and the state (or society/employer) – is being attributed to Social Work itself. It is based on sound scientific competence and a genuine code of ethics, comprised of human rights and social justice. Self-attribution of a third mandate entails the claim to gain clear orientation and, at the same time, creating a sound basis for dealing with dilemmatic situations.

In 2014, the German Professional Association of Social Work (DBSH) came up with a code of ethics based on international human rights agreements, international debate within the profession and theories of Social Work (Kaminsky, 2008; 2018) comprised of two categories of ethical principles (DBSH, 2014): principles of human dignity and human rights and principles of social justice. Principles of human dignity and rights contain *"1. Respect the right to self-determination; 2. Promote the right to participation; 3. Treat each person holistically; 4. Recognize and develop strengths"* (DBSH, 2014:30). Turning to the question of whether or not participation in deportations is ethically and humanely legitimate, these principles do not offer any clear orientation beyond a general commitment to the fundamental equality and freedom of all people.[7]

According to the principles of social justice[8], Social Work professionals have an *"obligation to promote social justice, in relation to society in general, and to the person with whom they work. Meaning: 1. Countering negative discrimination [...] 2. Recognizing diversity [...] 3. Fair distribution of funds [...] 4. Rejecting unfair political decisions and practices [...] 5. Working in solidarity [...] 6. Occupational Behavior"* (DBSH, 2014:30–31). With regard to the question of whether or not participation in deportations is legitimate, professionals could relate to the rejection of unfair political decisions and the demand for solidarity with the addressees. Although the fourth principle explicitly only criticizes injustices concerning access to and distribution of funds. However, the fifth principle represents a multi-dimensional concept of social justice. This allows professionals to criticize social inequalities as well as social exclusion, marginalization, stigmatization and structural repression such as the current deportation practice. However, in order to reject deportations as illegitimate and participation in deportations as ethically not justifiable, further arguments are needed. Here moral philosophy comes in for the argument: It is not only necessary to negotiate which (collective) obligations we have towards refugees and how to distribute burdens within society equitably considering all interests. Apart from that, we have to discuss how the interests of refugees and asylum seekers can be taken into account, as refugees are typically excluded from processes of democratic will building in potential host countries. Refugees do not have any

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[7] The situation is different when it comes to the question of ethical standards, for example, in collective accommodation. In that case the principle of respect for self-determination can be directly referred to in order to criticize restrictive visitor practices and food regulations and to demand effective health-care institutions (see: Initiative Hochschullehrender zu Sozialer Arbeit in Gemeinschaftsunterkünften, 2016). In counselling refugees, the principle of treating each person holistically aims at reflecting that refugees have many stories to tell (see Adichie, 2009; Steinkamp, 2017).

[8] On the concept of social justice, see Fraser (2009), Perko (2012; 2017), Young (1996).

opportunity to demand consideration of their interests. Citizens of democratic states have a moral duty to include the interests of refugees seeking admission in an appropriate way (see Hoesch, 2016:15–16).[9] Therefore, it is not only about numbers of refugees we are required to grant asylum by constitutional and human rights law. Furthermore, we have to discuss the more fundamental question of whether and how we can legitimize a universal right to free global movement versus a right of peoples to limit flight-immigration.

Participation in deportation - Violation of our obligations towards refugees?

One of the most prominent advocates of a universal right to free movement is Joseph Carens (Carens, 2012). Carens develops his argument discussing three approaches to justice in contemporary political philosophy: the property tradition, represented by Robert Nozick, utilitarianism, and the tradition of contract law, represented by John Rawls' theory of justice. His main argument: None of them can conclusively justify why citizenship marks the border of legitimate global migration. That calls into question a basic intuition of many citizens in states of the Global North namely, that states could decide in a morally legitimate or justifiable way whom they would welcome into their community and whom they would not.

Unlike current international law – which differentiates groups of claimants according to the factors that caused their flight – moral-philosophical reasoning does not refer to the nature, but to the gravity of plight as main argument for obligations to help: If someone is in serious need through no fault of one's own, s*he must be helped. In such situations, we have a peremptory general obligation to help (see Hoesch, 2016:17). Peter Singer clarifies the unconditional obligation of general help referring to the so-called *"child in the pond"* example (Singer, 2009:39): If we pass a pond where a child is drowning, we have a peremptory obligation to help and save the child. We could only be exempted from this obligation if we would place ourselves into a similarly threatening position while attempting to rescue the child, e.g. if we are not able to swim.

