Vito Flaker

Basic operations of social work

FSD | UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
Faculty of Social Work

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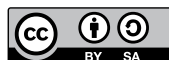

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Preface

The aim of this book is to summarise and present in a monographic way what social work is and how it works. To present the core of social work – what distinguishes it from other similar disciplines – to present its basic workings in a succinct and transparent way that will allow the reader not only to get information about the subject matter, but also a sense of what it is all about, and to help them find their way in this complex field.[1] At this moment, such an effort seems timely – not only as a means of presentation of the matter to the new audiences – as an introduction to new students or even as a recapitulation it works well – but also in times of pressures on social work to become something else, to change its essence in the grips of bureaucracy and digitalisation, to point out what it is really about, to affirm its core and spirit – not only to the commissioners of social work and the general public, but also to ourselves, who are deeply involved in it as users or social workers.

The idea of basic operations of social work had emerged some twenty years ago. While analysing the statutory tasks of centres for social work[2] in Slovenia and compiling the *Catalogue of tasks of centres for social work*, we noticed that some basic activities consistently reappear. We need to establish contact and, later in the process, a working relationship with the user, to get to know him or her, to find out how he or she lives, to find out how much and in what ways he or she is at risk, to empower the user, and to be vigilant so that he or she does not lose power when we enter his or her life. At the same time, we have seen that in order to perform these tasks well, workers in the centres (and elsewhere) need new skills and incentives to do

things differently. We noticed that fieldwork and outreach work are neglected, that colleagues use an administrative style of recording and documentation, which additionally stigmatises users and does not really describe their life situations. In many of the tasks, teamwork was also a necessary or desirable component. We also saw that social workers lacked negotiation skills.

The basic methodology we used to extract the concept and content of the operations was to match the individual steps of the administrative procedure in the tasks of the social work centres with a fairly general theory of social work methods, which the compilers of the nascent catalogue of tasks were familiar with either from the literature or from their own experience. The gains of such an analysis were twofold – firstly a set of basic social work skills (Flaker, 2003, pp. 22–32; Flaker, 2004), and then a broader set of practices for social work situations in centres (and elsewhere) (Flaker, 2003, pp. 32–74). For the training of centre staff to use the catalogue, we have intuitively, as is the case in qualitative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Mesec, 1998), developed seven training modules, which emerged to be simultaneously categories of basic social work conduct.

A first, we did not term these categories as operations nor as social work registers, but when, for example, we were drawing up a list of social work competences for the purpose of renewing the study curriculum, we used the term “basic procedures”. It soon became clear, however, that these were sets of two different qualities. So, we named the ones we are considering here fundamental operations, and the others fundamental ways, modes, and later registers or even spaces of social work. We have seen that operations are the predicate of social work, that they tell what social work does, while, on the contrary, notetaking, fieldwork or outreach work and teamwork, and also conversation, are the adverbial clauses of this predicate, which determine how and in which space operations can be carried out.[3]

To some extent, maybe not much very new, just a new synthesis of what we have been developing in the past two or maybe three decades. A reader who has been following the textual production of Slovenian social work will recognise them, sometimes frown at the repetition and sometimes rejoice, because it will be homely, yet in another context still something new. For a reader less familiar with

the social work literature, however, it may be essential reading, but not sufficient. I refer, namely, to broad patterns of thought, which get condensed in my statements. For this reason, I have tried to direct the reader to sources that deal with the matter in a broader or more in-depth way.[4] Some recycling of ideas is necessary (I hope it is not excessive) in order to provide a grounding. But it is also a way of underlining a theme, of giving it a prominent place in the narrative.[5]

Some of the emphases may be new, mostly expressed through twists and turns in the text or by application of a specific case (an in-depth analysis of the intensification of encroachment in the living space). What is new is that the fundamental operations are presented monographically and comprehensively, and treated as a topic in their own right, rather than as an explanation in the margins of the text. It is therefore also an extension and completion of what has been hitherto investigated.

The main purpose of this synthesis is to present social work in a way that enables people to think about it from a different perspective and, above all, to enable social work to work in a different way. It is quite clear that we want to reverse its direction from one that fits in with "professionalism" and the system (of social care), i.e. the abstract schemes of governing the social space, to one that observes the actual life and perspective of the user, the one that is consistently on their side. To give rise to a social work that is simultaneously socially critical and engaged, yet skilled in dealing with the ordinary, prosaic situations of social work. Social work that recognises also the social dimension in a situation and can find a practical way to do something new, sometimes even amazing.

The style of writing aims to support this. I have tried to address the reader (the social worker) as directly as possible, to lead him or her less through the labyrinths of scientific speculation and more to create signposts and stepping stones for new deeds, for creative and productive work. The style is therefore mostly essayistic, sometimes aphoristic. As such, it allows for more freedom of thought and narrative. For a text of this kind, it is necessary to escape the restrictive canons of scientific or professional writing – to be direct. Short, also occasionally paradoxical epigrams, pointers are sometimes an easier, and above all more insightful, way to say something that would

otherwise be difficult to relate in even the most in-depth analysis or dissertation. The point of such short proverbial punctuations is to make the reader stop (often at a witty nonsense), with the interruption being something that allows him or her to move on, to engage in his or her life and work in a fresh way. Aphorisms are also a good way of deconstructing and a good polemic against those structures of social work that keep repeating themselves, but we don't know how to go beyond or at least escape.

In this direction, I have also developed some layout solutions, which are otherwise rarely used. I have moved the footnotes, in which I further explain or elaborate on a concept or observation, to the end so that the text can flow, to keep what it is important to say on the same page. The notes are mostly a series of short essays, glosses, which complement the main text. They are in fact an additional chapter, which the reader can read either at the end or as they go along. Another such solution is the boxes, in which I have placed the very basic highlights, explanations, mottoes. Mostly, I have titled the boxes and the reader can find them in the table of contents, at the third level of the headings.

In the introduction, I first establish the difference between social work and related disciplines, those which also have a strong influence on it. I accentuate the core of social work, important in this critical period. Then I briefly apostrophise the matter of the text – the basic operations. I present the operations in an arbitrary, but not random order. I organise them as a narrative of what social work does. I start with the operation "exploring the Life-World and accessing resources". This operation is the historical starting point of social work – getting to know people in their Life-World in order to provide the missing resources. As such, it is now often neglected, or is subject to administrative and other technical procedures. It therefore needs to be reaffirmed so it can, in an up-to-date version, still be used as a foundation and benchmark for social work. In contrast, the concept of risk has become only recently an important basis for contemporary social work intervention. It is important to note that this can be a source of stigmatisation and disempowerment, and that this operation needs to be designed affirmatively to enable risk-taking while ensuring basic human social and physical security. In social work it is a necessity to

do so, if it is to be a profession that enables change (with all the risks that change entails). Then there is the operation of empowerment, which is rightly placed at the centre of social work, since lack of social power is almost a common denominator among users of social work. The art of empowerment is to be seen in the facilitation of greater contractual power and the transfer of power to users and the creation of their vital sovereignty, the expression and exercise of their will. The establishment of a working relationship or alliance, which is perhaps the most (over)valued operation in social work, and, compared to the first three, is mainly instrumental in its purpose, enables not only the other three, but also reflection on the situation and planning action in it. The penultimate chapter examines the actual complications that arise in the interaction between power, its intensification and the working relationship, which vary according to the degree of intervention in the user's Life-World. In the concluding chapter, I look at the matter again, try to connect the operations, to extract the relations between them as well as their relations to the basic registers of action, to derive a tentative, maybe experimental, theory from what has been said, and thus to resist ending deliberation on them.

It is important to stress that although we have drawn on literature to create the categories of social work operations, what we have created is home-grown knowledge, coming out of practice. Such a view is not found in the literature, either in the design (of the operation) or in the way it is understood, although it can be traced in its infancy (cf. Wilson, Ruch, Lymbery and Cooper, 2008; Lavalette, 2019; Bell, 2020). (For my own part, I have drawn most on the tradition of radical social work, from David Brandon and Bill Jordan, and of course on the foundational and transversal works of Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault, Ivan Illich, Robert Castel, Franco Basaglia, and last but not least, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – as well as others.) In any case, this work is not a systematic review or analysis of the state of social work either in Slovenia or in general. It is merely an attempt to grasp the heart of the profession, to crystallise what is important to it.

As such, it has its shortcomings. Some will find them in the style, in the way it is presented, others in the scope, in the lack of treatment of the whole field. I am sure that the majority of readers will nod in cheerful recognition at particular observations or orientations, while

these same readers will raise their eyebrows, even be indignant, at other details. Despite differences of opinion, and despite the fact that someone else might say the same thing in a completely different way, I hope that my work as a whole, as a gestalt, provides a good basis for social work, even for those who disagree with or even reject parts of my exposition.

From the perspective that I am taking here, the major shortcoming is that I have not gone into more detail on the quartet of characteristic modes of social work, its registers. I have done this in passing when describing how the individual operations or aspects of them work, how they are implemented, and finally when I tested how they are modulated by the individual operations. This is also a challenge for the times ahead. The shortcoming is often that I have adopted a way of writing about social work that assumes that our acts, in this case the operations, are for the individual, when in fact they are for very different structures, groups, communities. It is the community aspect of the operations that would benefit from further work, as it is clear that this mode of social work needs to be revived. It is also a shortcoming that, although I keep pointing out the relationship between the Life-World and the institutional world, the latter remains rather abstract – not only as an abstract scheme, but also in how it actually influences social work and how social work might act on it. More on this next time.

As it often happens in social work, this work is, although written by one author is result of the effort of many. Here, I would like to acknowledge contributions of the colleagues most involved in the construction of the Catalogue: Bernard Stritih, Gabi Čačinovič Vogrinčič, Jelka Škerjanc, Pavla Raposa Tajnšek, Vida Milošević Arnold, and notably Marija Perkovič, then chair of the Slovenian Community of Centres for Social Work. I would also need to thank the students of a few generations who were examining my work and together with my co-worker Juš Škraban contributed to this edition. My gratitude goes also to Marjan Vončina and Janko Cafuta, who took time to read and comment on the work; as to all other people who made the publication possible.

Vito Flaker *Ljubljana, March 2024*

Preface to the English edition – the Slovenian social work context

Social work as a science and profession has some generic features and qualities – some of those we want to present here. On the other hand, it is also very locally determined and must be culturally sensitive (Zaviršek and Flaker, 1995). It is shaped by national social policies, social security legislation and the social care system, and has to respond to the diversity of human contingencies, which arise from specific conditions, contradictions and mores of particular communities. Since this book was primarily and originally intended for the Slovenian audience, for an international readership, there is a need for some contextual information, which Slovene readers are almost automatically aware of.

It is important to note that in comparison with other ex-socialist states Slovenia and other ex-Yugoslav countries have had a longer tradition of social work. After the break with Stalin and the Soviet Union, with the help of UN agencies, political support and support of prominent socially oriented professors of the law, medicine and education, social work education and thus the profession were established in the 1950s. In the crossbreed of Marxist political science, medical, legal and education tradition, social work represented a special methodical aspect (Vodopivec, 1959). This, and the positions that social workers held, yielded a type of social worker that can be described as a sympathetic official, knowledgeable about the social provision, yet prone to listen to people's distress and to intervene on their behalf, and also to engage in (official) community matters.

This basically official-activist approach was starting to be superseded by an increasing professionalism in the 1960s. An important

source for such a process was "the experiment in Logatec" – an attempt to transform a reformatory facility for "juvenile delinquents" by introducing a more democratic approach, then called "permissive education", with group work, therapeutic communities and a more client centred attitude (Vodopivec, 1974). This experiment, supported by research and publicly acclaimed (also internationally) had a multiplying effect, not only in the institutions for young people, but also by introducing groupwork and a different style of working with clients and of collaboration of diverse services and professionals. In this period, the School of Social Work (Bernard Stritih) provided, not without political consternation, a first translation of an international textbook (Friedländer and Pfaffenberger, 1970).

These developments can be seen as a fundus of quite buoyant development in the late seventies and early eighties. By introducing modern forms of voluntary work (Stritih and Kos, 1978; Stritih et al., 1981) by initiating summer camps for children in distress (Stritih and Mesec, 1977; Stritih et al., 1979) and by their inclusion into formal organisations like scouts (Stritih and Mesec, 1979; Flaker, 1980; 1981) community work was set on the scene (Šuštaršič, Stritih and Dekleva, 1977; Stritih et al., 1980), street-corner work tried out (Flaker, Pavlović, and Peček, 1982), groupwork strengthened and developed in unseen ways (Stritih, 1980; Flaker, 1981). Through these activities social work was a main pioneer of action research (Stritih, 1980; Adam, 1982; Dekleva, Flaker and Pečar, 1982; Mesec, Baskar and Flaker, 1982; Mesec, 1993; 2006) and qualitative research methods (Adam, 1982; Mesec 1998) in the Slovenian and Yugoslav academic community.

This was also the time of fascination with the new, humanistic group therapies (Southgate and Randall, 1976/1984; Berger, 1986; Možina, 2011). School for social work was a prominent base for experiments and development of these practices. However, as much as we were fascinated, we soon became critical of some aspects and the arrangement of these practices – mainly its distribution of power and lack of concern for the social context. The challenge was how to use such tools, which are usually used in an esoteric environment, in the everyday world, real situations (cf. Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, pp. 81–101). Here adopting the Freirean way was instrumental (Freire,

1972a; 1972b; 1974; Flaker, 1982; 1988) and Southgate's work on community and cooperative group dynamics very helpful (Randall and Southgate, 1978; 1980/1988).

These action research and community work projects had from their start also a pronounced anti-institutional edge, they were a quite explicit critique of institutional stance, medical model and total institutions, at the centre of such a string. Our proximity, and the similarity of our reasoning and acting to the Trieste experience of deinstitutionalisation (Basaglia, 1987; Flaker, Jović, Cvetković and Rafaelič, 2020) and participation in the international Network of the alternatives to psychiatry inspired us and affirmed a radical element to our orientation (concurrent with socialist thought but still disturbing for the authorities) and gave the professional humanist movement an activist streak. Groupuscules of these movements were also, together with ecologist, peace, feminist movements, important actors in the political transition process at the turn of the eighties to nineties. They were also instrumental in the formation of the non-government sector in transition in the nineties.

In the time of socialism, the social care system had two tiers: institutional care and territorial services, embodied in the centres for social work, both being public services. The latter were a unique organisational solution for social services in former Yugoslavia, established in the 1960s. Unlike in many other countries, they are not part of local authorities but autonomous professional bodies with statutory powers (Kuzmanič Korva, 2012). Most of the residential institutions were established in the fifties as a result of galloping industrialisation to provide the place to the redundant workforce, to the most dependent part of the population. However, some intermediate structures were established already in the socialist era. Adult training centres for people with intellectual disabilities started to crop up already in the seventies due to the pressure of parents who did not want their children to be placed in institutions. In the eighties, as a continuation of work in youth and children institution and as an alternative to them, group homes were established and a deinstitutionalisation (perhaps the only one in socialist countries, but not fully completed) of homes for children was staged at the end of that decade (Skalar, 1986).

However, for other areas of work or care, the development of alternatives to institutions, took sway in the nineties, and in the non-government sector. It was a time of massive experimentation and innovation of social care. It went beyond the formation of group homes, day centres and voluntary associations; besides developing home care, there were pilots in direct funding of the services, personal assistance, advocacy, crisis lines (for mental distress, women and children), women's counselling centres and refuges. These developments were supported greatly now by international cooperation and still with action research and participation of academia. Among such projects a TEMPUS project for community mental health (Flaker and Leskošek, 1995) should be singled out since it provided support to such innovations, integrated previously dispersed knowledge and provided important developments in methods. Some, like personal centred care planning (Brandon and Brandon, 1994; Škerjanc, 1997; 2006; Zaviršek, Zorn and Videmšek, 2002; Flaker, Mali, Rafaelič, & Ratajc, 2013), normalisation and social role valuation (Wolfensberger, 1983; Brandon, 1991/1993; 1993; Ramon, 1991; Dekleva, 1993; Flaker, 1994b) harm reduction (Dekleva, Grund and Nolimal, 1997; Flaker, 1999; 2002c) and with Rapid assessment and response were transferred from abroad and integrated with existing knowledge in Slovenia (Stimson, Fitch and Rhodes, 1998; Dekleva, 1999; Flaker et al., 1999; 2019). Some, like working with families (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 1996; 2016), were our own synthesis of various streaks of existing knowledge, while some, like risk analysis, were mostly our own invention (Flaker, 1994a).

This fervour, residing in the NGO sector, was formative in the sense of developing methods and organisational models, but was futile in its main goal of radically altering the system from an institutional one to community based – all this did not diminish the number of residents in the institutions (Flaker et al., 1999; Videmšek, 2012). The effort refocussed on the public sector and issues of changing the system. In the first decade of this century, the major residential institution of Hrastovec (650 residents) has undergone massive changes and in a few years resettled almost half of its residents and similar institutions followed the example by providing detached, community based services (Cizelj et al., 2004; Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023,

pp. 151–181). Simultaneously, there was a strong will to improve, to update the services of centres for social work (which inter alia provided also the base for work presented here), to place it better in the community (Perkovič, 2002; Flaker, 2003). Preparation of a new long-term care system and legislation took off by experimentation of direct funding (Flaker et al., 2007a; 2008; Flaker, Nagode, Rafaelič and Udovič, 2011) and a brand new Mental Health Act was adopted, introducing advocacy and coordinated care (the term preferred to "managed care" or "case management" in Slovenia) (Flaker et al., 2009; Urek et al., 2010; Flaker, Mali, Rafaelič, Cigoj-Kuzma and Udovič, 2011).

This period was quite a happy one and promising for social work. Previously developed methods were inserted into the public services, for this reason updated and affirmed and also got more of a theoretical base (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 2002; 2003; Zaviršek, 2002; Zaviršek and Leskošek, 2006; Flaker, 2006; 2009). However, this course did not continue linearly, it has in fact subsided – not so much from opponents resistance to change and the complexity of the endeavour, as because of the austerity policies and general turn in the political and social atmosphere – the rise of managerialism and bureaucratisation of all spheres of life, xenophobia and authoritarianism. But there was a reaction to this by some part of social work. We staged a 700 km and 33 days long protest march, the Walk-out, through Slovenian institutions, to contest the halt in deinstitutionalisation in 2010 (Flaker and Rafaelič, 2012), social workers who joined the occupy movement formed an initiative The Direct social work in front of Ljubljana stock exchange (Flaker@Boj za, 2012), within the popular uprising against corruption a Female uprising by social workers was formed, a number of young social workers got involved in autonomous social spaces and in protests (2016), as well as the actual support to migrants (Zorn, 2007; 2009).

This return to the activist practice of the eighties, or rather a new wave of it, of course, did not change the world nor substantially social work. But it did have some impact on the social care policies, we cannot be sure how marginal – the Slovenian government did commit to deinstitutionalisation and there was some progress in a couple of institutions. The Long-term Care Act was adopted and is

being implemented. It gave some edge and confidence, imagination too, to social workers resisting the centralisation of centres of social work (Rape Žiberna, Cafuta, Žnidar and Flaker, 2020).

At the present time we, as social workers, however, live in a schizoid position. Being confronted with three axes of seemingly productive challenges: of deinstitutionalisation, long-term care implementation and upgrading, renewing, even restoring social work at its centres and beyond, we, on the other hand, experience further fragmentation of the field the axes should constitute, and further pressures towards bureaucratisation of our work, senseless and absurd managerial requirements to "preform efficiently" (which in fact means an increase in paperwork and indirect handling of people in distress). We are told that social work is needed in its noble tradition more than ever, at the same time prevented from doing it.