Referring to what we owe to persons seeking asylum, Stephan Schlothfeld argues that anybody being in an existential plight can claim entitlement to admission and asylum. *"Concerning deliberately induced* [e.g. due to political persecution] *and accidental plights* [e.g. famine, environmental catastrophes] *there is no relevant difference with regard to the moral claims of the victims"* (Schlothfeld, 2012:203; see Wendt, 2016:47). Both claims to admission refer to the same moral worth of the person concerned, no matter the reasons that caused him*her to leave his*her home country and seek asylum. Treating people in existential plight arbitrarily differently amounts to illegitimate discrimination and violates the equal right to consideration. In addition, it is the mere fact that refugees are under real threat involuntarily and through no fault of their own, that obliges us to help (see Hoesch, 2016). Therefore, it is not the nature but the severity of distress that causes our obligation.

What kind of help is due depends on the nature of the plight. Whereas political refugees as a rule can be effectively protected only by the granting of asylum by another state, for those fleeing war, temporary admission in a neighboring state could possibly be the overall better means of averting the current threat (for example because of linguistic and cultural proximity). Poverty refugees may be helped better by improving the situation in the country and changing world economic relations.

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[9] This raises the problem of the *"marginalized of the discourse":* the current (political and philosophical) debate primarily discusses about refugees who are present, that is, people who have already reached a border of another state and who urge their consideration in existential-physical-irrefutable way. However, what about those who do not make it to the border of another state, the absent *"refugees"*? What obligations do we have towards them? According to the all-things-considered principle, if they meet the same criteria as present refugees, they should be considered in defining and prioritizing our obligations towards refugees. Judith Butler addresses another obstacle of an appropriate representation in the discourse in her analysis of the divergence between the precariousness and the grievability of life (Butler, 2009).

According to Marcel Twele, poverty refugees could raise a legitimate claim for asylum based on their subsistence rights only in the case of *"granting of asylum was the only means to avert greater harm from the subject of rights being threatened in terms of essential interests"* (Twele, 2016:34).

The obligation to help refers to any state that is capable of helping. It is limited solely by the moral-philosophical principle that anyone can be obliged beyond his*her ability (ultra posse nemo obligatur). Here, of course, some questions arise: How can limits of capacity/capability be set? Is it possible to extend limits of capability? In answering these questions, extra-moral factors, such as the overall political mood and intention, are crucial and tend to blur distinct attributions of duties. Thus, the capability to receive refugees – especially beyond fair share – is due to commitment of governments and citizens (see Brezger, 2016:67).

Seen from another perspective, the ultra-posse-nemo-obligator principle binds the current status quo in terms of wealth and stability to the strength of obligation. All states that are capable of helping are obliged to help to the extent of their capability. *"The better of economically speaking a state is and the more promising it can integrate refugees into society, the higher the total number of refugees it should take"* (Hoesch, 2016:19). Capability, however, is not a static, uninfluenced factor, but depends inter alia on commitment (see above). In addition, further questions arise: If states have fulfilled the *"quota"* (according to ideal theory), do they have any further obligation? Alternatively, is there an obligation to compensate for the insufficient performance of other duty-bearers? Moreover, is the obligation to compensate insufficient performance a strong or at best a supererogatory duty? Referring to the pond example, Jan Brezger argues, *"Actors are obliged to provide compensatory help even if they already provided for their **fair share**. Even if states have already received a number of refugees and thereby met their fair share, they have to take more people"* (Brezger, 2016:66, emphasis in original). What is at stake, is the fair distribution of burdens within the community of states, so to say, the reciprocal obligation of states vice versa one another.

In addition, of course, one has to talk about potential obligations of the countries of origin. Considering war refugees, it is (generally) uncontested that states of origin are *not capable* to guarantee the protection of the essential interests and needs of its citizens. Considering people living in extreme poverty, one could argue rather that states of origin are ***not willing*** to fulfil their obligations towards their citizens due to corruption or other causes. However, what is the moral-philosophical weight of argument if de facto protection does not exist? Therefore, Hoesch argues: *"Potential host countries must welcome all immigrants who are unable to cover their basic needs in their countries of origin and who either cannot be helped or are not actually helped by their countries of origin"* (Hoesch, 2016:18).

That is, our obligation to help is due to the severity of the plight and the absence of (other) help. It applies regardless of whether others – on a senior or peer level – are in fact not capable or unwilling to help. *"If institutions like the EU or the UN fail, and not all states participate in helping, we (as a people) cannot discard our obligation to provide help, even if the burden is heavy and it seems unfair to us. Rather, we even have to take over the obligations of non-cooperating states as far as we can, if we want to act in morally appropriate way. This results from the fact that the plight of immigrants is morally more serious than the uneven distribution of burdens amongst the states"* (Schlothfeld, 2012:206). Therefore, there is no moral right to maintain the current status quo, nor is it possible to derive an exit option from unfair distribution of burdens. Concerning special duties towards fellow countrymen, Goodin argues that special duties *"derive the whole of their moral force from their connections to general duties"* (Goodin, 1988:679) with the consequence that they have to be weighed and may be overridden by other – more pressing – general duties. *"In this way, it turns out that 'our fellow countrymen' are not so very special after all"* (Goodin, 1988:679).

The basic rule of fair distribution relates the total number of refugees that states are obliged to take to their economic and social capacity and to its population density. If sparsely populated states are willing to receive a larger number of refugees if further (financial) assistance is provided, states are free to delegate their obligations (see Hoesch, 2016). Thus, the collective responsibility of states

vis-à-vis refugees also implies an obligation vis-à-vis neighboring states to take a fair share each. Absolute intake figures can only be assessed in relation to the situation in the neighboring states; one-sided formulations of upper limits or the closing of borders are no legitimate means.

Participation in deportation - violation of human rights / applicable international law?

International law does not provide for an individual right to seek refuge in a state of one's choice. Rather, territorial asylum, whereby people are granted refuge in foreign territory, is a means of international law that allows states to respond to the concerns of *"foreign"* nationals without this being considered as interference in the internal affairs of foreign states.

However the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights drafts a universal right to free movement (see Art. 13 UDHR), and de facto it is restricted in various ways. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly links the right to seek asylum to prosecution (see Art. 14 UDHR). Thus, under international law, raising a legitimate claim for asylum is bound to persecution. According to the 1951 United Nations Geneva Refugee Convention (GRC), the term *"refugee"* applies to each person who *"owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"* (Art. 1 A, Para. 2 GRC). This narrow interpretation of refugee ties asylum in individual persecution, thereby excluding other groups of refugees, for example, those fleeing war, those seeking to escape the general dangers of armed conflicts without fleeing from individual perils, or those fleeing poverty and the existential threat of starvation and death. Thus, current international law categorizes refugees seeking protection not according to the gravity but the nature of plight that forced them to take flight. The universal right of leave under Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not correspond to a universal right of entry; refugees cannot force states to accept them into their territory.

Nevertheless, there are further means of protection for refugees apart from asylum due to persecution (see Eberlei, Neuhoff, Riekenbrauk, 2018:114–116). For example, refugees in situations of imminent deportation to their country of first arrival or to their country of origin can claim their individual case to be scrutinized. The so-called Geneva Refugee Convention *"Prohibition of Refoulement"* – principle states: *"No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"* (Art. 33 GRC). The prohibition of rejection grounds in the prohibition of torture, which is granted in various international conventions – for example in Article 3 of the 1984 United Nations Convention against Torture (CAT) or in Article 3 of the 1950 Council of Europe European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). Thus, the prohibition of rejection covers all situations that threaten refugees with *"torture or inhuman [...] or degrading [...] punishment or treatment"* (Art. 3 ECHR).

Referring to the 2011 case M.S.S. against Belgium and Greece, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Dublin-Deportations had to be examined case-by-case. The Court thereby strengthened proceeding case law on the matter, stating that *"the expulsion of an asylum seeker by a Contracting State may give rise to an issue under Article 3, and hence engage the responsibility of that State under the Convention, where substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned faces a real risk of being subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the receiving country. In such circumstances, Article 3 implies an obligation not to expel the individual to that country".* (M.S.S. against Belgium and Greece, 2011, No. 365) No matter whether the state in question is a so-called *"safe third country"* (German: Sicherer Drittstaat according to German Asylum Procedure Act), any deportation has to be examined thoroughly including scrutinizing