This short precis of development of Slovenian social work demonstrates that it has developed by building a solid base of traditional post World War II social work, its own and unique synthesis (Ramon, 1995). What enabled this, was a transversal action, connecting diverse strands, not only of social work but also other humanities and social science, transgressing the boundaries not only of disciplines but of its own strata (e.g. the classic division between casework, groupwork and community work). An important foundation of it lies in action research, willingness to experiment, to join the researchers, practitioners and users in action and knowledge acquisition; hence creating a dialectical relationship between theory and practice – theory being practical and arising from the experience, practice being critical, i.e. dealing with the critical momenta in an engaged way. The trajectory of Slovenian social work thus passes from reception to creation, from a professionalistic stance to the activist mode, from conventional settings and relationships with users, to public, communal and autonomous spaces, but also from rather narrowly defined social work to community action, voluntary work and action research and thereby providing a pier for development of the third sector, but also taking these experiences back to the public sector in order to transform it, to induce system changes, participate in them, and also affect the culture and value system (reducing stigma, normalising drug use, denouncing patriarchal patterns etc.).

Of course, this narrative is an optimistic version of the social work story. In all the described phases, there were obstacles and struggles, and there are still more today. Social work has dealt with those in most cases productively and survived; however, real social workers are endangered species in Slovenia, as they are elsewhere.

This book is primarily about the social work methods, on what and how it does its job. However, our argument implies also other layers and levels of doing it – the form of work and care, its organisation, the system where it resides and politics and culture that concern it. To put methods into the forefront is warranted since they are the part of social work that directly touches, gets us involved in people's lives, the world they live in. The methods are literally the way to achieve a goal, this in social work means to transcend, overcome our situation. For this, social work needs to provide the power of doing and elicit from users the direction, the goals. However, to be available for use the methods need to be integrated into the forms of work or care – either by method determining the form (as it is the case in personal planning) or vice versa: the form enabling the appropriate method (for instance the task performed by care personnel in nursing homes and as home help is very much the same, but enacted very differently in an institution or at user's home). Organisation is instrumental in assembling multiple forms into a whole, thus providing the opportunity for teamwork, offering the provision to the public, enabling flows of the human and material resources. These in turn sustain a system of care, integrating various occurrences into a field (of care, social work) or in worse case separating them and fragmenting them.

If these layers of social work resonate in a harmony, if they complement each other, the work will be done well, it will support changes and strengthen the people's desires – the methods will work well and accomplish what they are intended for. However, what we often learn from (bitter) experiences, other layers can smother and decapitate the well-meant and well performed methods. A fragmented system prevents collaboration and integration of the services, hierarchical and rigid organisations will make responses uniform, so the users will be subject to procrustean modelling (of their needs, behaviour), institutional forms will be segregating people, disabling them by displacement and preventing community participation in care – thus

diminishing human solidarity and, in doing so curtailing the methods, making them a treatment, ways of handling and controlling people, disabling really the expression of their will.

Which way social work will travel depends on whether the forces go from the bottom up or from the top down. If the latter is the case, we, as users or social worker will be subjected to ever changing axioms of power, if it comes from below, we will be the subjects, not only in our Life-World, but also in running the services, in moulding the system and in creating truly participatory politics that will serve the people and not make the people servants of the system (which is mostly true but stupid, since the people created the system – and it should work for their ends and use).

* * *

Note: Apart from to this preface, the English edition does not differ very much from the Slovenian version. The changes we made during the translation are mostly to do with the readers' context. We have taken out some notes and emphases that would be hard to understand without the familiarity with the Slovenian reality and added some explanations that could bring a non-Slovenian reader closer to it. So this imprint is not a fully revised and edited version in term of its content, although there are some minor additions that go beyond the text being a mere translation. This makes the book something more than just translation, but slightly less than a new, revised edition.

In translating the text, we tried to remain true to the tone of original, while rendering it into appropriate English linguistic expression. We cannot be sure how successful we have been, but we are aware that this compromise does alter the idiom of both – sometimes for better, enriching it, sometimes for worse, spoiling it. However, this is a fate of dialectics between the major language and minor ones. Still, I am very grateful to Al Stone, who undertook the translating studiously and with care to the content, providing me with new insights into the matter and language. Also, I wish to thank to those who encouraged this edition, as well as to those who will read it.

Vito Flaker *Ljubljana, March 2024*

Introduction

What social work is not

Before we tackle the question of what social work is, or rather what social work does, it seems necessary to look at what it is not. As a profession and science, social work is explicitly interdisciplinary, connecting with other related professions from the outset, and not merely as an afterthought. In its operation, it uses several tools – knowledge and techniques, developed by other, usually more respectable, professions. In its origins, social work often emerged under the patronage of other professions, usually law, medicine, pedagogy and even the clergy. Later, psychology and sociology contributed greatly to the development of social work as a science, and in a specific way also as social policy.[6]

Social work is not *counselling*, although it is often equated with it. The difference between the two practices is best described by the observation that while counselling is not social work, social work is also counselling. Counselling, as an activity, is a legitimate (but far from exclusive) part of social work, but counselling, in established professional practice, cannot include social work. In classical counselling and psychotherapy[7], it is taboo[8], a forbidden thing, to actually enter the living space of the client, whereas in social work this is often a necessity. Getting one's hands dirty is essential – to change the environment and circumstances, to intervene in relationships and to facilitate new roles and statuses. When we say "getting our hands dirty", this is not just a metaphor, we often really get our hands dirty when we have to unblock the toilet, change

incontinence pads etc. – to improve someone's life and sometimes just so that we can start to work together.

Social work is also not *education, up-bringing*. It does not have, and does not want to have, this intelligence, nor the arrogance to determine what a person should be, how we should "construct" them. It does not have an ideal of "a universally accomplished personality" or any other idealised image of a human, and, even less, the will (or mission) to shape humans according to such an image. The social worker performs social work with characteristic modesty, uses what is available, and looks out for what a person wants to become.

Nor is it *curing*.[9] In social work, the difference between healthy and sick is not important – both are modes of human existence. When seeking out the causes of human suffering, social workers do not look for flaws beneath the skin – in the vital organs or in the depths of the soul – nor in the fate that watches over us, but instead look for connections between events on the surface – there, where we act and create meaning for ourselves (Deleuze, 1990). In social work, a person's intentions and will are important, and not their reasons or causes – these are not only numerous and impenetrable, but also blur what is important to a person. The insistence on causes will mostly be used to establish the mandate for "professional" intervention in people's lives – bypassing the actual authorisation by the person.

In social work we respect human imperfections and failings. They do not have to be repaired at whatever cost. Social work is not *repairing*. A person is not a mechanical device, a closed system, a box in which we just need to replace the broken part for the machine to work again (Goffman, 1961a, pp. 331–336). Neither is it possible to build a good life if we are focused on mistakes and shortcomings, rather than paying attention first of all to a person's virtues, strengths. Even if something does need fixing, the orientation of social work is towards creating, and not only solutions, as these are mere answers to problems, but creating new possibilities, new connections, new actions and hope that can keep us afloat.[10]

Social work avoids *judging*, validating people and the rectitude of their actions. In our work, we must not only rein in our prejudices but also refrain from retroactive judgments, even well-founded ones, determining human guilt, fault or crime. That is a matter for the court.

We are interested in the victims of the situation, even those who are officially labelled “perpetrators”. Social work is interested in the harm suffered by the participants in a given situation, and, even more, in proactively reducing harm as much as possible (see the chapter ‘Operation B: Risk analysis and damage reduction’, pp. 43–55). Nor will we signpost the victims, instead ensuring that they are no longer victims.

We will avoid *decreeing, decision-making*, especially final decisions. People should make their own decisions. Every human decision has its own sequel, the flow of events does not stop. In contrast to administrative decision-making, where the decision ends the procedure, in social work, the point at which a social worker makes a decision is just a part of the process, part of life. When, for example, we decide to take a child into care, that is only the end of one stage and the beginning of what can sometimes be even more in-depth work (involving the parents).[11]

Social work is also not an *explanation* or a clarification. In contrast to explaining sciences, –ologies, we do not need to know and understand everything (the right to not know).[12] In the title of our profession “social work”, the second word in the idiom is *work*, a necessity to do something, to respond to the plight of the other (preferably through action). It is often not fully understood that acts are not just mental creations but they are the result of will, intention. When acting, doing, theory and epistemology are as important in professional work as are deontological ethics – our duty is not so much to help as to not forsake help.

Last but not least, it should be noted that social work is not *charity*! Social work is in fact a genealogical part, a class in the phylum of help, one of a series of human activities aimed at helping others. However, just as it is the historical continuation of its predecessors – charity and philanthropy – it is also their negation. Social work must renounce the conceit that it is doing good, and also the generation of that conceit, which arises from placing oneself above others, drawing power from the helplessness of others, as well as from being (supposedly) radically different to them. Social work was founded by workers’ movements and movements for social justice precisely by breaking the chain of charity and philanthropy, and establishing its activity on the basis of solidarity, reciprocity, since it is merely

accidental to our existence whether we experience distress or not. We are all in the same boat and which side we end up on is a matter of chance and fate – which are not ours alone.

Social work – remaining human in inhuman conditions[13]

A question that often arises in social work is the one that Levi (1947/1959)[14] posed after the Auschwitz experience, "If this is a man?" In decent living circumstances, it is easy to be human, but to remain human in difficult conditions, in conditions that have become inhuman, it takes more than good will. The knowledge, skills and values that are available often prove insufficient – we need a machinic assemblage, a machine that will transform inhumanity into something fundamentally human.

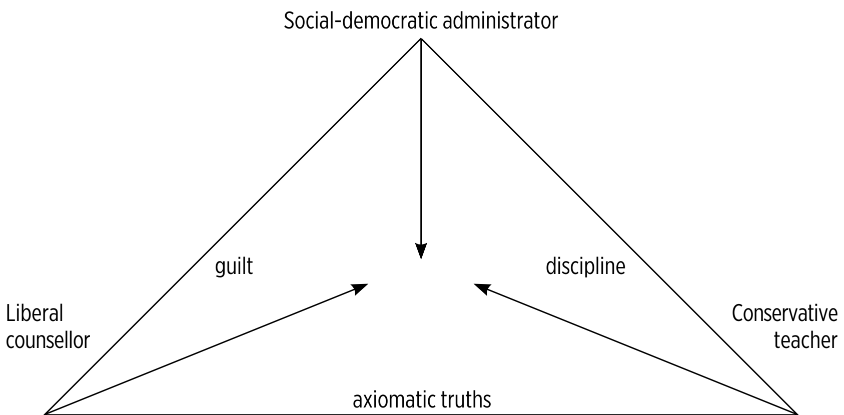
In social work, during recent decades with the global neoliberal regime creating crisis after crisis, we have encountered ever worsening, if not inhumane, conditions into which people have been plunged. Many people have lost their homes, jobs, been left without friends – many of us have also lost ourselves – our thoughts, our identities, our time... More and more people are living a nomadic life – but without grazing land, wandering aimlessly through the streets, making long marches to various offices and through institutions.[15] Not for them the joy of discovering new sources of life, which is the reason that true nomads wander. We are waylaid by beggars who are enslaved by debts (which they ran up buying things they now cannot afford), or those beggars who are actually capitalists' creditors, who, having not received their salary or wages – are owed thousands of euros by their former employers, and are reduced to begging for change on the street. At the same time, some of us have become like Robinson Crusoe in the flood of abundance, isolated on our own personal islands, with a bunch of devices and things we don't really need, but without anyone, not even Friday, to share our solitude. Millions of people are still imprisoned in various institutions[16], where they have exchanged their freedom and dignity for food and security – they are prisoners of abundance.

Under new conditions, regimes and crises, social work finds itself in an environment that is quite different from the environment and time of the robust welfare state in which it had become established. As

teachers, we have often heard from our former students: "What you taught us is not enough". The tradition of social work has become ineffective in the context of austerity. The assumptions of social work in earlier times of welfare were possibly correct. But, given the new roles and tasks that are now being imposed on social work (often directed against people rather than working with them), and the lack of means and resources that social work can provide (reduced redistribution of resources), the classic assumptions of social work, a consequence of the post-World War II era, have now become, without doubt, wrong and obsolete. Also useless at this point in history.

The incapacity, the disability of social work, causes a retreat from true social work into bureaucracy, counselling and the endless repetitions of various workshops. This retreat is the result of the loss of the power of social work – people need more than just words, more than benefits doled out stepmotherly and more than useless lessons about how to live – they need sources of survival, strength (to resist[17]) and avenues of living together. The retreat into three different roles can be represented as a triangle corresponding to the three welfare regimes as described by Esping-Andersen (1990). Social work is limited to administrative work in social democratic regimes, to the role of a teacher in a corporate-conservative regime, and in a liberal regime it is reduced to counselling.

Figure 1: Negative synergies of retreat into roles of the welfare triangle



Source: Flaker, 2016 adapted from Hämäläinen, 2013

However, this is not social work – these are the final vantage points in the withdrawal of social work when it lacks the power to do its work. Retreat into the roles of social administrators, counsellors and teachers, which coincide with the corners of the ideological structure of the "welfare triangle"[18], is an expression not only of the loss of the power of social work, the reduction and impoverishment of its methods, but is also a triangle of control and governance. The roles decentralised by the triangle have the dual effect of control and power. They awaken guilt feelings in users, because of their inability to achieve an adequate (decent) living standard or because they are in receipt of help. They discipline users through their dependence on meagre social benefits and through cultural representations of normality. They utter axiomatic truths about production and the division of labour.

Of course, the basic activities of these three roles – talking, learning and providing access to resources are also among the basic skills and ways of working in social work. In order for these skills to work for people rather than against them, we must: ensure that the words we speak are followed by deeds, that the words denounce inhuman arrangements and announce a hope for change; in learning to learn how to come together, live together and find new solutions; and in terms of access to resources, we must ensure restored access to public good that has been alienated, to preserve those of our own resources that we still have at our disposal, to generate new resources for survival and a better life, as well as to transform old (and inefficient) resources into new ones.

We can define social work as an ideal type as well as an assemblage. Social work is a mixture of a certain ideal type and a "hodgepodge" jumble. It contains thousands of small, disparate particles united by a consistent idea. To rearticulate Goffman's (1961a, p. 5) formulation of the ideal type (he used it to define total institutions), social work can be defined as:

No task of social work is unique to social work, nor is there any task that is performed in all the varieties of social work.

So, if social work consists of activities that are not specific to social work, what then are the distinguishing characteristics of social work? They fall within the scope of ethics and deeds.

Social work:

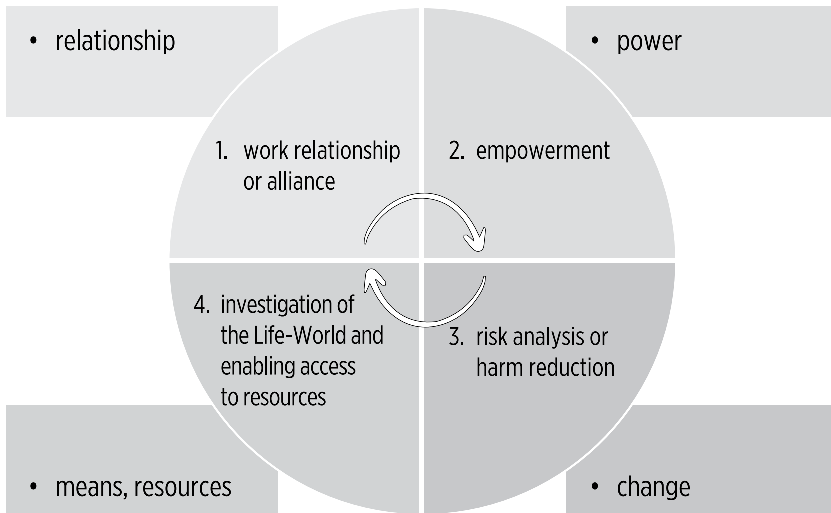
- is an action based in the ordinary Life-World of people,
- always takes the side of the weakest,
- has the courage to work in alliance with people (and thus risks losing the power that is invested in social work),
- has the courage to experiment, to play with human unpredictability and creativity (which is often forgotten these days),
- always seeks the means and resources required for a better life.

Such a definition of social work also summarises its fundamental operations.

The four fundamental operations of social work

Social work is work. Perhaps the best way of presenting what social work does is by its basic operations. To have a better life, changes have to be made to the existing one, and this entails certain risks. To know what to change in a life it is necessary to know one's life and to know what we want to change in that life, what resources can be used and which ones need to be imported from elsewhere. We need power to induce change and also to master our life. We get such power also from a partnership or an alliance (in a working relationship), not only because of the needed support, but also to increase the ability to reflect and act. The key words of the four fundamental social work operations are therefore: *relationship, power, change and resources*, introducing the operations that we choose to name: 1) work relationship or alliance, 2) empowerment, 3) risk analysis or harm reduction; and 4) investigating the Life-World and enabling access to resources.

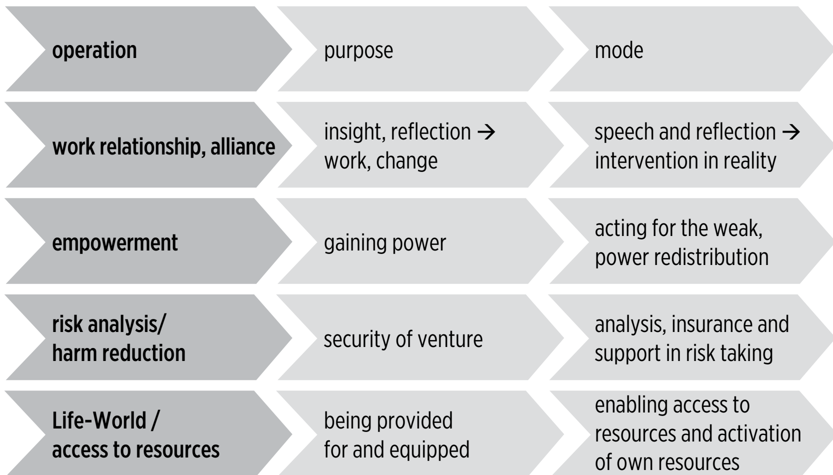
Figure 2: Four fundamental operations of social work.



Source: Flaker (2015)

These four operations are defined by their purpose, which in turn presupposes the form of their performance. The purpose of forming a work relationship or alliance is to gain an insight, to reflect on the situation one is in, so that through dialogue, like a taut bow releasing an arrow, work and change are set in action. The relationship is formed in part through speech and reflection, but above all through important deeds and work. The purpose of empowerment is clear – to gain power – and this is mainly done by advocacy and negotiation in order to enhance one's social status – personal and social capital. The purpose of risk analysis and harm reduction is to secure the venture (not so much to avoid the risk) and is done by analysing, insuring and supporting the risk taking. The investigation of the Life-World and the enabling of access to resources has the purpose of providing and equipping a person, and it is carried out so as to enable access to resources and the activation of their own resources.

Figure 3: The purpose and ways of implementing the operations.



The purposes intrinsic to the operations as listed above are only instrumental to the personal goals and are just tools to accomplish them. No matter how small and petty a specific personal goal may be, it has an overarching property regarding the purposes of the basic operations and the operation itself. The goal of an operation and its underlying desire are the foundations of the operation and its purpose, end and its "raison d'être".

The fundamental operations of social work are therefore not to be seen as means of reaching some metaphysical or transcendental ends but means of reaching personal, group or even institutional desires, usually articulated as goals, often as needs, sometimes in terms of necessities, sometimes in terms of wishes.

Operation A: Exploring the Life-World and enabling access to resources

Social work is about resources. At least this was the classic outlook on social work, and it is still valid. Social work users still mainly expect social workers to provide, i.e. to enable them to access the resources which they cannot access on their own – getting a job, a flat, financial benefit, a service they need, etc. (Flaker, 2002b). The object of this is simply to bring about improvement in their life, the world they live in, his or her Life-World.

Life–World

Life-World (German Lebenswelt) is a phenomenological concept of the world as immediately or directly experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life – individually, socially, perceptually, and practically. It is the world we live in and that is lived (*erlebt*) by us.[19]

The notion of the Life-World is important in social work since it is its starting position, its point of departure; it is where social work "meets people" and where working together starts. Although social work uses tools that also pertain to the "other worlds" (the worlds of social security, social theory, politics, institutions) the final criterion of successful or effective intervention is what happens in the Life-World itself, what really happens to people and is lived by the people concerned. Hence, the Life-World is the foundation and the gauge of social work.