the current situation within the state concerned. The Court does not consider it sufficient to prove formal compliance with human rights standards, as evidenced by ratification of the United Nations Geneva Refugee Convention or the Council of Europe European Convention of Human Rights. Rather, the expelling state has to make sure that the on-site situation corresponds to human rights standards in a way that they are substantially met. The European Court of Human Rights unambiguously assigns the duty of review to the expelling State. In that sense, the Court rejects the Belgian Government's formalistic argument as follows: *"The Belgian Government argued that in any event they had sought sufficient assurances from the Greek authorities that the applicant faced no risk of treatment contrary to the Convention in Greece. In that connection, the Court observes that the existence of domestic laws and accession to international treaties guaranteeing respect for fundamental rights in principle are not in themselves sufficient to ensure adequate protection against the risk of ill treatment where, as in the present case, reliable sources have reported practices resorted to or tolerated by the authorities which are manifestly contrary to the principles of the Convention"* (M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece, 2011, No. 353).

In 2014, the European Court of Human Rights reaffirmed its prevailing case law on the prohibition of torture and affirmed the prior obligation to protect vulnerable persons and groups amongst refugees. The decision Tarakhel against Switzerland is the master copy of the family T. case. Referring to that case the ECHR stated: "This requirement of 'special protection' of asylum seekers is particularly important when the persons concerned are children, in view of their specific needs and their extreme vulnerability. This applies even when, as in the present case, the children seeking asylum are accompanied by their parents […]. Accordingly, the reception conditions for children seeking asylum must be adapted to their age, to ensure that those conditions do not "create ... for them a situation of stress and anxiety, with particularly traumatic consequences" (Tarahkel v. Switzerland, 2014, No. 119). According to the Tarakhel ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, Dublin-Deportation may be legal in principle. However, each individual case must be scrutinized to ensure that the on-site conditions in the country of return are not only humane, but also appropriate for children. The duty of verification lies with the expelling state.

Finally, all refugees have the *"right to an effective remedy"*: Article 13 of the European Convention of Human Rights states that, *"[e]veryone whose rights and freedoms as set forth in this Convention are violated shall have an effective remedy before a national authority notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity"* The right to an effective remedy also applies in the in the face of imminent deportation.[10]

OUTCOMES

Morally speaking, we are obliged to help family T. because they are in severe distress through to no fault of their own. Our obligation to help is peremptory and our possible obligations towards fellow citizens are lower ranking as we do not have a moral right to maintain current status quo (see Hoesch, 2016) nor can fellow countrymen claim to have prior moral claims per se (see Goodin, 1988). The overriding responsibility of Italy, implied by the Dublin-System, cannot satisfy as legitimate argument. Rather, the Dublin-System itself has to be put to the test. Distinctly speaking, the Dublin-System is a bureaucratic response to the issue of collective obligations: it aims at defining responsibilities unambiguously to ensure that each refugee has (just) one chance to apply for asylum. Thus, it solves one problem of shared and joint responsibility, namely the problem of ambiguous competency. Ethically problematic however, is the criterion according

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[10] Refugees can also invoke the ban on collective expulsion under Article 4 of the 1963 Fourth Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and the prevailing case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Accordingly, *"collective expulsions of foreign persons […] are not permissible"* (see Art. 4 of Protocol No. 4 ECHR, cf Sharifi et al., Italy and Greece, 2014).

to which competency is assigned, namely the geographical position at the external borders of a state union. In determining state responsibility in the context of collective obligations towards refugees at the external borders of the European Union moral arguments should be considered, for example: *"The better of a state is economically speaking and the more promising it can integrate refugees into society, the greater the share of the total number of refugees it should take"* (Hoesch, 2016:19). In September 2017, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) confirmed these measures (see Gerichtshof der Europäischen Union, 2017). Hungary and Slovakia had filed a suit before the ECJ against the decision taken in September 2015 by EU Ministers of the Interior to equitably relocate refugees within the European Union. Apart from a necessary general revision of the Dublin-System, the blanket provision of safe third countries (German: Sichere Drittstaaten) by the German Asylum Procedures Act - which (currently) include all member states of the European Union as well as Norway and Switzerland - is ethically problematic and stands in contradiction to international law (see below). This provision exempts transfers to so-called "safe" third countries from the necessity to be scrutinized. *"For, who enters from a 'safe third country', cannot refer to the fundamental right to asylum (§ 26a AsylVfG)"* (BAMF, 2019).

Speaking about moral obligations towards refugees who have arrived at our communities: According to Michael Walzer, we owe the chance to become equal members of the community to all persons, who have already arrived at our society: *"The denial of membership and affiliation is always the first link in a long series of abuses. [...] only as members of community people can hope for equal participation concerning social goods – security, prosperity, honor and prestige, offices and power – that communal life can bring about"* (Walzer, 2012:144).