This operation is, therefore, about exploring the Life-World, to get to know it better, to acquire greater sovereignty over it, and to find

out what resources it contains and which are lacking in order to provide a better life. Unlike anthropology, it is not a voyeuristic exercise of just getting to know the ways people are living; it is geared towards bringing in a Life-World's missing resources from the outside, usually from the welfare state provision. It is therefore a pairing of the lived world with other worlds too abstract to be immediately experienced, like the world of social security.

It could be said that social work is in an amphibious position based both in the Life-World and in the more abstract domains of legislation, economy, politics and especially of welfare provision. A social worker could be seen as a broker between the two realities. He or she facilitates the redistributive flow of resources from social accumulation to a place where people can make use of them. He or she also acts as an interpreter between the everyday language of living and the language of the abstract systems of entitlement and provision.

The language of action in the Life-World

Social work does not have its own special language, jargon, a professional slang that would serve as the professional liturgy, as Latin had been in the church. Partly, this is because social work has no temple, no special grand place where it is practised (such as the hospital, court, prison, barracks ...), partly because in social work there is no higher truth to be defended and relayed to people. Most importantly because social work is practised in the Life-World of its users and needs to be understood. It is an advantage and a necessity that social work does not have a jargon of it is own.

The fact is that we have to perform an operation quite contrary to the standard operation of other professions. Namely, the inmates of the special institutions have to learn the esoteric languages and rules pertaining to the institutions. Social workers, in turn, in order to understand what is going on between people, have to learn their tongues, idioms and argots as well as the rules, relationships, and mores which underlie them.[20]

Thus far there are similarities to anthropology. While the latter translates the learned into the deeper meanings of structures or

functions, social work relies on the *imminent* and *immanent* meanings, their mappings and their transformations into action. The new and different meanings will emerge after the questions: "what is to be done?", "what will happen?", "what shall we do?" etc., have been asked.

The rationale of the operation is to ensure that people are being provided for and equipped and this is achieved by enabling access to outside resources on the one hand, and the activation of their own resources on the other.

Social work needs two sets of solid knowledge to do this. One is the knowledge of the Life-Worlds of social work users, the other is the knowledge of what is on offer, what provision (or duty of the state)[21] social work can make available to the user. The art of social work in this operation is to match one with another. This knowledge is usually created by mapping.

Mapping

Mapping[22] is one of the main methods in social work.[23] It is a way of representing reality in an all-inclusive manner by putting all the important items 'on a map', forming spatially represented relationships and so enabling "orientation" or "navigation" through hitherto uncharted territory, giving a holistic, integrative understanding of the issues at hand and thus forming the basis for the required action.

As in geography, the maps can represent not only different territories but also different aspects of the plane they tend to chart. They can be spatial maps or, as in Sociometry, charts of personal relationships. They can portray the discussion, topics and themes, they can point out power differences, flows of goods and acts and they can indicate resources, ways of doing things, living circumstances etc. They can be simple sketches or elaborate depictions of various parameters. They can serve as the underlying background to an action, a general guide for acting or they can be used to pinpoint specific knotty issues which need addressing.[24]

There are existing general maps of human behaviour, like the mapping of drug use (Parker, Bakx and Newcombe, 1988; Flaker, 2002a; 2002b), like knowledge of everyday life and coping strategies of old people (Flaker et al., 2008; Mali, 2013; Mali, Mešl and Rihter, 2011; Grebenc and Šabić, 2013), modes of child participation in schools etc. (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 2009; Kodele and Mešl, 2016). These can be used – but only to inform the specific maps that need to be made for a specific individual, group or community in order to address their actual living conditions and show their living reality.[25] From the other side there are existing inventories of the available provision (or if not, then they must be drafted). However, these must be updated, according to the relevance and adequacy of the maps to the Life-World. Even the lists which we make as we go along, must be made as extensive as possible (e.g. by brainstorming) in order to maximise choice and the adequacy of the response.[26]

Needs

Mapping in the context of accessing resources is often termed needs assessment.

The term "needs" is one of the most widespread and important concepts in social work and social policy, as well as in general discourse. It not only lacks clarity but it is also problematic because of its normative nature. Based on the biological proposition of homeostasis, it presupposes a lack, a deficit, which can easily be ascribed to an individual person, group or community rather than to a situation, social relationships or the system. In this respect it is a devaluating mechanism and a misleading tool of action. Besides, it is normative – in the sense of prescribing the nature of what people need and the quantity of what they are entitled to. At the same time it implicitly expresses rights to some kind of welfare provision. In fact, the term "needs" masks rights as a socio-biological fact or given.

Illich (1992) historically deconstructs needs into desires or wishes on the one hand, and necessities on the other. Desires in the sense of what somebody wants or wishes to do or to happen, while necessities concern social or material contingencies of what ought to be done or happen. This dialectical double[27] can be integrated by using the term

"goals" rather than "needs" and thereby stressing volition and accumulation rather than a predetermined state and lack.

"Needs", however, will remain in use for the time being, albeit just as a technical term. Using the term as such requires attention to its negative properties. If its signified concepts are too abstract, we must root them in the Life-World by asking how they actually affect the material life.[28] When they are one-sided, representing just half of the experienced contradiction, we must ask which contradictions[29] they are hiding (and then denounce them) and untangle their metaphors or metonyms to reach and express the actual will of the person.[30] Above all we must be critical, even polemical when the "needs" show (alleged) human deficiencies[31], which in fact disable and even isolate and reify the person.[32] *The role of social work is to transform a lack into abundance*[33] *– a desire and the goal.*[34]

Goals and desires might be directly placed on the map or deduced from its intricacies – the contradictions, gradients etc. of the everyday life. Once identified and articulated they will be transformed into claims (applications, requests), which, once placed in the system are eventually brought back to the claimer as entitlements or eligibility. However, the claims have to be evaluated and assessed, usually by experts following some rules. Once the claim is granted, the claimer converts from claimer to beneficiary, a recipient. The resource will be integrated into his or her Life-World.

When this operation is about mobilisation of the (dormant) resources in a person's own Life-World, it may still be about imposing claims on others that share that Life-World, but it is also about participation, membership, and the person's contribution to a group, network or community. It is also about recovery of the ground beneath the feet and instigating actions for the common good.

Claiming should not be seen as a selfish, egotistic action, only for personal benefit. When it is about claiming from public resources it is an act of "redistribution" and "re-appropriation" of a public good into the common good, based on rights rather than needs. When a claim is placed on others in the community, it must be seen to be the creation of something that works for the common good.

When the claim is approved, sometimes formally sometimes informally, delivery must be implemented. In the case of simple matters, such as basic financial benefits, the delivery is simple as well. In the case of complex provision of services and benefits, alongside the direct provision, the delivery entails coordination, taking care of continuity and monitoring of the effects. When it concerns informal provision, attention must be paid to the stability of the newly mobilised resources, e.g. by giving the required support to participants and also coordinating and encouraging the common interest. Attention must also be given to the interface between the Life-World and "other worlds" in a way that the latter do not overrun the former and that the "colonialisation" impact of the abstract scheme is reduced to a minimum.

The best example of this basic operation is person-centred care (personal planning and coordinating care). Its basis is the personal plan, which presents and analyses a person's life situation, establishes personal goals and sets them in motion by listing the providers, the required means and resources, setting the deadlines and, in the case of direct funding, calculating the costs. It begins with an individual, consults with other actors involved and is usually approved in a team conference. After that, its delivery begins with the support of the care coordinator. (For further reading see Flaker, Mali, Rafaelič and Ratajc, 2013, pp. 176–207; Rafaelič, Nagode and Flaker, 2013: also Brandon and Brandon, 1994).

Enabling! Not disabling (access)

While enabling access to resources was a prime task of social work in times of an abundant welfare state, under the ideology and regime of austerity, social workers tend to be pushed into a role of "custodians of public resources", watchdogs of public expenditure, curtailing, if not denying, the access to welfare provision. Social workers have quite a few ways available to withstand such pressures and to adapt to new circumstances without jeopardising the basic definition of their calling.[35]

In this context especially, the mobilisation of the resources dormant in the Life-World must not be seen as saving public money,

but as value in itself. Community responses are usually more appropriate, the use of community resources increases participation, and mobilisation of community resources can be seen as a contribution (from usually marginal members) to the common good. Mobilisation of their own resources, reclaiming them and recovering common ground also enhances people's autonomy from authority and diminishes the dependence on public, but alienated, resources.

Encouraging desires not "ticking boxes"

This operation is a dialectic totality, combining two highly heterogeneous parts – one very human, real, the other abstract, mechanical. The art is not only in integrating them without the more robust and powerful colonialising the more delicate and subjective reality, but also without losing one on account of the other. In everyday social work practice, it does happen that a practitioner may concentrate on exploring the Life-World while neglecting access to resources elsewhere. Exploring the Life-World without employing the knowledge of claiming rights is not only voyeuristic but also unproductive and sterile (even if interesting). Basically, this omission not only deprives a person of his or her rights, it perpetuates control mechanisms of a psychological nature. On the other hand, insistence on a purely procedural, bureaucratic operation denies people subjectivity, their actual life, and, even more, is a means of that life's colonisation.[36]

The use of check-lists and box-ticking according to pre-defined categories is not exploring the Life-World, but imposing extraneous (bureaucratic) logic and alien ideas (what is needed, what are the basic needs etc.) onto it, thus killing the meanings inherent to the Life-World – personal and group priorities and hierarchies of desire.[37]

Similarly, the pre-set provisions might, by their very existence, determine the desires and goals. The "fridge logic", which makes us wish to eat what is in the fridge, can (and must) be overcome by firmly grounding the desire in the Life-World and only then looking at what is on offer, how it fits the desire, and, if it does not, creating a new tailor-made response, using funds external to the Life-World if necessary.

User perspective

The use of the Life-World notion to approach the issue of resources, as well as in other operations, introduces what is often called "user perspective". The necessity is to see the situation and its changes through the eyes of the beneficiary of the action. It is important to actively and purposely adopt the perspective of the other, because otherwise the service or other types of provision will be misplaced, misunderstood by both parties. The view from the perspective of the provider is basically different to that from the recipient's perspective. The care personnel in a residential facility, when serving lunch to a bed-ridden resident, define the situation as requiring them to clean the table, serve the meal and clean the dishes off the table. Putting things – that the resident needs to reach – back on the bedside-table, is simply beyond his or her definition – leaving the resident stranded for hours without spectacles, drink, mobile phone or a TV remote control.

Reflective and reflexive

In social work there is a need to distinguish between two similar but yet different modes of action – between the act of "reflection" and "reflexive" responses. In the first, the key is contemplation, thinking about what has been done or has happened, the latter is about being responsive to the living situations of the users. Not only do those involved in an action have to think about what has happened, about what has been done, but also about what has to be redone, amended, repaired. Where there is action, there needs to be reflection. However, this does not need to be an interpretation of deeds and action, but instead viewing them as a whole, with their context and inter-relatedness. In addition to the need to be reflective (in a mirroring contemplation), we must also pay attention to active and actual responses to any act or event. Acts point back to the immanence of interaction and are not reflected in some kind of transcendental mirror.[38] Social work operates in the everyday, ordinary, and banal. Most human interaction is not ruled by the rule of Law, God or hygiene regulations. It is

ruled by flexible, self-constituting little rules and ways of observing, talking, touching and engaging with each other, by rules that are both cultural and those made on the spot allowing for the intentions, purposes and inclinations of the people involved.[39]

These rules and their inherent meanings are bound by the context in which events happen. Since we do not have good maps for these ever-moving territories, we almost always have to explore them in co-operation with their dwellers and other participants in the situation. The use of transcendental shortcuts and axiomatic shorthand will always risk imprecision and introduce the danger of missing the point.

Stories as mapping

In social work many stories are being told. Although any life-course can be narrated as a "sad tale" (Goffman, 1961a, pp. 67, 151–162; Urek, 2006) or a "success story", depending on how the storyteller links the singular events of his or her life into the narrative whole, in practice sad tales tend to dominate in social work. Social work users tend to tell sad tales, not so much because of a massive sad experience as much as to legitimise the intervention by the practitioners and the claim from the users.

No matter how personal such tales can be, they rely on the standard narrative patterns present in popular culture. Some of the stories have been told more than a hundred years ago with fixed narrative patterns and literary structure, for example the "story of a junky", told long ago by Thomas de Quincey (1821) and reiterated by Dostoevsky's Gambler, recounted by the Children of the Zoo Station, to be told again in the office of a social worker anywhere on this earth. It is not about a lack of imagination and plagiarism, it is simply a matter of organising the narration, the way of telling the story.

In addition, stories are also a way of organising actual experience, a script to be followed in an actual life, and it could be claimed that people are "prisoners" of their biographies (Grebenc, 2001). Social work therefore has three tasks: to let people tell us their own stories, encourage and help them re-appropriate them, transform sad tales into stories of success and to invent means of escaping the

biographies by transforming them, giving them different endings or sequels. Actual lives are not like novels, with plots, heroes (usually tragic), resolutions etc. Human lives are more like intertwining series of novellas, in which we often overlook the final twists and miss a connection to something that was not previously there (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 192–207). And we fail to see that human lives are more comic than tragic.

Transversality

Social work knits together many strands. It knows the language and substance of many other disciplines and applies them in its own fashion, transversing many diverse planes of function to connect them in singular social activities and address many different planes of human existence. Consequently, social work is unable to reduce the variety of meanings and functions to a single dimension, to the homogenous space of a reductionist profession.

> When an old person is placed in an old people's home, we know that we cannot attribute this placement to only one criterion, e.g. their bodily feebleness, or their personal inability to care for themselves. There may be many different stories involved: it is also about their nephew getting a new job, the cat that will be left behind, the relationship with neighbours, etc. Of course, there is also the issue of the availability of services and how they function – is a home help available?; are there practitioners who will listen to his or her wants and needs?; is there a service that could bring formal and informal support in unison action?; what are the rules concerning how the funds are spent (i.e. can the money available for institutional care be spent to support the person at home?) etc. All these forces and events interact and produce vectors and tensors that will propel an old person into care or let them stay at home.

Transversal action is seeking meaning, which is to be found on a different plane. It does this by connecting with otherness – that which is not its own – and thus amplifying the resonance between levels, the reverberation of events on a particular level with those on other levels (Guattari, 1972; 1984).

Social work understands and employs events, circumstances and materials, connecting them to other planes. There, a different meaning, use, or function may be found, other than the one in the clean, homogenous zone of existence (such as sickness/health, right/wrong, clever/stupid etc.). Precisely by finding it somewhere else or something else, something radically different from itself, social work can strengthen its initial action, which can then transverse the different levels.

> Shabby clothing and a neglected, "mental patient" appearance, will be seen within the framework of mental health as a sign of the illness and deterioration; it can though be read as a sign of not having many reasons to keep up appearances, or as a loss of interest in self presentation on account of being excluded from the ordinary life, etc. When this person falls in love, he will be dressed well, shaved and spick-and-span. Was his miserable state the result of not being in love?

Operation B: Risk analysis and harm reduction

Social work is about change. It is either actively inducing change to improve a person's life, or striving to contain imminent change, i.e. conserving that person's assets and benefits in upcoming perturbations (e.g. old age, illness). Change brings risks – with their benefits and dangers.

We live in a changing society, the risk society (Beck, 1992) and we have to deal with it. Furthermore, macro-social risks, like pollution, natural catastrophes, climate change, political and military conflicts, economic and other crises strike the poorer, marginal and powerless segments of society the most. Social work is the profession that deals with "vulnerable groups", i.e. the people who are exposed to societal stress to a greater degree or who, on account of their life-situation, find themselves facing intense challenges that could result in massive distress.

Notwithstanding exposure to societal risk, that which is produced by the "society", there is a number of other instances where life changes and presents risks that need to be taken. Various life events, transitions, identity crises or even quite banal unexpected and unprecedented happenings, no matter whether they are mishaps or just 'haps', occur in the course of life, affecting daily routines.

Life events

Life events are highly stressful events that fundamentally change our Life-World. These events not only heighten the energy levels of functioning (stress), but also turn our notions of everyday life upside down, changing meanings, roles and alliances. This happens not only in

adverse, undesired events like loss of a loved one, loss of employment, eviction, or illness, but also in events that we experience positively, which we desire – like getting married, becoming a parent, getting a new job, new home etc. The research has shown that if several such events happen in a certain period, some consequences to mental and physical well-being are very likely to follow (Holmes & Rahe 1967; Nastran Ule 1993; Gallagher 1995: pp. 329–333; Lamovec 1998: 215–220).

Social work is very often placed in the statutory position of a guardian, whose role is to deal with hazards of people's lives and to secure the best possible outcomes. It is an option that people can turn to, when they see their own social, personal or financial capacities as insufficient to deal with their risk situation. The objective of social work is to assess the degree of risk and to provide a response, a provision that will diminish the risk to an acceptable degree. Risk is therefore often a measure of entitlement to social or other provision. The assessment may be a rather simple one as in means-testing in the case of financial benefits, or a relatively complex one as in a case of family violence or similar.

At the same time, in contemporary, capitalist society (and probably in post-capitalist too), risk taking is a constituent of a person's identity and self. People should be allowed to take risks (not just avoid them). The purpose and end goal of risk analysis is harm reduction, or better – security of venture – being able to do things without exposing oneself to exaggerated, unnecessary or unwanted risks.

This is why the risk should be analysed and not just assessed.[40] The main analytical tool in the risk situation is the identification of the *hazards,* the *dangers* (harm) and the *benefits* (or even profits) of risk taking, and to simultaneously consider the measures that would *reduce the harm*.

Ascertaining these elements of risk is necessary, since, in everyday life, the circumstances that make a situation risky or hazardous are often confounded with the actual events that are dangerous. If someone is psychotic, he or she is not necessarily dangerous. Statistically speaking, not any more than any sane person (Fazel and Grann, 2006), but psychotic behaviour introduces a certain unpredictability of action. Hence, the assessment of the intensity (seriousness of the hazard) and

the quality of the psychotic situation must be made separately from the assessment of the probability of a dangerous event (and only subsequently combined into a risk formula).

Moreover, the favourable events, the benefits of risk taking, and their probability must be taken into account, and weighed against the dangers and harms of the situation. Benefits are the rationale of risk taking behaviour. Not least, it would be unethical (and even stupid) to only assess the risks without considering the means of reducing the possible harm. It is not only about finding out the least harmful way of securing the benefits, but also about using the least restrictive measures to avoid harm.

Such measures should be foreseen at various points of intervening: as means of preventing risk (not driving when drunk), as ways of mitigating dangerous events (wearing a helmet) and modes of repairing harm (insurance, apologising). Various means of harm reduction may be used: technical (smoke detectors, helmets, electronic devices), educational (informing, awareness raising, learning skills etc.), social (escorting, inclusion, protection, mediating …), legal (written agreements, advance directives, court delivered restrictions …).

In risk analysis, we therefore analyse the situation, determine the intensity of the risk and its acceptability and plan the intervention for risk reduction. It is about securing the life situation and providing support in risk taking.

Social work – for change

Social work is not needed to maintain what is already there. Bill Jordan (1987) notes that where routines are established, where forms have to be filled, where procedures are set and to be followed, there is no need for social work. Social work is needed where change is necessary, where distress is so great that people cannot cope with it anymore, where changes are taking place and people need to cope better through them, where a change has happened and we have to learn to live with it, or when there is a substantial possibility that change will occur and we want to get ready for it; or prevent it. *Social work is the profession of the unpredictable.*

Risk avoidance and scaping the giddy goats

The notion of risk is very often used as a means of disqualifying a particular person, group or whole segment of society. To label someone as "presenting risk behaviour" and even ascribing this to his or her "personality", i.e. seeing it as a personal property, a trait imbedded in his or her individual personality (be it by their psychological make-up, upbringing or by biological, "neuro-scientific" constitution), means not only do we take the behaviour and personality out of its context and transfer the risk from a situation to a person, but we also evoke, sometimes massive, mechanisms of control, and consequently deprive the person or group of their basic human rights. This ousts them from social participation and places them in some form of social protection, or even custody.

Labelling and scapegoating

Labelling is a property of social interaction, by which a specific behaviour or personality trait is stereotyped in such a way that it overshadows other properties of the individual. Stereotyping in its benign form can be a useful shortcut or shorthand in interaction (if we label someone as a "shop assistant", we know what to expect and how to relate to them in the shopping situation). Even if someone is given a label that is so dominant (doctor, policemen, professor), that it extends beyond the situation in which he or she performs the applicable role, it may do some injustice but not much harm. However there are labels of a type that discredit the bearer, blight his or her identity, produce stigma (Goffman 1963a) and therefore construct a, sometimes insurmountable, obstacle to social participation and rob him or her of contractual power. By depriving someone of valid means of interaction and social roles, and with their acts being read and judged based on a discrediting label, the label becomes a *self-fulfilling prophecy*, and the person in this situation is given a "license to deviate" and is left with not much else to do.

The notion of scapegoating comes from the Jewish tradition. In direct opposition to contemporary usage, the scapegoat meant the abolition of human sacrifice – people transferred their sins to the goat, which

was then sacrificed. The mechanism of scapegoating is still about transfer – but nowadays to another (lesser valued) individual. Thus, it is not about what such a person does, or is capable of doing, but about what we project onto them from ourselves. We are not afraid of the other's madness but of our own. The scapegoat actually creates this other, fundamentally different to us. The scapegoat must be separated from society and given the status of a thing (animal) to which we can do what we like – which we sacrifice for our sins (Basaglia, 1967/1981, pp. 444–446).

Often, people labelled with disqualifying labels serve as scapegoats for a certain group, sometimes for the whole society. They are pointed at as culprits for all the troubles and misery of the group and become a conduit for the pent-up frustration, grief and anger of the group. For the leaders of such persecution (sometimes termed a "moral crusade" (Becker, 1963) or "moral panic" (Cohen, 1980)), having a scapegoat means an increase in their power and the obedience of the group.

The source of labelling, stigmatising and scapegoating risk behaviour and personality is the uncertainty inherent in the "risk society". It is the way of fending off the fears of what might happen, of unpredictability and the precariousness of existence.[41] Avoiding risk is another facet of the risk society or the imperative of risk. It is a leading principle of many public agencies concerned with public safety (police, sanitary inspection, etc.) – partly out of concern for a safe environment, partly out of concern for what might happen to individual human beings. The latter concern is managed through surveillance, constraint and, in many cases, also by restraint and confinement.[42]

While social work is not immune from such operations, such measures must be seen as unacceptable for social work. The mandate of social work is to support people in coping with risks presented by society, its mode of production and organisation. However, on the micro level of individuals and groups, it has to maintain the perspective that risk is the property of the situation not of the person, and apply the user's perspective of risk taking as a means of gaining benefit while leaving aside the custodian and guardian perspective of risk avoidance which can lead to impoverishment of the individual's life and opportunities. Moreover, it must make risk taking possible since every activity carries potential risk, and risk sustains a person

throughout their life (the only certainty in life is death). In social work risk assessment or analysis must be subservient to the will to live, to desire, and to the human will to goals. As always in life – we must start by knowing what we want to do, and only then work out how we can safely achieve it. Risk analysis must be affirmative and proactive, not defensive and reactive, or even destructive.[43]

Harm reduction

Social work is not concerned with what is right and what is wrong, but in what works and what doesn't.

It is not of interest to us whether drug use is right or wrong, or whether a parent should stay with their children or not, whether someone should not talk to themself, or kill themself, should have a home, drive a car, wear socks of the same colour etc. We know that a drug can have destructive but also creative effects, that parents are a major resource, but can also pose a major threat to their children, we know that inner voices can be equally encouraging or demanding, etc. It is not a question of relativism, it is a question of what kind of machine is at work – how the elements of a situation come together and how they function within it.

The machine should be constructed according to criteria that result in arrangements that ensure maximum gain, minimum loss to all participants; not only in economic terms – harm and improvement could be also bodily, emotional and sensory: pain, disgust, hurt and joy, pleasure, beauty; and to some degree also gratification.

Reducing the harm and enhancing the benefit; the pragmatics escape from the binary division of grammatical rules. It is not about a choice between health and illness, right or wrong, success or failure, black or white – we want the picture to be at least black *and* white, preferably in colour.

Taking the stakes of the weakest participants into account, is the mandate of social work, and fundamental to this is the formulation of language that works (or simply a working language) in this respect. Social work gets involved with the purpose of being a guardian or an advocate, of safeguarding the interests of the weak who cannot do this for themselves; and advocating on the behalf of those who do not

have enough power to be heard on their own. The criterion for action is weakness, which grows into strength and power.

Harm reduction is a primary concept which replaces guilt, fault, deficit.[44]

Guardianship – an obstacle to productive risk taking

Risk avoidance, rather than risk taking (Davis, 1996), is a function of professional paternalism, which is frequently assumed when working with people. The guardian role that social work is endowed with makes professionals preoccupied with adverse consequences of risk taking. If there is harm it is the guardian's responsibility, while the benefits are to be enjoyed by their protégé. Such division of moral labour equals a dissociation between the interests of the protector and the protected, and results in inability to achieve mutual identification. In order to support the strivings of fellow human beings it is necessary to assume their perspective, identify with their interests in the situation (and its benefits) and only then, as a rule together with the user, develop risk reduction interventions from within this perspective.

The statutory guardian role[45] is instituted in the event of people being seen as unable to make sound decisions about their life contingencies – as is the case with children and those considered to have diminished mental capacity. In such cases, legal capacity is not acknowledged or it is removed, and a legal guardian appointed. However, this is in fact a robust infringement of the essential human faculty – free will, capacity to decide, make a choice.[46]

As a result, a trend has emerged to do away with this inhuman operation – at least concerning the complete removal of legal capacity. Alternatives are seen in at least limiting the removal, i.e. not removing the capacity *in toto* but in a constrained way which focuses on very specific interdictions – such as preventing a person from driving if there is a serious risk of an accident, or substituting the removal of legal capacities with support in decision-making. The latter resting on the logic that if a person is not fully capable of deciding in a sovereign fashion (who is fully capable of autonomous decisions in all aspects of their life?), this "disability" should be overcome with support in this activity (sometimes also by public or statutory intervention)

– everybody needs support in the decision making process – some do not get it or need more of it. (European Expert Group, 2012, pp. 77–78; Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, p. 116).

The issue of guardianship is one of the classic dilemmas in social work. In one way, social work is a guardian profession, a substitute for the will for those who "will not", a constituent of the profession. On the other hand, social work presents itself as the advocate of the oppressed, as the champion of their will. Social work is caught in a perpetual dance between these two roles of guardian and advocate.

The dance between the advocate and the guardian

Social work is always about duos, about Holmes and Watson, Laurel and Hardy, Pooh and Piglet. It is about being both at the same time. And it is about being able to dance between these two facets. The classic guiding light of social work is that it has to safeguard the (virtual) interests of a person, who cannot take care of them on their own. On the other hand, a further essential task of social work is to advocate for that same individual's actual desires and necessities (which they can nevertheless express). There is a difference between what one is supposed to want and what one actually wants; the difference between the role of guardian and advocate. The first looks at "real" interests, as we commonly understand them in society, the second amplifies the otherwise unheard voice.[47]

The guardian role in the people-facing professions (medicine, health care, education, social work) is historically based on the undertaking of the feudal masters to take care of and protect their subjects, to be their patron and protector. It is the basic relationship of feudal society (Anderson, 1974). The bourgeois society in turn is based on sovereign, autonomous, independent individuals forming contractual relations. For those who are not capable of doing this, or are not acknowledged to be, a special institute is needed which ensures their place in the social process. This responsibility is fulfilled to a certain extent by the philanthropic professions who have taken on the guardian (patron, protective) role for people lacking in contractual power.[48] The basic characteristics of such a professional role are that, on the basis of inferred and prior knowledge, the virtual interests of the

individual (what should be good for him or her in principle) are taken care of with an emphasis on safety and care, that social authority on the basis of the individual's shortcomings (he or she is not capable, not able to make decisions) is obtained, and that it is treating people either as children or a stranger (both are helpless and ignorant, in need of help and patronage).

The advocate role is based on the tradition of the struggle for the social emancipation of marginal groups (workers, women, ethnic minorities…). In principle, it is intended to present the interests of people who have "lost their voice"; it takes the role of a solicitor or representative, aiming to establish full members of society, to supersede their deficits and overcome the obstacles that prevent people from attaining such a status. It is a professional stance that takes into account the strengths perspective, and strives to empower the social status of the person. The basic characteristics of this role are that it stems from the actual interests and desires of individuals, that it creates knowledge based on the analysis of reality, that it stresses rights and prevents injustice, that it gets a mandate from the person or a concrete social group, that it focuses on irregularities and injustices in society. As in sports, when a person has a handicap, the advocate wants to enable the person to regain the lost advantage, and they do this on the basis of interchanging roles (*The Prince and the pauper*, Mark Twain, 1966). The supporting or assistant role is also similar (for example personal assistance). In this case, the question of power has less importance, since the user is the employer from the outset.

Table 1: Differences between guardian and advocate roles.

Role	Guardian	Advocate
Interests	virtual	actual
Knowledge	inferred, prior	situation based, subsequent
Mandate	from the general society	from the individual, concrete group
Deficiency	inside the individual	in the social order
Character of the user	stranger, child	absent individual, handicap, role interchange (*The Prince and the pauper*)

Source: Flaker (2003; 2006).

The contradictions between the guardian and advocate roles, which are presented schematically above, is a genuine problem in social work, which is subject to both extremes: on one hand there is the "societal" demand to "take care of people", on the other is the obligation to strive for their autonomy, self-determination. In practice the contradiction can be resolved in several different ways: by abstaining from the role of guardian, splitting the two roles between colleagues or managing a combination of both roles.

When the guardian role (of an administrator) is unnecessary we must reject it (or at least put it in parentheses), that is to say, when it is imposed on us (as in an interaction, when, due to interactional discontent, the interlocutor addresses the escort instead of the person whom the exchange concerns; or when people close to the person place us in the role of an expert to act as a protector who will resolve a family "drama" or other stringent interpersonal situation (Flaker et al., 2008, pp. 43–47, 61–64, 67–75). We must also reject it when we get caught up in it through the traditional construction of the role of social work. It can also be abandoned in cases where it does not need to be duplicated since the court or some similar authority already has such a role.

Separation of the roles requires teamwork or at least work in pairs. It makes sense, for example, to divide the roles in the unit team in such a way that the unit leader takes an administrative role – because he or she manages the space and is concerned with taking care of the well-being of all members of the group. Moreover, he or she is responsible for the virtual interests of each individual (their a priori physical safety, their rights, etc.), but, on the whole, he or she can only do this for the entire group or the typical member. Therefore, in such a situation, to allow individual wishes to be expressed, and to account for the perspective of each user, it is necessary to establish the role of "key worker". This role is specifically one of advocacy, as a solicitor for the user, an amplifier of their voice, a fighter for the expression of their wishes and actual interests (more on the role and tasks of a key worker in Brandon and Brandon, 1991/1992; on key workers in the transformation process in Hrastovec in Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, pp. 238–241; on their responsibilities in Flaker, 2023a). When it is not about residential services (i.e. social work

centres, counselling centres, home help services), as well as in cases where the key worker system is not present in the organisation, the following logic can be applied. In the team, we determine who will represent the person's general or virtual interests (the rational benefit determined by the interests of an everyman, anyone), and who will take the user's gaze, while taking on the role of advocate. The choice of who will be the "devil's advocate", that is, the one who opposes the general opinion, will depend on the orientation of the team. In the usual orientation, this is likely to be the member playing the advocacy role. However, this kind of division of roles in social work must not turn into a game of "good cop, bad cop". In social work, we do not want to coerce someone into a confession, or pressure a person into doing something. Even when it becomes necessary for the person in the guardian role to take coercive or restrictive measures, we must at least allow some space for dialogue between the participants or room for different, sometimes conflicting perspectives.

We must be aware that by separating roles and rejecting the guardian role, even if justified and productive in some situations, we give up the decision-making power that social work is generally and concretely endowed with, and thereby also the power that we can use to achieve the relief of distress that the user desires.

Synthesis is possible if we follow both roles, continuously (through dialogue) negotiate our mandate and the possible outcomes, keeping in mind the interests and benefits (or harm reduction) for all the actors involved, particularly and above all the user. In doing so, we must, in the role of a guardian, employ the least restrictive necessary measures and, as advocates, ensure the maximum possible influence by the user.

As an example, we can consider the case of taking a child from the parents' custody. The procedure is two faceted: moving towards removing the child while, at the same time, trying everything possible to prove the removal unnecessary. Optimally, we would create an alliance so that we also work on behalf of the parents, and work together with them, to explore the possible paths to keep the child with them, up to the eventual point of assessing that it is not possible and the child must be, at least temporarily, removed. In particular, we must strive to uphold whatever connections and functions of the parents

do not harm the child. Social work should not support the definitive, complete and irrevocable removal of children.

It is vitally important that, when social workers make decisions in someone's name and for their benefit, they consistently respect that person's wishes and support their attainment (as opposed to deciding based on a general idea of common sense or on legal assumptions).[49] The social worker may feel that the user's goal is "unrealistic" and will not be achieved. Here, the guideline applies that we social workers cannot judge the reality of others, and especially that we cannot and must not be "protectors of reality", reality is strong enough to speak for itself (cf. Flaker, Mali, Rafaelič and Ratajc, 2013, pp. 47–50). An advocate is needed by the one who is weaker (up against reality, we are all weak). Together with the user we must test reality, supporting the user in this test and experience. Our experience will tell us what is possible and what is not. Social workers need not and cannot know in advance what is "real" and what is not. They must not be patronising to users. The user's desire is a hypothesis to be tested. Life is an experiment anyhow.

Synthesis is possible also, because assessment, planning and working are interwoven. In social work, acting according to traditional linear scientific or professional patterns and procedural consequences is useless and even harmful (diagnosis, prognosis, therapy; interrogation, finding and decree, sanction). Social work is not obliged to first assess and only then intervene. As soon as we establish contact, we are already working, and then when we establish a working relationship, we are already working together. The known world is already being changed – first by our presence, and presence in social work also means action. If we see that something can be done, we do it. If we suspect that children in a family are being neglected or even mistreated, and at the same time it is obvious that help is needed to manage the household, it is not necessary to first determine whether our suspicion of abuse is justified or not, but instead we need to provide household help, which, regardless of our suspicion, will improve the quality of the child's life. Further, it will very probably reduce the possibility of neglect or maltreatment. The concrete acts we take at the beginning go beyond a straightforward assessment, since they bring about an immediate change in the situation (a young man who is in

conflict with the law gets a job, finishes school, his attitude towards the law changes; the father changes his communication patterns with his children, etc.). Sound and tangible plans for the future change the present.

Social work with operational ability, that is to say, with the ability to organise and change something, not only overcomes the contradiction between the guardian (patron) and advocate (support) role, but also, together with the user, takes on the role of commissioning. Plans also include requests, the social worker can order resources and services that will significantly improve the user's life situation. This power is also transferred to the user. This prompts the assumption of completely different roles, different to guardianship or advocacy. They are no longer merely middlemen in the relation to the state or other sources of means and power, they become generators of power in the social sense of the word.

Another reason why we can operate as an advocate and a guardian at the same time is because we can ensure that things happen. If, as social workers, we can solve matters and really bring about change, an active, pragmatic synthesis is possible. Through the capacity of doing, acting we assume the virtue of commissioning and link the user's actual needs and desires to his virtual interests. We can plan and create arrangements (services, environments, resources) that satisfy both – what the user actually wants and what we assume is good for them.

When we combine the advocate and guardian roles in this way, when we dance between them, while we simultaneously uphold and, in congruence with the rhythm, lead our dance partners, the advocacy facet must prevail, regardless of the ebb and flow of the current. Advocacy is the starting point of social work – the user must get more power.

Operation C:
Empowerment – enhancing contractual power

Social work is about power. In fact, it is a power relationship. Its function in society is to be an intermediary between the powerful and powerless (rich and poor, elites and ordinary folk, oppressors and the oppressed).

Social work deals with an immense variety of human situations having very little in common. What we can say is that the common denominator of social work users is lack of power. They turn to social work when they cannot do something on their own, when they need extra power to perform.

> Power is a measure of how much sovereignty one has over one's Life-World, one's ability to do things, to bring about change or maintain a steady state.
>
> Power therefore is not a property of the Life-World itself, but is its differential and scalar function, the differential calculus of movement through the Life-World, or of action in it, the potential of such movement or work.[50] It can be generated among the participants in the situation itself, but at the same time it also depends on schemes or arrangements which are beyond the experienced world but nevertheless have an impact upon it. The group creates its power through its development, its dynamics and interactions between its members, while at the same time these processes and exchanges can have a significant effect on that power. Moreover, the power of the group is expressed precisely at the interface between the group and its environment, and as a force it is expressed either by being embedded in other social relations, or by opposing them (Randall and Southgate, 1980/1988; Flaker, 2022a).

Paradoxically, by definition, assistance and help take power away from the helped. The need for help not only proves and demonstrates helplessness and powerlessness, it also produces it. Doing things for, or instead of, somebody diminishes his or her actual control over the matter, over their Life-World – it withholds sovereignty over it.[51] Hence, after being helped, a remedial action is required, the person who received help must recover, regain strength and regain the lost ground (Flaker, 2015, pp. 54–60).

The sense of the empowerment operation is therefore gaining power, but also conserving it and recovering it after an "episode of help". The modes of working applied in empowerment are usually advocacy and negotiation.

Contractual power

In social work, the most appropriate operational definition of power is to consider it as contractual power. So we need to evaluate and analyse it according to its constituents, mapping power possessed against the power that can be attained. This involves also decoding the "power diagram" – the lines of forces that are shaping the situation and establishing the status of the person. By taking into account the power invested in social work, we can identify mechanisms and the places where power is lost, and the opportunities to enhance power or import it into the situation from outside.

Contractual power is not only the ability to fulfil a contract but also the capacity to guarantee such performance, or still preceding this, being able, having the potential to enter into a contractual relationship. On the registry of interaction the contract also presupposes the character of the person of the contractee, implies a notion of oneself and the other (Goffman, 1961a, p. 174). Contractual power originates mainly from the social status, which can be seen as the general and quasi-formal basis of contractual capacity and power. This virtual property (virtue) is upheld by (or falls on) the interactional credibility. The outcome of these two faculties, their synthesis, are social roles in which statuses are realised either in a credible or discrediting way.

In legal terms, contractual power or capacity is articulated as legal capacity. Legal capacity is granted almost automatically with

citizenship. However, mere citizenship only provides limited contractual and legal capacity (since the state does not vouch for the deeds of its citizens) and must be upheld by property, or as is the case for the majority, usually by employment (contractual power thus being determined by the division of property and the division of labour).

For large segments of society who are not in employment, surrogate statuses are provided – some of these are temporary – such as the status of child or minor, patient, convict, alien; some are of a more permanent nature – such as being retired, disabled, being under guardianship, etc.). The surrogate statuses at least provide some kind of status, although the contractual and even the legal capacity pertaining to these statuses is greatly diminished. There are other formal statuses that a person can acquire; such as having a job or a work position, being in education, being a functionary or a member of a formal group or organisation, or even having a permanent address. These do not provide the basic legal capacity per se, but can sometimes support and enhance or even, for example in the case of employment, be the condition for a person being granted the contractual capacity and power.

Money does not only ensure purchasing power, but also the power to enter into contracts. When someone has money it is easier to trust them to fulfil their obligations; if someone does not deliver their part of the contract, they should be able to compensate for it, either by paying damages or hiring someone to do it for them. Besides citizenship, employment or other equivalent status, money, and other resources that can be measured in monetary value, constitute an alternative potential to enter into contractual relationships. Income, salary, assets, real estate, annuities, and savings all provide the capacity to deliver contracts. Money, in addition to being a general equivalent of work (political economy), is also a general equivalent of trust (moral economy of trust).