Under current international law, family T. can claim their right to an effective remedy in order to sue against the impending deportation. They may also refer to prevailing case law of the European Court of Human Rights as set forth in the cases of M.S.S. against Belgium and Greece (2011) as well as Tarakhel against Switzerland (2014). Both interpret the prohibition of re-fouling as scrutinizing Dublin-Provisions case-by-case. Providing that in the country of rejection, there are no threats of degrading treatment and adequate protection for particularly vulnerable persons, for example children. According to prevailing case law of the European Court of Human Rights, expelling states remain responsible under international law even within the Dublin-System or given that, the receiving countries have ratified the United Nations Geneva Refugee Convention or other human rights treaties.

Based on the evaluation of the case of family T., the decisive positioning of the German Professional Association for Social Work (DBSH) and its chairperson, Michael Leinenbach, that participation in deportations by nature contradicts professional ethics of Social Work can be specified now. Indeed, there may be a contradiction to professional ethics and a violation of our obligations towards refugees and guarantees under international law if the deportation in question cannot be justified individually or systematically. One has to scrutinize each individual case taking into account the special protection of vulnerable persons and groups. The right of peoples to self-determination has to be justified given the legitimate interests of refugees to be protected from severe harm: as moral persons and bearers of equal human dignity, all human beings are unique, unrivaled and status-equal. Borders as well as birthplaces are random factors that cannot claim any ethical validity as such. Prominent theories of justice of our time - for example, Rawls's theory of *"justice as fairness"* (Rawls, 1979) cannot plausibly justify the blunt distinction between citizens and non-citizens with regard to the consideration of their (conflicting) moral claims (see Carens, 2012:2014).

Apart from that, our obligations to refugees are much wider than the guarantees of current international law. In this respect, professionals should further discuss whether participation in deportation leads to a "sell-off" of professional ethical values. Hereto one should differentiate: While supporting state regulatory action via participating in deportations (German: Beteiligung **an** Abschiebung) cannot be justified ethically (see Muy, 2018), in safeguarding of human rights

standards in the process of deportation (German: Beteiligung **in** Abschiebung), it is an imperative to take an ethical professional and human rights perspective. Making full use of all available legal remedies in solidarity with those affected and ensuring their human rights protection is a genuine part of professional actions according to the Global Definition of Social Work and the Code of Ethics of the German Professional Association for Social Work (DBSH). In line with the fourth and fifth ethical principle of social justice, Social Work professionals are obliged to oppose unjust structures and to enforce standards of justice and human rights vis-à-vis their employers, legislators, politicians and the public (see DBSH, 2014:31). Hereto, the function of (professional) ethics as a *"critical sting"* (German: kritischer Stachel; see Shklar, 1997) becomes obvious: human rights based ethics has to reveal gaps and inconsistencies in existing national and international law. Specifically, refugees have a legal right to comprehensive individual counselling on their individual rights. Therefore, Social Work professionals have to acquire not only adequate knowledge of national law, but also of guarantees under international law. *"In terms of content, legal counselling must cover everything that is required to decide on the use of social rights, and what aspects – official or judicial – have to be considered in enforcing individual legal rights"* (Eberlei, Neuhoff, Riekenbrauk, 2018:199). German social law aims at *"the realization of social justice and social security [...] It should help to ensure a humane existence"* (Art. 1, No. 1 SGB I). In case of a conflict between *"administrative regulations and a human rights-oriented perspective, professionals should commit themselves to amending the administrative provisions. No doubt, such an approach is not easy; but in taking a human rights-oriented attitude, it will be unavoidable to act that way"* (Eberlei, Neuhoff, Riekenbrauk, 2018:200). According to Paragraph 8 of the Legal Services Act, most Social Work professionals have the permission to provide legal services (Art. 8 Para. 1, No. 5 RDG). Apart from that, a good network with lawyers who have proven expertise in human rights issues is imperative. Social Work professionals should have a well-maintained database of qualified lawyers.