Contracts require guarantees or deposits. Apart from status and monetary basis, various other kinds of guarantees can secure the contract. Guarantors, trustees, or advocates can provide support for contractual interaction and interchange, as can deposits, property and social capital. The network in which the individual is interwoven assures others that they will take care of the delivery of the

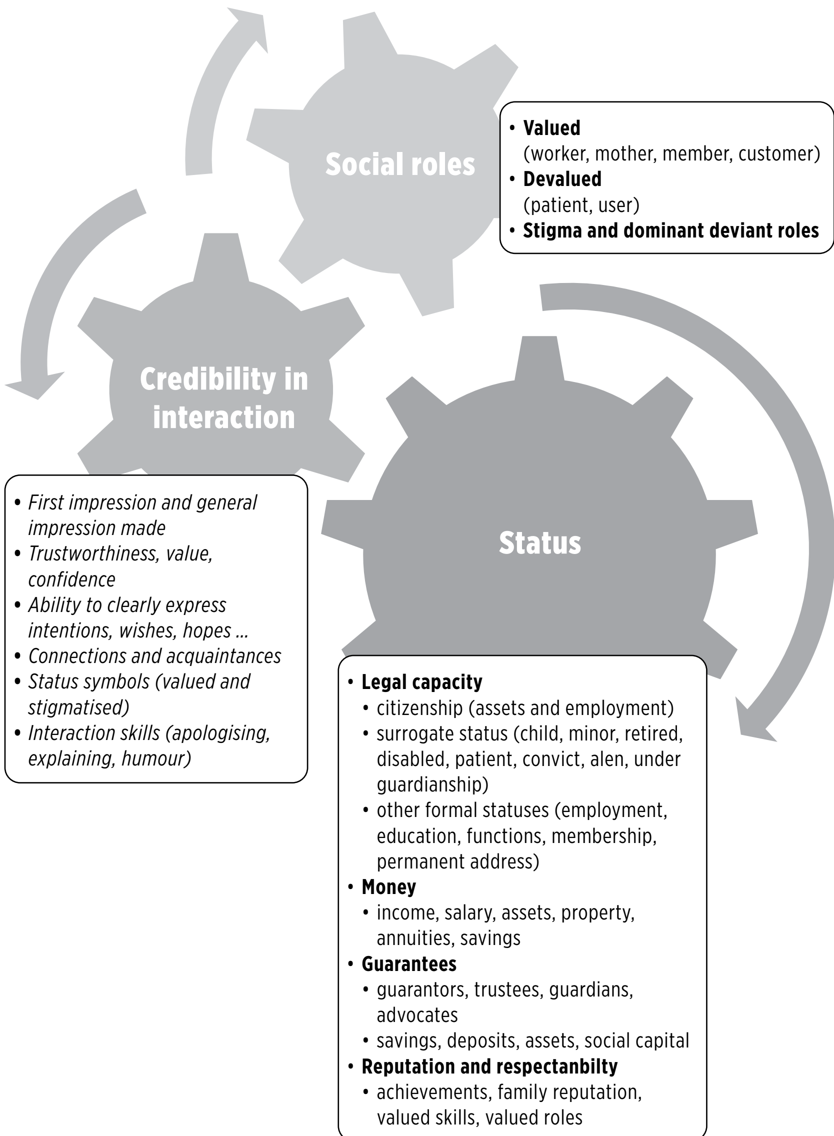
"contractual obligations". They vouch for him, extending their status and reputation into areas where the individual may be lacking. Social capital is thus often expressed as reputation and respectability and can be supported by achievements, family reputation, valued skills and valued roles.

In comparison with social status, credibility in interaction plays a minor, but still important role in the contractual interaction. The first impression and the general impression a person gives off, eases the entry into contractual relationship, as do the trustworthiness and confidence enjoyed by others. The ability to clearly state one's intentions, wishes, hopes etc., is an important tool in the formation of contractual interchanges. Connections and acquaintances do not only provide the basis of contacts but they can also provide a good impression and trust when concluding contracts, and sometimes in addition they are also go-betweens in doing business or forming contractual relationships. Interactional skills such as apologising, explaining and using humour increase credibility, facilitate business dealings and contribute to contractual capacity. Status symbols can encourage the formation of contracts if valued, and blight the process when stigmatised.

Social roles can be seen as a synthesis of status and interactional credibility, combining them into a functional and interactional whole.[52] Having a valued role as worker, mother, member, customer, etc. directly provides increased contractual capacity, while a devalued role, for example as patient, user of social services, social case, etc., reduces it. The more roles someone performs, the greater one's contractual power – and vice versa – the fewer roles there are at one's disposal or in the extreme case when the repertoire is reduced to a single deviant role, the contractual power is meagre. The more valued roles we have, the greater is our social value. One of the most important function of stigma (and the dominant deviant role) is to serve as a warning that functions as a cautionary tale that discredits players regarding the virtual, virtuous general assumption of contractual capacity (Goffman, 1963a).

Figure 4, which schematically shows the more detailed elements of contractual power – status, credibility, and roles – can be used as a checklist when assessing power in any social work situation. It can

Figure 4: The elements of contractual power



serve as an initial benchmark of contractual power at the start of the work. It can be used later to evaluate the intervention in terms of empowerment – whether our work led to an enhancement or reduction of social power. Using the diagram as an aid, we can move directly to increase power, using the listed elements of contractual power to

map the power a person has available, as well as to identify the areas in which they lack power. Based on such a map, an "empowerment plan" can be made to trace a path that will lead us through the areas of diminished strength so that we can fill them.[53]

Although such a map detects the power available as well as that needed in a particular situation by a person or a group, it shows what is missing but not where to get the missing power from. For that, a different map is required – a diagram of power, a diagram of the forces at work in a given field.

Changing the diagram of power

We can assume that there are diverse social (political, economic) forces at work in a given social field. Their resultant expresses itself as a social situation – either in itself, or for some group or person – in the form of statuses, interaction capacity and social roles. Some of those forces at work in a situation are manifest, easy to spot, others are well hidden in the background, or in what Kurt Lewin (1947) terms a quasi-stationary equilibrium – combined in mutual action resulting in a balance that hides precisely those forces which are operating. These forces have to be decoded and mapped in a diagram by, among other things, destabilising the equilibrium through an intervention in the field. Such a map can help us identify which sources of power can be used to strengthen the power of the agent who lacks it, as well as to recognise the forces that are taking power away, reducing it and causing disempowerment. (For an example of the use of such mapping see Flaker et al., 2007b).

The basic power diagram in social work, and other people-serving activities, is the power relationship between the service user and the professional. Although seemingly a dyadic relationship, it is at least a threesome, a tripartite diagram – it is not only about the expectations of users and social worker in respect of each other, it is also about the power invested in social work (and taken away from users) by centres of power. Social work is basically a "middle dog" between the "top dog" and the user as a social "underdog". The social worker, like all intellectuals, is a link in a vertical chain of subordination.

Figure 5: Diagram of the hierarchical three-layer power relationship

In this case the function of the "middle-dog" (intellectual) is to transmit messages, orders, actually commands, from the top to the bottom (Gramsci, 1971; Basaglia and Basaglia, 1975).

Types of power relationships

The power relationship between professionals and users can take one of three forms (Basaglia, 1987, pp. 65–66; 1968/1998, pp. 121–122):

- aristocratic relationship – a contractual relationship between the holder of economic power and the holder of professional power,
- help relationship – a relationship between a rightful claimant and an expert (bureaucrat),
- institutional relationship – a relationship of pure control between the institutional power holder and "the wretched of the rights".

The first relationship is based on the balance, exchange of economic and professional power. The services of the professional (e.g. private psychiatric practice) can be purchased and, beyond the agreed services, the customer remains a free individual. The professionals give advice, not orders. It is difficult to command a king. For example: King George III, King of Great Britain and Ireland, absolutist ruler at the end of the 18th century, went mad. It was notably difficult for doctors to give him orders, since he was the supreme authority in the country. It took a great deal of political action to get him to become a patient (Porter, 1987). The user of the service in this relationship is genuinely the client, who commissions the service, he or she has the economic power, while the service provider merely has professional power.

The second relationship is linked to the welfare state. The social worker or the doctor has a monopoly and society grants him powers which go beyond mere professional power. Users can exercise their rights as citizens, they are beneficiaries (making them part of the proceedings, not a contractual party). This is a bureaucratic power relationship. Users are dependent on experts, but in a type of dependency which allows them a degree of freedom and even power in relation to the expert (e.g. with the potential to make complaints).

In institutions, the resident's power is minor, if not minimal, or is taken away from them altogether. People in institutional wards are naked objects upon which power acts, things that staff are supposed to take care of and control.

Professional power is shaped not only by the mandate that the expert receives in his actual relationship with the user, but also by the vectors of power beyond this relationship. In the aristocratic relationship power and mandate derive, on the one hand, from the expert's actual ability to deal with the situation, and from the expert's general reputation and prestige, on the other, however, they must be actually conferred by the user him or herself. In the help relationship, the mandate comes first of all from the state (public service), but also from the user, who, as a citizen, is also a beneficiary with rights. In the institutional relationship the professional mandate is given to the expert mainly by others (the state, the user's environment), while the user's mandate remains ignored and denied.

While the first of these types of relationships is horizontal, compound, the others are vertical, superordinate-subordinate, the last one especially so. In the latter two diagrammatic constellations the mandate of social work (and any other similar profession) should be to operate so that the diagram moves towards a horizontal relationship. The art of the profession, however, is how to use the power invested in the profession to empower users. It is about transferring the power, invested in the profession, to the users. We can achieve this by empowering users to "speak", by hearing them and acknowledging their distress, and then by conveying the message to those with decision-making power, involving them in the situation, and bringing their power into play, to empower and improve the life of the "underdog". A power transfer of this kind enables empowerment of a person, greater sovereignty in his or her Life-World and, not least, to have a better life.

Figure 6: Reconfigured diagram of the three-layered power relationships

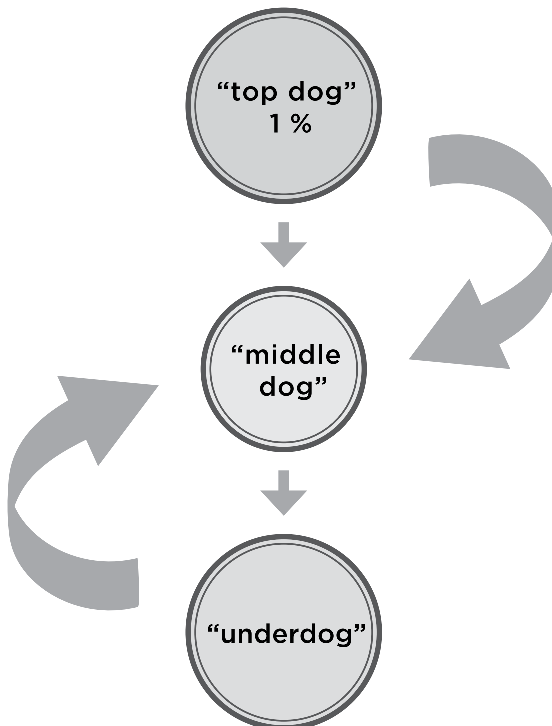


Figure 6 depicts the flow of information and involvement between the bearers of power in the situation – thus the redistribution of power. In this way social work is not only an agent of redistribution of social wealth but also of social power. At the same time it portrays the double mandate social work needs to have.

> Social work is always about seeking and securing a double mandate – from the powerful and the powerless, from the user but also from the centres of power, which have the necessary power to change the user's situation.

Psychologisation and individualisation of power

> The concept of empowerment, which originated in the struggle against apartheid, is a political concept par excellence. In its current usage it has been diluted, lost its bite and come to signify psychological capabilities, such as assertiveness, decisiveness, courage and social skills. Slightly better, but still misleading, it may be reduced to the approach of the strengths perspective. The *strengths perspective* is an approach that focuses on a person's virtues (their strengths), rather than on their weaknesses, deficits and faults (Saleebey, 1996). For social work, it is important when working with people, to learn what they can do, how they can be seen in a good light, rather than concentrating on what they cannot do, what is wrong with them, what they lack. This approach is an important paradigmatic shift towards getting to know the individuals and their Life-Worlds (Brost and Johnson, 1982). It is a giant step towards seeing users as *heroes* of survival, rather than as victims of devastating circumstances (poverty, violence, stress) or even to blame for them (as is characteristic with drug users, people with mental distress...).
>
> *The strengths perspective is an important part of empowerment, but empowerment cannot simply be reduced this.*

Use of the term empowerment in a demeaning way can be considered as a, probably not intentional, "ideological revision" of the

concept that fails to take into account the structural features of the situation in which empowerment takes place.

When we place the issue of power within the individual and their psychological structure, or when we want to "empower somebody", we position them as the "object of empowerment", and this changes the essence of the operation. With this twist, as by turning them into an object of empowerment, we replace cause with effect, we consider them the source of loss of power, or inversely the source of power and not its bearer. Such an operation reiterates concentration on the fault, the guilt – making people wonder "What did I do wrong? Where did I make a mistake?" On other hand, it also reflects powerlessness and lack of resources by the professionals. For example, "empowering" the victim of family violence through counselling and engaging in family therapy, may reflect an inability to provide material resources, such as a flat the victim could move to (and which would also strengthen the possibilities of counselling and negotiation).

At the structural level, there is broad understanding that society consists of equal individuals. Consequently, the welfare register is placed on the individual – and this in turn enhances focus on the individuality of the welfare – denying its social nature. A good example of this is deinstitutionalisation – which is in its very purpose a protection of the individual against the oppressive collectivity. Here, the individual is a good starting point, and probably a good destination. However, deinstitutionalisation, as a process and operation, must be seen as a collective issue – be it as individual empowerment resulting from the collective action, or, in term of recovery, regaining common ground. Investment in an individual is also investment in the community and vice versa.

Operation D: Creating a work relationship, an alliance

Social work is about *relationships*. And, social work is a relationship. A special relationship – a work relationship and alliance. Social work is about people coming together in order to perform meaningful changes in their lives. Hence, it is a working relationship, an alliance of action.

However, before we start performing the social work, we need an idea of what to do. This idea needs to reflect a person's inner and outer reality and needs to be reflexive to the events and contingencies of their Life-World. It must also be utopian – bringing about something that is not yet present, while at the same time being pragmatic enough to be workable. Indeed, it has to be feasible, with a basic concept for how it can be achieved, and thus how the utopia returns to reality.

Dialogue

The most important tool for realising this, and probably among the most important tools in social work generally, is dialogue. Dialogue does not mean the conversation between two people, the prefix "dia-" does not stand for "two" but for "through", "across" ... Dialogue literally means talking (and thinking) the matter through. Announcing what is to come.

Seen through Freire's (1972a) prism, dialogue is a way of seeing through the material forces, a way of including people, conspiring with them to see what is going to be. Dialogue is a way of rendering the social arrangements material (reducing substance to matter) and

thus to transform them. Just like love was, for that man, a reason to dress better.

Dialogue is a means of establishing a safe space where it is possible to express things, to name the world in order to change it (Freire, 1972a). It means establishing "theoretical (thought) contexts", in which the concrete context of the lived-in world can be represented and decoded, and where new codes can be produced, which can lead to action in the actual context.

The necessary prerequisite for working together is the encounter, contact.[54] Social work users usually get referred to social work practitioners by other services or fellow users, who detect that there might be a social work issue; or they may come on their own initiative "to sort something out", be it a simple social benefit or the complexity of life. Not infrequently, however, it is also the task of social work to "seek out" the user, as is the case when it is a statutory or a moral obligation due to perceived danger.[55]

In any case, meeting is essential and, since social work is not repairing or making "things" but dealing with human, personal and existential matters, this usually means an encounter between two human beings. This may not be important when the common task is a simple one, but is of vital importance when it comes to sorting out the "whole life". Here mere professional trust is not sufficient – authentic human trust must be developed. Actors need to get to know each other, and this should be a two-way, more or less symmetrical, mutual process. The social worker also needs to learn about the person in their situation, acquire the "user's perspective" and recognise the strengths of the person. The user needs to know the social worker in terms of what he or she has to offer, to get a rough idea of how social work operates and what resources are at its disposal. They also need to understand the way in which the social worker experiences the kind of distress presented by the user, what the social worker's attitudes and values are – and to at least get some idea of what kind of person he or she is.[56] Employing the strengths perspective is important since it is about sharing values. *For common endeavours, a common value base is required.*[57]

Places to encounter

The meeting point should, in principle, be somewhere half-way between the two Life-Worlds. While it may be handy for the social worker to meet in his or her office, this might not hold true from the user's perspective. Although the social worker's office should theoretically be a safe space, a space where it's possible to express anxieties, worries, desires …, the user might not see it that way. He or she might experience it as alien territory, somebody else's turf, feel constrained by assumed or actual rules (e.g. no smoking) and by expectations of how to behave.

Meeting in the user's home environment reverses this perspective. Not only does the user feel at home and is in the host role, thus reducing the power differential, but additionally the social worker encounters and gets to know the user's situation, not only their abstract persona but also its material and immaterial extensions.

Meeting on neutral territory, often a public space (café, park, town square) is also a good option, especially in the early stages of working together. Not only is it a location unburdened from institutional expectations or domestic constraints, but it also enables an encounter that can be, prima facie, an exchange of equals (Goffman, 1963b; 1961b; Flaker, 2022b).

Often, out of necessity, an institutional space other than the social worker's office has to be used (hospital, prison, retirement home). In such cases a niche should be sought which permits a personal encounter, a stand-in for home, office or public space – allowing privacy, equality and sovereignty. These conditions must also be ensured in the spatial arrangement of the meeting.

(For more details on operating in these spaces, see Flaker, 2003, pp. 45–50; Milošević Arnold and Urh, 2009; Flaker, 2015, pp. 193–211).

The dualities of the social work mandate

In order to be able to do social work we need a commission, a mandate. In social work, the mandate is always dual, as shown above in the power diagram (p. 63). A worker must get the invitation, the

authorisation to do the work, from above and from below, usually from those who hold the power and from the user. This is a characteristic of social work, especially in statutory services, like centres for social work in Slovenia. Here we will take a brief look at the process of acquiring the mandate.

Although the mandate is a constant issue in a work relationship, it must be dealt with intensively from the outset. The worker needs to be crystal clear about the mandate and how he or she is implicated in the user's situation – i.e. on his or her prior mandate from above. The user might be very clear about what he or she wants, or expects the social worker to do, but often not. When such clarity is lacking, the mandate has to be developed in line with the desires and goals of common action. The mandate and the goals of action may coincide and they must be congruent – although they do not need to be identical. Many actions may be necessary to achieve the goals – not all of them need be performed by the worker.

The user's mandate and goals must be developed on the basis of the contradictions and tensions in the user's Life-World (and not be imported from outside). They should be expressions of the user's (free) will. They should be in line with the other three operations – they should reflect and respond to exigencies of the Life-World, the intended benefits of changes and empowerment of the user. The exploratory phase of the work alliance should be dedicated to getting an insight into the situation that will provide the basis for deciding on the goals and the actions needed to realise them.

The expressed desires and established goals provide the direction and framework for action. To realise the goals, a plan or a "project" must be made. This can be referred to as a personal plan, care plan, individual plan, individual unique project, etc. Or, it can simply be a task to be performed. The idea is the same. Some plans are meticulously made, clearly stating what has to be done, who by, when, the time needed, using what means and employing which resources. Others provide just general guidance and the main idea for action. But, even in such cases, some operative knowledge needs to be built in.

And this is when the actual work begins. The "work" in social work chiefly signifies either the provision of services or means (and

resources), or the creation of various (intangible) arrangements that will improve human life (Flaker, 2015, pp. 29–36). The design is principally that of a service model; services are also instrumental in providing resources and setting up arrangements, although in this case they are not the final purpose.