Empirical studies show that restricted administrative action by Social Work professionals is widespread in the field of Social Work with refugees (see Pieper, 2008; Eichinger, Schäuble, 2018). However, Ulrike Eichinger and Barbara Schäuble also point out that even under restrictive conditions, resistive action is possible. Namely, they identify an *"optional [but] extremely small and fragile space of possibility"* (Eichinger, Schäuble, 2018:294). Loyalty obligations, laws, political and economic conditions, free will of the addressees, etc., always bind freedom of action of Social Work professionals. Therefore, professional action is always *"unbounded action"* (Großmaß, Perko, 2011:165). To consider it void for that reason would degrade human beings as 'vicarious agents' or 'puppets'. Furthermore, it would disband professionals as moral subjects who account for their decisions and actions, and who participate in framing and shaping professional and social contexts by their actions. Rather as a rule, in situations of dilemma, professionals have more than one option for action, and therefore they should be able to justify their decisions and professional actions. *"Social Work is challenged to deal with these contradictions in an open and transparent way. It has to use scopes in order to be as much as possible a helpful resource for the refugees with whom it engages, and to fight against conditions that progressively block professional action corresponding to a professional mandate with means of political publicity and lobbying in solidarity with refugees"* (Muy, 2018:270). Ultimately, of course, professionals can only be obliged according to their skills and competences: ultra posse nemo obligatur. Here, on the one hand, a further discussion is necessary on how resistant action can be justified ethically and to what extent *"human rights based disobedience"* (German: menschenrechtlichen Ungehorsam) can be demanded of Social Work professionals.

SOCIAL WORK IMPLICATIONS

In order to broaden the scope for individual professional action based on human rights and professional ethics, prospective, as well as current, Social Work professionals have to 'walk the talk' and translate professional ethics and a human-rights-based approach into practice. To promote

a human-rights-based approach further human rights education and training has to become an integral part of the curriculum of Social Work Education and the methodological repertoire for all fields of Social Work. According to the 2011 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (HRET), Human Rights Education aims at promoting a *"culture of human rights"*. *"Human rights education and training comprises all educational, training, information, awareness-raising and learning activities aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and thus contributing, inter alia, to the prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviors, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights"* (Art. 2, No. 1 HRET).

Human rights education consists of three dimensions "education about human rights, education through human rights, and education for human rights" (Art. 2, No. 2 HRET):

> a) *"Education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;*
>
> b) *Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;*
>
> c) *Education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others"* (Art. 2, No. 2 HRET).

Thus, it starts with those who want to ground their professional action in human rights, that is, with the prospective and current Social Work professionals themselves. Human rights education provides them with necessary knowledge, promotes attitudes consistent with human rights and encourages them to fight for their own rights and for the rights of their addressees. Therefore, human rights and professional ethics must be imparted systematically with the aim of identifying, acquiring and strengthening human rights-based competences in all fields of social work. Furthermore, a human-rights-based approach is by definition interdisciplinary: Human rights are at the same time prepositive moral norms, rights enshrined in international treaties and political fields of conflict and negotiation. At least ethics, law and political science have their own genuine approaches to human rights, which have to be thought of in an interdisciplinary manner. In doing so, it is imperative to reflect that human rights are a complex and often-controversial topic. Insofar Fritzsche is right as he states that human rights education is *"a kind of school of critical thinking and change-oriented action"* (Fritzsche, 2016:194). Referring to Social Work, this action aims at solidary engagement with the addressees and ultimately at their empowerment in knowing about their rights and being able to claim them successfully.

Therefore, students as prospective Social Work professionals have to acquire knowledge about the human rights protection system as Social Work professionals can also actively use the human rights protection system themselves, e.g. by filing an individual complaint before the United Nations committees or the European Court of Human Rights. Take for example the 2011 Heinisch against Germany case: *"It was triggered by the judicial confirmation of the extraordinary dismissal of a geriatric nurse, who had filed a criminal complaint against her employer for fraud and severe grievances in foster care. The Labor Courts had failed to strike a balance between the interests of the employer and the rights of the complainant, including the interests of the public. As relevant weighting criteria, the ECHR referred to the intention of the complainant to remove existing maladministration, the unsuccessful, ineffective or unacceptable application of other complaint procedures and the soundness of the information provided to the Public Prosecutor. Moreover, in a democratic society, the public interest in information about deficiencies in institutional care for the elderly is so important that it outweighs the company's interest in protecting its reputation and business interests. This applies even more if the company is government financed"* (Althoff, 2013:599). That shows: whistleblowing based on a professional ethical and human rights perspective is possible and can be successful.

In addition, there are organizations – such as the Berlin-based European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) – that collect cases of human rights violations and sue legal interventions as part of strategic litigation: *"Strategic litigation aims at bringing about broader societal changes exceeding the individual claim. It is about opposing injustice that had been neglected by justice and politics, with legal means and thereby promoting justice. Those affected by injustice should be seen and heard, little-noticed human rights violations should be publicly known and discussed, weaknesses and gaps in the law should be made obvious. Ideally, sustainable political, economic or social changes can be initiated and the legal system be amended"* (ECCHR, 2019). Those examples show that in order to learn to 'walk the talk' on Social Work as a Human Rights Profession students need to acquire interdisciplinary knowledge on the international law system and on political lobbying at micro-, meso- and macro-level.

Especially in fields of Social Work where law heavily regulates professional action and thus renders restrictive action by Social Work professionals' favorable, preventative human rights education is indispensable both on the professional side and on the part of the addressees. Social Work professionals who commit themselves to a human rights approach can engage themselves in framing their responsibility in terms of human rights education. Thereby ensuring that their addressees fully comprehend their rights and learn to stand up for their rights (and the rights of others). This requires work on structures and attitudes. For it is about framing Social Work institutions according to human rights and social justice standards.

In order to render a human rights attitude possible in everyday life, given the scarcity of resources, pressure to act, and situations characterized by contradictions and conflicts, permanent reflection and discourse is imperative. Organizations and institutions have to reflect on their mission and human rights responsibilities associated with it, make them transparent and establish structures that promote and support exercise of human rights by all.

In particular, working with refugees who often live under precarious conditions in collective housing and sometimes are threatened or affected by deportation, it is important to agree on shared ethical goals and values and to act jointly. Furthermore, the legal and political framework is extremely restrictive; conflicts concerning *"the legal"* as (partly) opposite to "the ethically justifiable" turn professional action into a permanent tightrope walk. Therefore, "analyzing discrepancies in order to elucidate that professional ethical action [...] is not possible" is desperately needed as well as critique by the Social Work Profession, *"that current refugee policies limit professional action in a way that undermine its premises, as formulated, for example, in theories of Social Work and professional ethics"* (both quotes: Eichinger, Schäuble, 2018:295).

The appointment of child/human rights officers or ombudspersons as well as the establishment of ethics committees contribute to the promotion of human rights for all. They can raise awareness and offer counseling. Apart from that, addressees as well as professionals can call them during conflict for clarification and support. Having this dual function of promotion and defense of human rights, ombudspersons and ethics committees are important means of organizational development based on a professional ethics and human rights approach.

Furthermore, mission statements are good means for orientation for both the organization itself and the public. They depict the self-understanding of an organization, its central values, normative positions and guidelines for action (integration function), on which professionals can rely in their action and decision-making (decision-making function). Mission statements provide a basis for transparency, promote a corporate identity and strengthen loyalty through identification. However, mission statements only take effect as lived instruments, if they are part of professional everyday life and are called upon in situations of dilemma. As a normative tool, mission statements are necessarily open to further discussion and need to be continually revised and adapted to new societal challenges. However, they may come into conflict with other sources of moral decision-making, for example the legal and political framework of action, professional ethics, human rights standards and possibly one's own moral norms and values. *"What appears to be conflict-free on paper*

of a mission statement often represents a field of tension and conflict for professional practice" (Großmaß, Perko, 2011:49).

'Walking the talk' on Social Work as a Human Rights Profession does not only imply knowledge about human rights and professional ethics but also a decisive positioning and the ability to develop structures that promote a human rights-based culture. Case studies can provide a good methodological tool to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to explore and discuss what a human-rights-based approach demands of Social Work professionals, as well as to name and discuss discrepancies between normative claims and restrictive realities. Furthermore, human rights education consisting of knowledge about human rights, human-rights-based organizational development, as well as political and judicial lobbying must become integral part of the curriculum and the methodological repertoire of Social Work Education in order to qualify prospective and current Social Work professionals to further develop and promote a human-rights-based approach for their diverse fields of action.

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Mariusz Granosik, Anita Gulczyńska, Małgorzata Kostrzyńska, Brian Littlechild (Eds.): **Participatory Social Work: Research, Practice, Education.** Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2019

Although Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches are currently used in many studies, methodological reflection and even handbooks have not yet progressed as extensively. Above all, there is a lack of specific discussion for the field of social work, because special challenges have to be overcome here.