Goffman (1961a, pp. 337–355) distinguishes between services that repair and those that create something new. Although social work is strongly influenced by the repairing service model (via disciplines like medicine), in its essence, social work is a creating profession. It creates new opportunities and possibilities, new arrangements, new life. While the repairing model needs assessment of what has gone wrong, in social work the issue is what can be done. Instead of diagnostics there is planning. Instead of reaction to misdeeds, malfunctioning, we take a proactive stance – taking an imaginative look into the future. Such modelling not only enables a totally different outlook, stance and approach, it also models the professional and user roles in a completely different way. The user ceases to be an object of professional repairing action, the subject is his or her reality and situation, and the objectives are his or her goals. Users become creators, with assistance, of a new design and new arrangements – performers of new deeds in their Life-World. The professional role of the social worker becomes very much like that of the architect, providing the expertise in investigating the Life-World, getting the ideas what to do, formulating a plan how to do it and accessing the needed resources and means for doing it. Only a creative service model allows a real working relationship to develop.

The tenacity and persistence of the repair model can be attributed, among other things, to its compliance with the most common mandate that social work receives from above, the one that establishes it as the guardian of the social order. Gramsci (1971) positions the role of the intellectual, i.e. an expert, in the power relations of society: as either a functionary of social consensus or as a custodian of those who nevertheless resist it too much. In the latter case, his "technical", "professional" task is to organise the care of, or, more accurately, control over, people in various institutions (mental hospitals, prisons, also in old age homes[58]). In the former case, in the role of the consensus functionary, the intellectual's job is to create an

ideology that legitimises the existing system, excusing it, justifying it and convincing people that, despite the problems they experience and the injustices that happen to them, the system responsible is the best at this moment in time. In social work, the custodian function shows itself through referrals to institutions and the maintenance of institutions. The guardian of consensus role manifests itself through counselling functions, which frame social contradictions as personal problems, and shift the blame for social injustices from the system onto the people. Hence people must be fixed, repaired, adapted to the system and social order, and if this does not work, they must be "parked" where they will not disturb others (and convincingly show these others what will happen to them if they do not adapt and obey the rules which ensure the supremacy of the Other).[59]

Such classic point of departure in constructing the mandate is alien to social work and its primary values (self-determination, solidarity, social justice), and at the declarative level it is also unacceptable. But must be accepted in order to work socially. Otherwise the power that could be employed on behalf of the users may be lost. (The alternative, as we will see later, is to switch to the other side.) The acceptance of such a mandate must therefore be, at least to some degree, subversive – in the almost literal sense of the word – we must overturn the mandate to favour the user.

The constricting kind of mandate is quite apparent in those tasks of social work in which, even if not intentionally, the agenda include placing restriction on the user – i.e. in the case of statutory powers, a mandate such as involuntary referral to an institution, the appointment of a guardian (i.e. withdrawal of legal capacity), suspension of parental rights, etc. It is more concealed in other tasks, such as counselling, home care, organising living conditions, relationships with significant others. In these tasks, the mandate of adjustment and control is not explicit, although it is at work in the background and is often, as we noted for counselling, implicit in the design of the method, its dispositive. However, such a mandate always works by being mediated by dominant social values. The moral mandate of social work is always a dialectical pair, splitting the essence of social work into two dialectically connected poles – e.g. in the case of withdrawal of parental rights – the child's right to parents and the right to

a safe childhood. The task of social work is to solve these polar pairs of values, as well as the contradiction between social demands and individual human desires, by concrete syntheses. That is to say, to create a situation in which the child will be safe and have a parent, in which one person will not threaten the others, but will retain their human dignity – dignity derived from freedom. Therefore, an advocacy role and attitude is necessary in social work. Consequently, when dealing with the robust demands of "society", an alliance with the user, rather than just a working relationship, is needed.

At the other extreme, there are situations in which there is no such order, authorisation, or, at least it is not apparent. Although we can be happy that we don't have a "dead weight" hanging over us, this joy can turn out to be fruitless when it is time to act, to get something done. For anything more than minor adjustments, for reframing the social rather than the personal framework, it is not enough to look for sources of power in the user and their Life-World. They are frequently not sufficient, and can often cause the exhausting of one's own resources – at the expense of enhancing the resources of those who have the power anyway. For example, in epidemic situations, the safety of old people in care homes would be greater if they went home or to stay with relatives, but they would still be charged with bills for staying in the institution (Flaker, 2020).

Therefore, this power must be sought elsewhere, outside the user's Life-World. And this is where the combination of the expertise of the user, who knows his or her own Life-World, and the expertise of the social work, who is supposed to know the sources of power and how to connect people to them, is important. If there is no statutory endorsement, or mandate, for such an operation, we need to find other sources, patrons and "power donors". We look for these in structures which might be potentially interested in participating in the transformation of the social framework (private and non-governmental sector), or in self-organisations and social movements, but in this case, sooner or later, we have to activate stronger and wealthier resources.[60]

The creation of a mandate and thus also a working relationship, therefore involves a series of dualities. First there is the duality of the granting of the mandate from the user and power centres, then there

is the duality inherent in the contradictions of social values and demands (to be explored and used in a working relationship), as well as the duality of explicit mandates, social demands and their absence, i.e. of overturning of the mandate and the search for a power-mandating body.

Intensities of intervention

Goals, projects and plans are invitations from the user to enter into his or her world. And, as with all invitations, should be taken up politely and respectfully. However, the invitation can relate to different levels of entry into the Life-World, or, to be clear, to different levels of social work's intervention into someone's Life-World (Flaker, 2015, pp. 53-61). The relationship can start and end at the level of just representing the Life-Worlds in a talking encounter, which is usually termed counselling. In this case, a social worker does not enter the realities of the user, their actual real-life world.

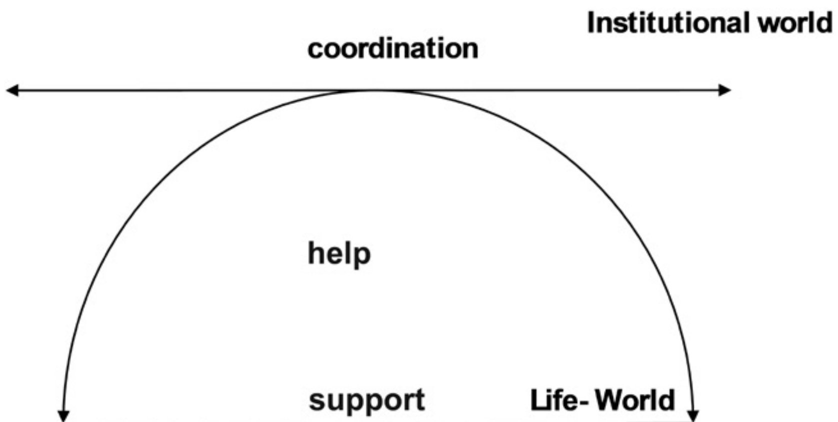
The next degree is entering into the world actually lived in by user, so that we provide support in specific activities by encouraging, providing material and moral support, and do this within the real contexts of their Life-World, as happens in personal assistance or what could be termed "support-work". When this is the case, the "supporter" enters the Life-World of the user and, at least during the process of support, becomes a part of it.

During the "help" operation, or at such a stage of an intervention, the "helper" acts from a position outside the Life-World and brings a new force into the field, which originates and is anchored in the domain outside the user's Life-World. This duality of locations creates a power relationship, in which the "helper" not only contributes to the activities of the "helped" but also "does things for him or her"[61], adding their own actions, some stemming from their own situation. With such actions, a middle ground between the ordinary Life-World and the institutional world is generated, in which the user is still embedded in his or her Life-World but is drawn into relationships where they lose a degree of the sovereignty which is otherwise characteristic of their Life-World.[62] This intensity is usually referred to as social "casework".

"Help" and "support" are essentially synonyms. Here we use the two terms to signify a difference that is negligible in everyday parlance. "Support" denotes an activity that sustains the activity of an actor by adding a force to it without altering the direction or intention of the activity. In contrast, we define "help" as a force in the field that operates as a vector, thus contributing to the activity of the actor while introducing an extra dimension to it and thus, however slightly, changing its direction and adding to its intention. In the terminology of mechanics, support is a "scalar" and help is a "vector" force.

When things get more complex, and especially when more input of institutional resources is needed, more organisation and coordination is involved. More "helpers" and "supporters" are needed and the intensity of intervention increases and reaches a new quality. Such comprehensive care is often called "care management", and it brings social work activity to the level of the organisation. It still mostly takes place in the intermediate space between the Life-World and the institutional world. The latter is merely touched tangentially, a point of contact with the institutional world which connects it to the intentionally oriented plane of the Life-World. Thus, it creates an "arc of help" (Figure 7) that ranges from the finality of the user's activities in the Life-World to different degrees of intensity of help.

Figure 7: The arc of help



The most intensive social work[63] intervention into the Life-World is taking somebody from his or her environment and displacing them to another, usually readymade, institutional space. This is usually called "institutional care" or in a post-institutional setting "residential care". Here, the person is up-rooted from his or her Life-World and transferred to a simulacrum of it.

This progression of intensities of interventions can be seen as a series of non-corporeal transformations of space, including the relationships situated in it, and of respective professional and user roles. The common space of the user and the social worker is transformed from an ideational space representing the Life-World, in Freire's terminology a "theoretical context", which is created in an interpersonal encounter, into a blending of the social worker into the user's Life-World by supporting their activities; then into a bridging of the personal and institutional world, the creation of an arch or dome of care that touches the institutional world, but is grounded in the activity of the Life-World; and ultimately displacing the user in the artificial, institutional world. The work relationships, thus formed, range from a free exchange of ideas with no direct consequence in a person's Life-World, its purpose being only reflection, gaining insight and reorientation, to a relationship in which the care provider takes charge of the person and is in fact, if not legally, their guardian. Between these two poles, there are relationships of comradeship in working together in a person's Life-World, the power relationship arising from helping, and the relationship of care brokerage between the Life-World and the institutional realm. The sequence of levels of intervention in the Life-World is summarised in Table 2.

We can observe two very strong tendencies in the sequence of the intensity of intervention. The first is the draining of power from the user, caused by the power differential introduced by the professional and moreover originating from the very idea and process of help. The other, concurrent with the loss of power, is the loss of the ground beneath one's feet, the uprooting from the Life-World. This de-territorialisation, de-grounding, can have a productive result by increasing the ability to improve the user's life – by expanding the reflective view, by expanding the room to manoeuvre, and by gaining autonomy in everyday life and by providing access to the benefits of the institutional

Table 2: Characteristics of the levels of intensity of intervention in the life space

Activity	Level	Term	Space	Relation-ship	Remedial action
Talking	repre-sentation	counselling	ideatory	reflective	reflexive thought + mutuality, symme-try of exchange
Supporting	actions	personal assistance (support work)	Life-World	comrade-ship in action	user perspective
Helping	power	casework	bridge be-tween Life-World and institutional space	power	empowerment
Caring	organisa-tion	care management	institutional "dome" over the Life-World	broker	self-management, re-appropriation of institutional resources
Placing	spatial shift	residential care	institutional	guardian	temporary and personalisation of the space

space. However, it can lead to progressive exclusion from meaningful relationships, estrangement from home and community. This intensification of help stages a series of metamorphoses – non-corporeal mutations, that cease to be merely situational (as they usually are in everyday life) and lead to progressive objectification into an institutional object. *The road to hell is paved with good intentions*.

The intentions, in social work, are undoubtedly good. Even the results need not necessarily be catastrophic, but rather relatively benign. Even so, this is not enough to counteract the accompanying underlying processes of losing power and the ground beneath one's feet. Social work has an arsenal of antidotes to these "iatrogenic" harms. Just like in everyday interaction, there has to be a remedial action for each threat of losing ground and power capacity.

One remedial manoeuvre is awareness that the Life-World is the point of departure and return. Not only because, as described earlier,

this is a criterion of social work intervention, but also because of the basic finalism of human action, which we need to support and in which the intervention takes place. We need to keep in mind that we are dealing with an activity that, by definition, has a purpose and that has its own goal (always specific, but generally to improve life conditions), and that this is the site of building our common action. Therefore, consistently adopting the "user's perspective" is the main way of fending off the negative consequences and side effects of social work intervention.

There are a variety of remedial actions available, depending on the degree of intensity of the threat. Even in the least intrusive action of representation, since it is a detachment from the Life-World and an act of deterritorialisation, there is a danger of skewing the gaze by importing ideas into the person's Life-World through representation (Freire (1972a) calls this "invasion"). To eschew such an imposition, invasion, we need to establish dialogic precautions through a critical and reflexive stance, as well as through reciprocity and symmetry of exchange.

Empowerment is a general antidote to losing power immanent to different degrees in social work intervention. If helping diminishes the power of the one we are helping, the power must be "assessed" at the completion of intervention to assure that it is not a case of "operation successful, but the patient died" and to design the remedial action to restore power beyond the side effects of helping.

In coordinated care, it is important to pay attention to any threats of uprooting and lack of control in our lives that occur at the lower levels of intensity and to integrate the remedies into the coordination. Special attention must be paid to symmetry, critical thought, the user's perspective and empowerment at all stages of planning and coordinating care. However, for this intensity there is a special imperative of "self-government", being in charge of one's care and the inflow of resources from institutional sources, which should not be treated as state charity or handouts, but as a re-appropriation of the public good.

Displacement should be avoided at all costs (and written off as a universal and paramount response to distress). When necessary, as in the case of family violence, or the need for safe haven etc., it must be a

short-term and temporary solution, preserving the connections to the usual Life-World, with intense work at lower intensities of intervention to enable the return to it. If return is not possible, the maximum personalisation of the new place (i.e. creating a new home) should be facilitated, as is the case in everyday life, when people move home from one environment to another.

This five-level gear shift of intensities in social work demonstrates, among other things, the ability and necessity of social work to traverse and connect the Life-World (concrete) and the institutional (abstract) planes. In doing so, it creates crevices, niches, in what would otherwise be a solid construction with no intermediate space between the two. The "Life-World" of social work is in these cracks in the social construction. The critical moments of transition, of passage bring out the necessity of social work.

Words: From none to too many

Although the purpose of this operation is work, doing something, it may seem to involve a lot of talking. Not only are words, talking and language, a significant, even an essential, part of human existence, they are also of vital importance in establishing contact, getting to know one another, formulating goals, planning and putting plans into practice, as well as monitoring, evaluating and reflecting on the work.

Working without words

Among the users of social work are those who have no faculty of language. We are not referring to those who speak another language or who cannot hear or vocalise the words, but to people who do not understand words in any language, who do not have such mental capacity. In such situations it is possible to have contact on the level of the body, movement, or perception, getting to know them by being together, by observing what they do, how they feel and by trying things out in action, learning through doing. It is possible to sense their desires and their wishes. It is possible to enter their Life-World, to sense it, and even

reflect it – in a joint shared dance. (Dance is also a conversation). It is even possible to provide support without words, in the world they live in.

It becomes evident that being completely without words is a key critical moment in bridging the world of the wordless to those other worlds in which words are still important, especially in bridging their Life-World to institutional ones – in presenting entitlements, plans, goals, arrangements and relationships. These words have a material power of action. The role of a social worker is similar to a translator or a loudspeaker, to convey the sensed desires to an audience which is not capable of immediate presence in the way needed to understand such an expression. This involves transforming or transposing the feelings and material aspects of the situation into words by means of logical deduction and induction, and especially abductive reasoning[64], which must be based on shared experience, empathy, or even by becoming the other (more on that later), or by knowing the situation and the person by way of praxis.

What has just been described does not only apply to situations with no words; getting to know each other and living together are general processes that are the basis of social work in this and other operations. Social work, even in the getting to know each other phase, is not only about words and language, but also about BEING THERE[65], observation and experimentation – trying things out. On the other hand, there is always the necessity to translate such non-verbally gained knowledge and insight into performative words, into the language of entitlements and other formal languages that dominate the caring and guardian professions and their actions.

Fetishism of words and relationships

Given the importance of words generally, and in particular in the operation of establishing a working relationship, there is a considerable possibility of becoming trapped in empty words – in words that have no practical meaning, words that do not generate actions, which at least directly, bear no performative properties. Empty words are those that are too abstract to have an operable meaning (cf. discussion of abstractions and concepts, p. 156). Even more perilous are those

words or speech acts that are perceived as acts in reality – that equate something said with something actually being carried out.

If we ask social workers, practitioners, students or academics, which skill is most important in social work, the most common reply is likely to be that it is skill in talking. Users, on the other hand will respond differently – they expect social workers to help them to "sort out" something, to provide access to needed resources, to "get me a flat, a job ..." (Flaker, 2002b, pp. 211–218). Maybe this divergence results from the great influence that psychology and psychotherapy has had on social work, the historical circumstance that, during the period of the academicisation of social work, psychologists, who came in large numbers to teach social work, often taught the methods of social work, consequently focusing mainly on counselling. Perhaps the divergence is there because, at the least intensive intervention in the Life-World, counselling, we remain merely at the level of words. Perhaps also because the virtual world of words is safer than the world of deeds and events, or maybe because, for social workers, the ideological, indoctrinating function of social work is more important than the operative, functional one. In any case, words make it possible to capture acts and events (the word "concept" derives from "capere" – "take, capture" – Snoj, 2015; cf. also Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). This is more important from the expert's point of view than from the user's point of view; presenting mainly the control and overpowering aspect of social work. This is also why it is important to "give the word" to the users and to decode their utterances into common deeds (of doing things together), and even when writing them down, to preserve the action potential that stems from their life situations.

Being "realistic"

> When users articulate their desires or formulate their goals, we often hear professionals expressing concern that these goals could be too "unrealistic" (as if the professionals were the "guardians of reality"). That is the stupidity of the powerful. Goals and desires are unreal by definition, once we realise them, they cease to be. Their essential property is that they are about something that does not yet exist in reality,

is yet to come into being. Realistically speaking, reality is approached only when we act. If we capture reality in thought, we approach it only through actions – which are our tests of that reality. Work and deeds are the membrane, the interface between what we think and the things we act on. In them we realise ourselves, fulfil ourselves (while words can reify us – make us into something that others can work with). Reality is powerful in its own right, it does not need an advocate. The advocate, the support, is needed by the one who is confronting reality.

Specifically in social work, for instance in personal planning, we resolve this complication through the "method of first steps" (Flaker, Mali, Rafaelič and Ratajc, 2013). It is not important whether a goal seems unattainable or not, what is important is to know what be the first realisable step in attaining it is to be. With the steps that we take towards the goal, we test the reality. In terms of action, the desires and goals provide the direction and the energy (motivation). Real work is a series of deeds, actually performed – through which we transform the reality. The slogan of the sixties: "Be realistic and demand the impossible" has retained its special meaning in social work.

And also the fetishism of relationships

In addition to the danger of getting stuck in the fetishism of words, there is also the danger that a social worker can become stuck in the fetishism of relationships. This is a serious danger since relationships are important in social work. On the one hand, as we claim here, establishing a working relationship is the precondition for working together and therefore for social work generally. On the other, too much significance is attached to relationships. This arises from the situation and the concrete dispositive – from the viewpoint of the social worker, since they, in order to perform their task, have to form a (working) relationship. Beyond the situation however, it is a consequence of a long tradition of fetishising relationships, since, in the psychodynamic tradition of social work that prevailed in the 1970s, relationships were the main tool of social work. The psychodynamic, psychoanalytic assumption was that the relationship between the user and the social worker reflects the relationship to the mother and father in early childhood (transference

– which needs to be processed). Additionally, such an attitude towards the relationship determines the guardianship aspect of the social work profession (which historically precedes the psychoanalytic formulation and is really its basis).[66] In this relationship of patronage, rooted in feudalism, the relationship is not accidental, it is predetermined by the place a person has in the pyramidal network of relationships. The relationship between two free and equal people is always, a priori, accidental. The air of destiny of a relationship comes only after time, by working together and also by joint struggle or love.

A trap we can fall into during conversation, is to interpret what users are saying. By doing this we reveal that we do not take their words at face value, we do not believe them. We are not just pretending to be cleverer by doing this, but we are also taking away their intended meaning, taking words away from the user and discrediting them. We are sequestering their words. Such an expropriation is not only disastrous for the user, making them powerless in conversation, especially as far as making agreements is concerned, it is also deleterious for the professional, who thus remains alone in his or her own world. Such perversion of words is a function of power and self-confidence in one's own power, deriving from the guardian relationships. In equal relationships, oaths are not needed, we enter into them bona fide, trusting that the words uttered mean what they mean and not something else – until proved otherwise. Interpretation is a vehicle of stigmatisation – we assume beforehand that somebody is expressing something else; and of domination – the one with the power has the last word.[67]

To avoid the pitfalls of the fetishisation of relationships and words, we need to be mindful that relationships and words are not the ends, but only the means of social work. Establishing a relationship, even when it is decisive, is a precondition and a tool we need to undertake the other three operations.[68] In social work, words are like an invitation to dance. The dance is the way of doing things together, of complementing each other, changing places. It is the essential element of the syntax of acts (including speech acts).[69] Besides being cautious not to fall under the spell of these fetishes, we need, in order to avoid the trap, to design the talk and the relationship carefully, to be attentive to the diagram and distribution of power, to dance the dance of a guardian and an advocate, to give the word to the user and

take their word at face value. For this, and to put the spoken into action, courage is needed.

To avoid such pitfalls we need to maintain partisanship, to remain consistently on the user's side. It also helps to laugh at things and, by not taking them too seriously, deal seriously with them.

A comic paradigm in social work

The comedic element is as underrated in social work as it is in the dramatic arts. Its value as a tool is not recognised. Common opinion is that social work is deadly serious, that it is about human tragedies or, that it is about something official. Yet, it is not uncommon for social workers to relate jokes – funny anecdotes – about their users during their coffee breaks. Likewise, users, in their circles, often ridicule the social workers. The late Zoran Sedmak once commented: "Why don't we laugh together?!" Would it give us hiccups?

Unfortunately, tragedy was installed in our civilisation to be a paradigm for understanding human nature and destiny. Comedy is there to make this easier to bear. It is the art of having fun, forgetting and moving on. For sure, tragedy is a device for remembering (albeit false memories), and humour is a way of forgetting (etymologically, anecdotes are glimpses that should not be published). With humour, we capture the situation in a refined way, laugh at it and move on. Is that why jokes are hard to remember? Is that why the joke tellers laugh the most?

Laughter not only transforms a situation into a bearable one, it allows us to make sense of it, to read between the lines of statements and actions. Unresolvable (tragic) contradictions turn into witty paradoxes. You may need to be stupid to be clever or clever to be stupid (I don't know which), yet, you do not need to be Wittgenstein to be witty.

Humour upends a situation, yet you stay on your feet and walk away. The upending of mind-frame and situation-frame allows us to stay in the situation while exiting it. Surprise is to be welcomed.

This is a good model for social work. The humour is not only a valve which makes it easy to sustain hardship, it is also a good way of coming and being together, doing things in a different way, having fun while working seriously. It is not just a talent, it is also a skill

– one to be nurtured. It is not just useful for breaking the ice, moving on, unblocking the working of the situation, it is also an ethical statement in itself.

The Importance of being Earnest[70]

The classic stance of a professional (and a scientist) is to be impartial, neutral. But we know, not just from the point of view of social work, that this is not sustainable. No matter how hard they try to perform in this way, and at moments achieve this, at the end of the day, in the crucial moments, the professionals will be on the side of the powerful.[71] On the other side, social work is by definition on the side of the most powerless. Such a clear position and commitment (*professio*) are rare luxuries for the professionals. Not only is it essential to assume the user's perspective, foster empowerment and be an advocate – it enables social work to declare its values clearly and decisively and to act upon these values. Nevertheless, like all professionals, we need to stay impartial and nurture the professional discipline, which gives us credibility, and trust that we are not acting for our own personal reasons. The classical definition of a profession or vocation usually equates personal and private. In social work we need to make a distinction. It must be absolutely clear that we are not extracting any private gain from the social work situation, apart from our fee or salary, and that anything additional is accidental rather than a premeditated result. A social worker who takes children to a summer camp should enjoy the camping too, should also be motivated by their own personal experience, although there should be no doubt about the primary intention of the "enterprise" that it is for the common good of the participants and the camp is not organised for the benefit of the social worker (e.g. having a paid holiday).

Empathy

In social work, two kinds of empathy are important – one is interpersonal, in conversation, where an emotional bridge is being established between two people, the second is social or situational, where one tries

to grasp how the other is experiencing his or her social situation. However, the concept and techniques of empathy are often used as a trick to fend off feelings and as a guard against intense involvement with users, to grasp and capture their feelings and situation without getting caught up in them, becoming overwhelmed by emotions and drawn into the situation. Empathy in this way may be a useful short cut to recognising the situation and identifying with people, when there is no time or urgency to enter fully into the situation.

However, making a principle out of it, is neither necessary nor productive. There are many other ways of creating a reflective distance from a situation (e.g. writing a diary, poems, blogs or having reflective discussions within the group experiencing the situation). There are also situations where it is not enough to understand the situation but it is necessary to act in it, and to act personally with "gusto". It is often necessary to demonstrate and confirm – by actions that create trust through intense involvement, with personal risk – that we are truly on the side of our users.

There are many tools and occasions of practising social work as a partisan profession. However, mere empathy, user and strengths perspectives, and observing the ethical imperative of being on the side of the weakest, may not be enough. Not only in anthropology[72], but also in social work, there is a whole history of transitions to the other side, the unwritten history of how experts went "native", relinquishing their appointed role and official mandate and joined the users. Not only joining youth subcultures, but also joining trade unions, activist groups and movements. And, this might not be just a fleeting jaunt, but a one way street (with burnt bridges and wrecked ships). Becoming the other is not just imagining how it is to be in their shoes, not just a provisional step outside the role, it is relinquishing the power invested in it. The prince has to become a pauper, for real, in order for a synthesis to occur.

Operation C ∩ D: Heightening the intensity of intervention also intensifies the issue of power

We have seen that stepping up interventions into the user's Life-World is not just about establishing a working relationship, but is, equally importantly, an operation of empowerment. In this chapter, which came about through discussions with students, we try to illustrate intensification of interventions in the Life-World of users. At the same time, the examples clearly show that empowerment is not just about respecting the strengths perspective, or about encouragement in conversation: it is not only a conversational practice, but also a practice of action, of rearrangements of both material and immaterial power relationships. We will illustrate this with two very different examples. Both are hypothetical, fictional, but also quite typical of social work.

Examples

Our first example concerns a friendly intervention by one girl into her friend's Life-World. One of the pair is having trouble at school. Because of her bad grades, her teacher has put her on a warning, threatening that she will have to repeat the class, or that she might even be expelled. Her friend wants to help her out. Let us look at what she can do for her friend at the previously described, various levels of intervention into the other's living space.

- *Talking*. They discuss her problems as friends. They comfort each other, berate the teacher who picked on her and look for solutions. They think about how she could study better, how she could stand up for herself against the teacher, formulate tactics, discuss how to tell parents about the problems, etc.

- *Support*. They jointly find out what needs to be learnt. The helping friend lends her exercise books, text books. They study together. They go to talk to the teacher together.
- *Help*. The helping friend instructs the other in subjects she is good at. She goes to the teacher and explains the situation, arranging for additional study material. The friend refers her to, or advises her to see, the school counsellor, with whom she is acquainted through working on a joint project.
- *Coordination (of care*). She organises tuition for her friend from those other classmates who have a good command of the subjects. In class, she organises a small fundraiser for her friend to buy books she does not have. She arranges for the class leader to warn the class teacher that some teachers have picked on her friend. She persuades the girl's parents to agree that they will not pull her out of the school, and that they will not overload her with work around the house while she is correcting her grades. In addition, they will take care of recreation and relaxation, setting aside time for activities that will relieve the pressure on her.
- *Displacement*. Because the conditions at home are unbearable, she moves her friend in with her during the time of intensive study. For the half-term holidays they go together to her parent's weekend house to study. (Option B – the friend moves to a student dormitory or a group home, maybe a shared flat: option C, which can be combined with option B – because she has such a bad reputation at school, she changes school).

The second example concerns a scenario at an old people's home (also hypothetical, equally typical). Two female roommates do not get on. They have different lifestyles, one going to bed early while the other watches TV; one likes to keep things tidy, the other is messy. They often argue. In this case there is a formal helper, a social worker.

- *Talking*. The resident comes to the social worker with her distress and complaints. They discuss the hardships she is experiencing, and look for possible solutions together – either ways to arrive at a better coexistence with her roommate, or how she can adapt to the situation. They also investigate other possibilities such as

making a formal complaint, the possibility of moving to another room, etc.

- *Support*. The social worker tells the resident about the complaint procedure. In consultation with the social worker, the resident writes the complaint in their office. Together, they make an inquiry to the head nurse about available places and rooms. The social worker visits the roommate several times to get to know the situation better, and also so that they can talk and maybe reach an arrangement in passing.
- *Help*. The social worker calls the head nurse and arranges a move to a different roommate. Option B: Arranges for the resident to get an assistance allowance, so that she can afford to pay the extra for a single room. Option C: because moving to another room is not currently possible (or because the social worker judges that the same situation will happen again in the new room – which can also be used as an excuse, when the first option is not possible), she talks to both roommates together about how to understand each other better and live together.
- *Coordinated care*. Since the conversations show that the unbearableness of living in the same room is only one of the problems the resident is experiencing, she decides, with the social worker, to make a personal plan. As well as a move to another room, this also provides for more (accompanied) outings from the home, participation in more activities in the home, a more intense social life, more contact with the grandchildren and, until moving to another room is possible, someone to mediate in disputes between the two roommates.
- *Displacement*. A move to a different room. Also possibly to a different home or back to her own home. In the latter case with a personal care package, which will ensure the care she needs, the lack of which was the reason for her being in the old people's home in the first place.

* * *

Despite the seemingly arbitrary nature of classification of the listed activities by category, the examples can serve as good illustrations,

both of the transition from one level of intervention intensity to another, and also of the logic that applies at one level and not at another.

It is also clear from both examples that when we "shift" to a more intensive level of intervention, we can transfer activities from a lower level, except now they change their value and nature or acquire a different place in the overall set of activities. The two friends always talk and confer, while in the support register, about what they will actually do together, what someone can do to help, how they might involve others in their actions (coordination), or even about a change of place (displacement). Each increased level of intensity therefore includes activities from less intensive levels of intervention.

Of course, the opposite also applies: every minor level, by definition, cannot contain more intensive interventions or rather it can only include them as an indirect consequence of its own intensity – e.g. during a conversation, the two friends find that changing schools is the best solution, resulting in the friend who is having problems changing schools. However, she does that on her own, without the support, assistance or coordination of her friend. But she can only do this if she is strong enough to see it through (and if she does not, she will anyway be thrown her out of school – without much resistance).

Thus, power difference is the key to moving from one level to another. It is about the power differential between the power a person actually has and the power needed in order to realise their wishes or goals. At the same time, it is the difference in power between the one being helped and the agent of that help, as well as a difference in the type of power generated by each of the levels of intervention intensity.

The effects of the power sources

It follows that the transition from one level of intensity to another is marked by a lack of power, the need for additional power, and the search for and use of new sources of power. That also determines the manner of empowerment, the way in which they affect the capacity to organise one's own life.

The source of strength in a conversation is the encounter – with one or more interlocutors – which provides space for reflection and expanding awareness of the possibilities of action. It is a purely personal empowerment coming from mutual respect, the strengths perspective.

In support, the source of power is the power of the other, i.e. it is about adding or lending power through a presence in the Life-World of the person receiving the support. (Lending power involves mutual, comradely assistance, in which the principled symmetry of relationships ensures "returning favours (services)".)

In helping, the source of power is also the power of another, but it is invested. Either in the sense that the helper acts as an agent, who helps the person – for example, the friend goes to talk to the teacher – or in the sense that the investment in the power of the helper is societal or even institutional. When using this source of help, it is about substituting (lacking) strength or transferring power to another, using the helper's power in the interest of the recipient of the help.

In care coordination, power is augmented through resources from outside the Life-World, as well as outside the helping relationship (which, despite the greater total "amount of help", strengthens the autonomy of the recipient). At the same time, power is enhanced by mobilising the user's own resources. External resources are usually institutional (cash or service benefits), but they can also be those available in the Life-World of others. However, these resources are not direct sources of power, but rather sources of care. The source of power here is precisely the constellation of sources of care, which create a field in which the object of aid can become the subject of the aid organisation. So, it is about the organisation of power, its import or brokerage and redistribution, simultaneously with the mobilisation of one's own sources of power. If coordination is carried out according to the principles of empowerment, the process of establishing a personal package of services is in itself a source of empowerment.

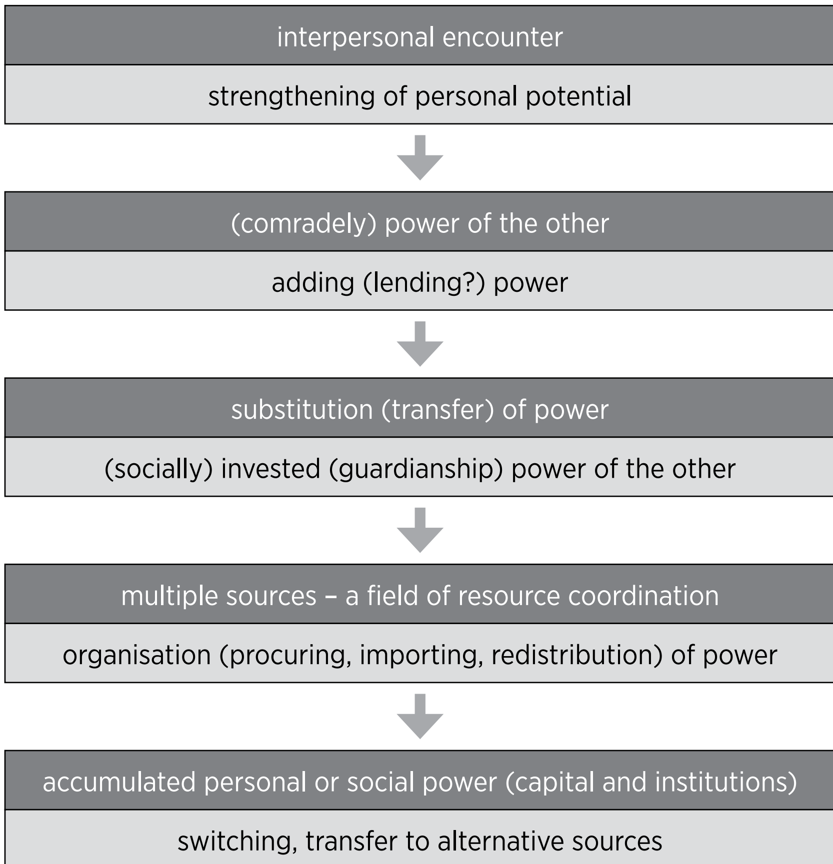
As a rule, displacement also involves institutional resources when it comes to professional help, while in informal help it mostly involves alternative resources, i.e. other resources to replace those that have been used up to this point. However, in the case of displacement, it is

not a matter of substituting power, as is it is in the helping relationship, but rather of connecting to these alternative resources, replacing the "place" or, especially when it comes to institutional placement, to those very basic resources for life (a roof over one's head, food). Because it is a displacement, it can be viewed as a "transplantation" – that is to say, drawing from totally different sources to those in the previous Life-World. But this is not about direct sources of power. The power required for displacement is the power of switching from one resource to another – the power of re-territorialisation.[73] The source of the latter is the forms of accumulated social power. If a transfer of placement has the character of emancipation, then it is moving, resettling – i.e. leaving the existing living space with the aim of greater independence (e.g. from parents, boss), a big step towards complete empowerment; however, if it is only a placement (in an institution), it is (even if means of survival are gained) about complete loss of power – a reduction to an object of help.

Escalating or "shifting" the intensity of intervention (and also the intensity of aid) involves a series of widenings of the pool of power sources and also a progressive change in the manner of empowerment. The sources of power broaden from the interpersonal encounter as a power source, to the power of the other, which, regardless of the nature of the relationship, is during support first of all comradely, in the helping relationship, it is so invested that it takes on the characteristics of guardianship. As power sources expand to include a combination of multiple sources, the field of coordination itself becomes a power source. In displacement the sources of power extend to accumulated personal, and above all, social power.

In accordance with that, the ways of empowerment also change. At the conversational level, empowerment can be nothing more than increasing personal strength or reinforcing personal potentials, while at the level of support there is an actual addition of power, in the helping relationship there is substitution or transfer of power. In the case of coordinated care we see the organisation of power (which means procurement or brokerage, importation and also redistribution of power), and, in the case of the most radical intervention, there is a switch to alternative sources, also a decisive status transition.

Figure 8: Sources of power and their effects – degrees of intensity of intervention.



Adding sources of power

When we deal with sources of power, we run into a conceptual cul-de-sac. Namely, it is difficult to distinguish between resources in general, i.e. the ones needed for survival, and sources of power. This conundrum is partly justified, since despite the difference between the two, the issue is, to a certain extent, the same. That is, power and resources have the same function, except that resources enable work or action, while power is the capacity to use resources faster or better. If we have no power, then we cannot use the resources – no matter how abundant.[74] Nevertheless, we can see empowerment, or power

itself, as a function of the resources, especially of gaining access to them, and even more so of owning them. Ownership of resources is therefore one of the key characteristics of resources being at one's disposal and thus, of course, of power (Flaker, 2015, pp. 219–234).

Thus, for empowerment, resources are needed that are not currently part of the user's Life-World or space. It is therefore about a spatial issue (meaning not just physical space, but, above all, social space). It is also about the acting of an agency or an agent, who enables access to resources. Therefore, the first step for an agent of empowerment is to enter the user's living space (either by politely knocking or by breaking in). Simultaneously, this expands the space – by making it possible to draw on resources that are not part of the living space, or, together with the user, discovering dormant, hidden resources that, because they were until now unknown, or unused, were not part of the user's lived Life-World, but that objectively existed in it. Naturally, Sleeping Beauty is easier to wake up with actions than with words. Good examples of these are the providers of family support, who, through their activities, encourage more effective patterns of behaviour in the family members present.

The difference between the two examples given above is that the first involved informal, the second formal, help. We have seen that the ways of shifting from one level to another have more similarities than differences. The helpers, one a friend, the other a social worker, took similar roles and the tasks they performed were also similar. Both cases were about talking, about active support, about taking over some activities from the other party, about finding and coordinating additional resources and assistants, and also about organising the transfer. In both instances the assistants started as interlocutors, then became supporters, at the level of help both had a mandate, and at the same time they also used the invested surplus of their power (the friend using her acquaintanceship with the social worker). The biggest difference is when it comes to displacement, as the friend can offer an informal solution (provided, of course, that she has a weekend retreat, that she has enough space at home and that her parents agree), but it is more difficult for her to offer formal solutions, as, in respect of that type of solution, she is in exactly the same civil position as the friend she is helping. However, even at this level the roles

played by the friend and the social worker have a certain similarity. Even though we are looking at an informal solution, it is still a matter of power. If she (temporarily) moves in with her friend, even if it is at her weekend house, she will be on the friend's territory and so under her authority.

The differences that arise, despite the similarities, are not just ceremonial, but rather power differentials. These differences become more obvious when the activity of both actors is deterritorialised, detached from the plane of the Life-World. More external, especially institutional, resources are required. The difference is noticeable even at the levels of conversation and support. A friend's advantage is in the authenticity of the relationship, in camaraderie or rather in the genuine friendship. It is easier for a friend to trust another friend, to know them better and perhaps, the common field they create, allows more creativity, invention. On the other hand, even in such relationships, the social worker's advantage is located in the power of an approved expert. The social worker has more information, experience, and a better knowledge of areas beyond the resident's Life-World that could be relevant to resident's conduct.