It is not easy to edit a collected international monograph about Participatory Social Work, because research and social work "practise" is defined very differently in different countries. The editors have explained the idea of the book in the introduction very convincingly. Participatory approaches raise anew the issues of credibility of knowledge, its creation and relationship to politics. The book has a "longer history" and is the result of a discussion about PAR in different professional, disciplinary and theoretical contexts. It focuses on methodological and practical experiences of the approach with a more radical perspective. Not only opportunities but also pitfalls and challenges are worked out.

The book can be read as a methodological introduction to the theory and practice of PAR. The PAR theme is difficult to structure (theorise) due to its open nature, and the approach is still struggling for academic recognition, especially against positivist approaches.

The structure of the book is good, there are separate parts on community work, intercultural participation, participatory issues in academic education, but also on the challenges of this approach. The last part is a reconstruction of current debates representing enthusiastic as well as critical voices.

The editors did a good job in supporting the writing process of the authors. Most of the chapters have a similar composition but not the same, because authors need some space to be "creative". Not all articles are at the same academic level, but in general the book is very important, some chapters even groundbreaking, and show new perspectives on PAR in international discourse.

Though we have many publications on this topic, fewer articles focus on the implementation and reflection of PAR. In this respect, the monograph is innovative, because new perspectives on PAR are being worked out and aspects (theoretical, empirical, practical and methodological) are reflected.

The international examples, particularly how service users are included as co-researchers, are important not only as examples of good practice, but also as experiences that need to be compared. This is particularly noteworthy, since there are fewer concrete experiences of peer research. Also new is the examination of

questions of coproduced education and studies. Generally, the book offers important insights as well as ideas on how PAR is understood, processed and advanced in different counties.

At the end of the review, one criticism could be raised. Although the publication is definitely interesting for the academic community, it may be not so interesting for professionals and service users. Most of the contributions are written in a very academic style. The question might be raised here: how can coproduced knowledge be disseminated for wider groups of interest with the regimes of academic standards for peer-reviewed publication?

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The mission of the journal "Czech and Slovak Social Work" is:

- to support the ability of Czech and Slovak societies to cope with life problems of people through social work,
- to promote the quality of social work and professionalism of social work practice,
- to contribute to the development of social work as a scientific discipline and to the improvement of the quality of education in social work,
- to promote the interests of social service providers and users.

In the interest of achieving these objectives, the Journal will, across the community of social workers and with co-operating and helping workers from other disciplines, promote:

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

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The journal Sociální práce/Sociálna práca/Czech and Slovak Social Work is published four times in the Czech language and twice in the English language each year. The journal publishes the widest range of articles relevant to social work. The articles can discuss any aspect of practice, research, theory or education. Our journal has the following structure:
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The academic text intended for publishing in the journal should be a research or overview essay (theoretical, historical, etc.). For the article to be accepted to the review procedure, the author of the text must work systematically with the relevant sources, explain the research methodology and present a conclusion with regard to the research goal. Because the journal has a specific professional nature, texts are preferred which also contain application aspects where the author explains the relevance of their conclusions in the context of social work.

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Online resources
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2. Instructions for book reviews

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

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

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

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

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

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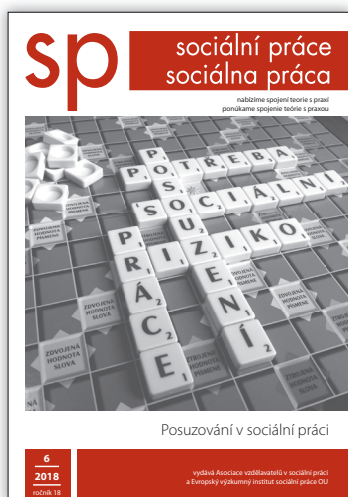
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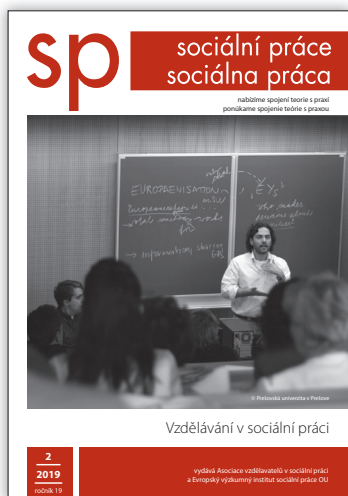e-mail: roman.balaz@socialniprace.cz

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