At the level of helping, the friend, for a moment, takes on a guardian role (and thus risks taking on the role of "godmother"), but does so primarily with her friend's authorisation, and she needs to be recognised as an authorised representative by others, or rather, must enact such a role. The social worker, on the other hand, already has this role (but must still also obtain authorisation or a mandate from the resident in question). To protect her fellow student from being expelled from school or even placed in an institution, the friend has to negotiate with a set of powers that have authority over her friend – school authorities, parents. Something similar applies to the social worker, except she has an advantage based on the fact that she is already part of these chains of authority and so can work more easily within them. At these levels, of course, the friend's advantage is that it is easier to remain in the advocate role.

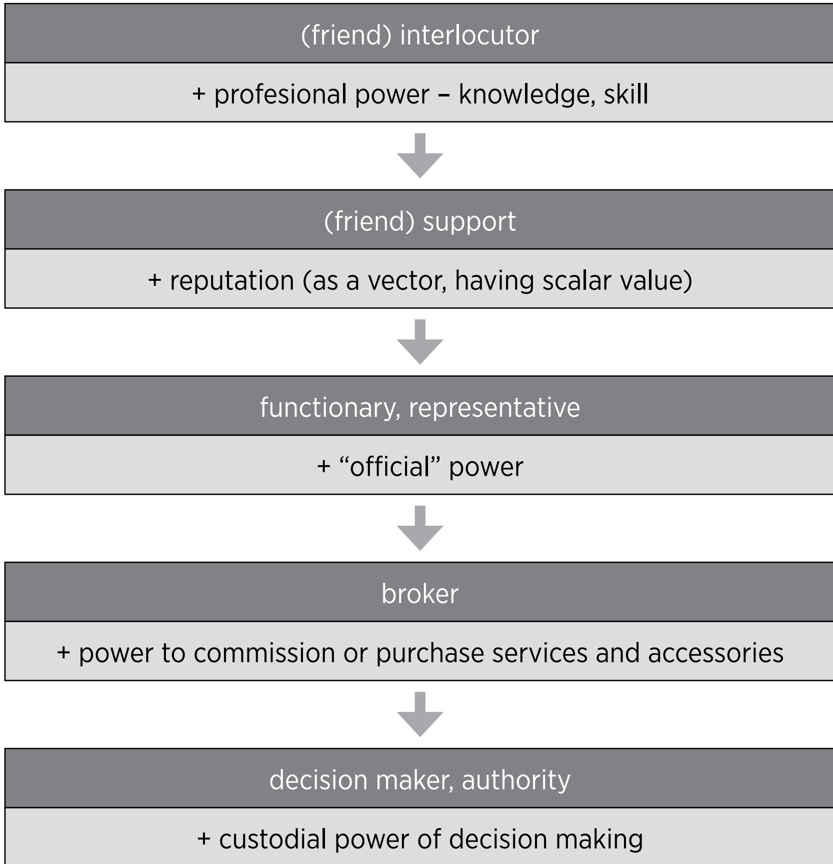
An important difference is also that the friend is, to a great extent, dependent on her own resources. Here what we mean are her personal resources as well as those shared within her network. Using these resources comes at a cost – either through depletion (in the case

of resources that are reduced through use – for example, a decrease in personal space if a friend moves in) or by the fact that the favour must be returned. A lesser, but important difference is in collective actions, where a friendly peer network becomes a mini-movement and generates new resources. The social worker has less need to use her own resources, since she is plugged into public resources and can make use of them much more easily (although this does not necessarily exclude the use of her own resources too). The two friends are in a position where they still have to claim resources readily available to a social worker. In short, the further we move away from the level of the concrete Life-World, the higher the stake for the friend who helps, and the greater the institutional power that the social worker already has, and that the two friends have yet to acquire.

We can conclude then, that in this series of roles, those assumed by informal and formal "helpers" are so similar that we can infer that in order to do their job well, professional helpers can, or even should, take the same role as friends, despite the differences in style and circumstances. If they want to do their job well, they somehow have to become "friends" – they have to get to know the person, gain their trust, stand up for them and take some risks in the process. This does not apply the other way round. Friends cannot become social workers, at least not officially. Even if they are rich in resources and have a lot of social power, in some important areas they cannot perform some tasks that are tied to power and the position of social work in the system of power and authority. Thus, when a professional steps into general roles at any level, he or she always adds her or his special power to those roles.

At the level of conversational representation, the expert therefore only adds their professional power. This allows an appearance of what Basaglia (cf. pp. 63–64; Basaglia, 1987, pp. 65–66) names an "aristocratic relationship" to emerge, the user having his or her own "court advisor". When a professional enters the user's actual Life-World as a supporter and they meld in performing a joint activity, (without professionally directing the activity) the social worker's power, derived from his or her reputation, standing[75], is added to the joint action in a scalar way. In a situation in which "extra power" is needed, the professional introduces ready-made official power, transfers it to the user

Figure 9: Adding professional power



and adds it to the mandate given by the user. A professional adds his or her power of the commissioning or buying of services (where available, of course)[76] to those brokerage skills and resources available to anyone. However, displacement is almost impossible to enact without the special – guardian power required for this operation.

Opportunities and pitfalls attached to power sources on individual levels of intervention intensity

The threat of displacement in the case of the student and the desire for it by the resident of the old age home, were included so that we

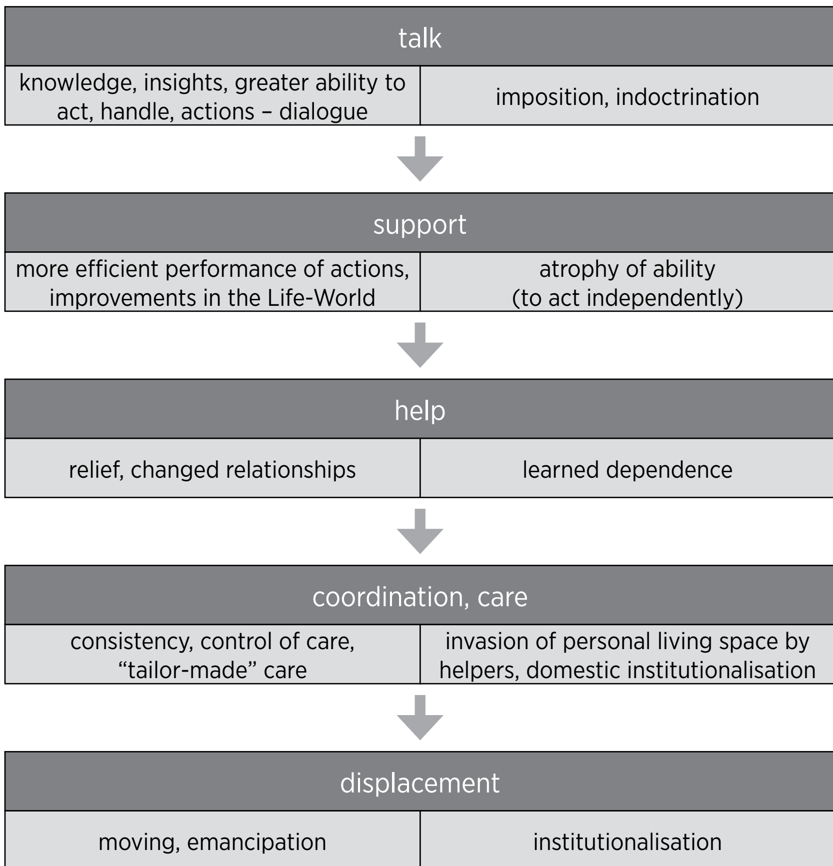
could make use of the cases throughout the entire span of intensity of entry into the living space. However, in principle, a similar threat or desire exists for any resident or student. Every student can fear being expelled from school and placed in an institution, and every old person can wish for an environment in which they will be more sovereign. It is just that these threats or desires are not as urgent for the majority as they are in the cases described.

When talking about threats, we can see that the institutional system affects even the less intensive levels of intervention. In fact, the two friends dealt with this threat at all levels, most effectively and holistically at the level of care coordination. Here, they drew on multiple sources of power and created a response that would prevent expulsion and placement in another school. Similarly, the desire for emancipation from the annoying roommate was the motivation and buoyancy of all the processes described in the second example.[77] We could conclude that, just as conversation is the beginning of every intervention, displacement or resettlement is, at least, the imaginary end that defines every less intensive intervention.

It would be bad if displacement from the original living environment to an institutional one was the goal of social work, and it is certainly not the desired destination of users, let alone their (real or authentic) goal.[78] On the other hand, moving from one place to another is a common human desire that often has an emancipatory charge and character. Children want to go their own way, young families want to move on to a better place, and so on. Even then, changing places means someone breaking out of a situation (which has been outgrown), but, in addition, it means a productive exit, the creation of something new and possibly more effective, with greater sovereignty and emancipation from some, in this case parental, authority.

Up to this point, we have treated the conjunction of intensification of intervention in the living space and of drawing of power mainly as a process of empowerment and gaining new powers. But here we also see, as we have already established, that intervention in the living space, even if it is fleeting and benevolent, can, precisely by drawing power from external sources, be destructive, reducing the user's own power and depriving them of it, so that while the results can often be really empowering, they can also be "disempowering".

Figure 10: The opportunities and pitfalls attached to power sources on various levels of intervention intensity



Traces of the dichotomy of possible outcomes that is most evident in displacement – the difference between displacement as emancipation and as institutionalisation – can also be found in less intense levels of intervention into the living space. The tension between emancipation and institutionalisation (or subjugation) can be seen at all levels of intervention.

Even at, what at first glance appears to be, the least invasive level, i.e. the level of conversation, talking, power loss can occur, even though the interlocutor does not actually enter the person's living space. Conversation allows the gaining of new knowledge and

insights, thereby also increasing the potential to act when in distress, enabling things to be done, action, and just having an experience of dialogue gives us a sense of creative existence. However, if the conversation is not dialogical, if it (often in an imperceptible and subtle way) imposes the other's ideas on us, ideas subordinating us, this is indoctrination, creating the feeling that everything is all right, when (at least for us) everything is all wrong.

The support of others often enables us to carry out some of life's necessary activities more effectively. It often means improvements in the Life-World, but, like crutches or a walking frame, it can also have a debilitating effect, reducing our power to use our own strength. At the level of help, this is even more pronounced in the effect of "learned helplessness", in our example, actually learned dependence. Often this "iatrogenic" side effect fails to outweigh the relief that we obtain from the help, and corrupts the altered relationships that substitution would otherwise improve. Coordinated care can provide personalised care, which will take place harmoniously or rather, will not fragment our lives. It will also give us a great deal of control over what happens to us. On the other hand, it carries the risk that in an extreme case, by allowing various helpers to invade our personal space, i.e. also the expropriation of that space, we will live at home as though in an institution – in a subordinated and objectified position.[79]

How to resist the end

We can conclude our discussion of the fundamental operations by summarising their characteristics, i.e. by starting with the initial determinants of the operations, their main themes and purposes and using our discussion to add descriptions of how they operate, their representative techniques and skills. We can also summarise the registers (spaces, modalities) of working that are distinctive of each operation. We can examine their effects and the ways the operations and registers interact with each other.

Summarising – concepts, suboperations, techniques

First, we will start with a descriptive summary, which will describe the fundamental operations with the help of the main concepts that we have used, with special reference to the auxiliary operations and techniques that give them a characteristic tone. We will start by presenting the summary in table form, and then briefly explain it.

The operation of investigation of the Life-World and the enabling of access to means mainly focuses on resources – for a better life. For that reason it is also bipolar – on the one hand, we explore resources in our own Life-World, and on the other, we provide access to external resources (of others, institutional, etc.). The purpose of the operation is to become provided and equipped. To be provided with the necessary assets and equipped (with skills, accessories and assistants) to function in the Life-World. We can say that the key feature of this operation is the satisfying of "needs", but we have to decipher the normative abstraction of that term – at least as a relatively contradictory set of desires

Table 3: The themes, purposes, main concepts, paradigmatic methods, suboperations and techniques of individual basic operations

Operation	Theme	Purpose	Concepts	Paradigm	Suboperations	Techniques
Life-World – access to resources	sources	being provided for and equipped	needs → contradictions of the Life-World	personal planning	maps, learning the user's language (translation), identifying (goals), enabling, claiming, eligibility, provision	eco maps, sociometry, brainstorming; planning skills, coordinated implementation of plans
Risk analysis/ harm reduction	change	reliability of the venture	life events, dangers and hazards, harm reduction	risk analysis, hazard assessment	separating hazard from danger/ harm, benefits (gains), harm reduction. Points of intervening: prevention, mitigation, damage repair. Means: technical, social, learning, legal, spatial	analytical ability (in multiple dimensions), brainstorming measures, determining points of intervention and use of means (technical, social, legal, environmental, pedagogic)
Empowerment	power	gaining power	contractual power, power diagram	advocacy and negotiation	analysis of the diagram, (de)construction of power, delegated power	negotiation, mediation, conflicts
Working relationship, alliance	relationships	insight, reflection → work, change	[co-creation, strengths perspective, ethics of participation, transparency, and original project of help], dialogue, encounter, double mandate, intensity of intervention, power(lessness) of words, humour, becoming a user	counselling	coming together, getting to know each other, reflection on the situation, deciding goal(s) – plan, project, acting, celebration	conducting conversation (active listening, mirroring, summarising), bracketing, directness, flexibility of boundaries, consistent identification, sensitivity to the level of intervention

and necessities, which above all, we need to derive from contradictions within the life field. The method that best articulates the core of this operation, establishing it in all its length and breadth, is personal planning.

Perhaps the most characteristic suboperation of this operation is cartography – the making of various maps, which best help us to understand and present the Life-World. Another important supporting operation is "learning the user's language". This can be understood to be a metaphor for learning the meanings and sense of what has been said, or taken literally for users who actually speak another language (immigrants, Roma and other minorities) or who lack language ability. It is important to know the user's vernacular language, not only for a better understanding of their lives, but also because, at the other side of the operation, we translate it into the language of the official world, and the language of the official world into their vernacular. However, it is not just about "giving the user a voice", but also about conveying their claims to others and to the institutional world. (It is a paradox that it is not possible to actually live in the institutional world, but it has its own language.)[80] So, the important suboperations are: assessing the situation and determining the goals that arise from it (and from its contradictions), creating plans or projects based on those and, in the other sphere, creating eligibility for funds from external or alienated resources. Of the greatest importance is the organisation of activities to bridge the gap between the user's own Life-World and other worlds – that is, the implementation of plans or projects. Therefore, in this operation, when learning about the user's world, we will benefit from cartographic techniques ("eco maps", sociometry), and when providing access to resources, planning skills (also brainstorming) and coordinating the implementation of the plan will be highly advantageous.

The topic of the risk analysis is changes. The purpose of the operation is not the avoidance or prevention of risk but, on the contrary, to encourage and increase the ability to act, to bring about changes in life – be they for new opportunities or to preserve what people value in their lives. Being about analysis, this operation is also among the most conceptual of those described. We are mainly interested in events (less in personal conditions or characteristics): those events that change our lives, how probable they are – as well as what they bring to us, good and bad, what benefits and harm they might effect.

The concept of harm reduction is of importance as it allows us to take a pragmatic approach to social work instead of a normative, grammatical one. The operation has been precisely and comprehensively articulated as a method of risk analysis to be used, not only for risk assessment, but also for risk reduction. The methods and procedures that do not analyse the situation, but instead attribute risk to human faults, the procedures that attempt (seemingly scientifically) to assess the riskiness of the person themself, however, must be avoided.

Risk analysis anticipates several subsidiary operations. In addition to the main task of distinguishing between hazard, danger and benefit while simultaneously planning risk reduction measures, we must, during risk analysis, be able to determine what our mandate is for this operation, determine the density and significance of the hazard, and assess the probability of dangerous events or beneficial developments. We must plan measures that take account of points of intervention in the development of risk (prevention, mitigation, damage repair), using a highly diverse range of measures (technical, educational, social, spatial, formal agreements). We must be able to formulate a conclusive statement, assessment of the risk at hand, while on the other hand, plan risk reduction strategy and tactics.

The main skill required for this, is that of analysis (listening and narrating, empathetic attitude, etc. are not enough). In terms of scope and thoroughness, a personal plan is a much more demanding method, but it is easier to create – we just have to listen carefully to the person's story and base a workable plan on it. Firstly, we need to be very receptive, and then we need to include an organisational mindset and precision planning. When analysing risk, a story or a map alone is not enough; the situation must be understood analytically and deciphered according to the anticipated dimensions. In the process, we must avoid common-sense considerations, quasi-causal connections, and use the logic of the probability calculus. It was its practical application that demonstrated that risk analysis is not simply a conceptual ability and effort, but also a skill. The method of risk analysis arose out of practical necessity (Flaker, 1994a). We tested relevant concepts in practice and supplemented the method with practical experience (Flaker and Rafaelič, pp. 133–135). Through the repetition of a method, we not only learn to use it well, the knowledge also travels in the opposite direction.

As with practical tasks in mathematics or physics lessons, using a method reveals its conceptual characteristics, its theory, leading to our better understanding. *Through practice we learn the theory (of risk analysis).*

Naturally, the theme of the empowerment operation is power. The aim is to increase power where there is too little (or none at all – e.g. in a total institution). For practical purposes, we need to operationalise power in the form of contractual power, while realising, at the same time that power exists in diagrammatic forms, power relations that must be changed to empower the user, who is always in a subordinate position. Empowerment is best expressed through the methods of advocacy and negotiation. The main operations that constitute empowerment are therefore the analysis (and transforming) of such a diagram, coupled with deconstructing the existing contractual power into its elements and the construction of a new power – both in the relationships in the diagram and in the elements that constitute the contractual power (status, impression, role). The role of social work is not only to enable these operations and carry them out together with the user, but also to, at least in part, transfer the power delegated to it by the holders of power to the user. The skill required to achieve this is advocacy. The social worker must be able to help the user express their claims and requirements well to others, be skilled in negotiation, manage conflicts, for example by playing roles, formulating minimum and realistic demands (for both sides of the dispute). The social worker must stand firmly on the side of the user, risk conflict, be persistent, even intrusive – must be able to "get their foot in the door" so that it does not close on the user.

The underlying theme of the operation to establish working relationships or alliances is, of course, the relationship (and less the work). In the literature that deals extensively with this operation, especially in the field of work with families (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 2002; 2003; 2009; Čačinovič Vogrinčič and Mešl, 2019; Čačinovič Vogrinčič, Kobal, Mešl and Možina, 2005), the main concepts are: co-creation, the strengths perspective, the ethics of participation, transparency and the original work project of help. These concepts mainly describe conversational practice, the representation of the Life-World in the verbal exchanges between the participants. To these concepts, with their partial and implicit consideration, we need to add and foreground the concepts of dialogue and encounter. These two concepts add an existential

note to the operation and link it more clearly to the concrete context. The contextualisation of counselling practice, which, as a model in social work, once enjoyed uncontested domination, was among the main challenges for social work in the 1980s (see Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, pp. 81–101). Here, we connect conversational practice to the context, above all to the urgent question of the mandate that social work needs, both "from below" and "from above" (and in doing so we establish a difference between the corrective and creative service models, which are forms of expression of the mandate). We must also understand the establishment of a working relationship by the consideration of several levels of intervention into the user's living space by social work. Social work cannot remain at the level of conversation (which is why we point out the fetishism of words and base the encounter also in non-verbal exchanges and arrangements). The relationship is formed not only through a concrete exchange with the user, but also by the space in which it takes place, or is being created by the relationship and thereby reflexively determines the nature of the relationship (and sources of power). The fateful distribution of power that marks social work can be overcome in the working relationship by humour, and even more, by going beyond mere empathy and truly becoming users.

The paradigmatic form of this operation is counselling. However, we have shown that social work cannot be only a conversational practice, that even in this operation it must "splash" beyond conversation and relationships; words and conversation are often not enough, deeds and work are needed. Working relationships and conversation are instrumental to the work that needs to be done. Although during work we constantly return to relationships and words, in social work even more than otherwise, deeds and events are endorsed points of perpetual return. This can acquire multiple meanings. One, which is sufficiently established in social work (as well as in other professions, for example management), is to retreat from time to time into the safe world of the theoretical context (Freire) or just talking about the world, verbalising the conduct (Gabi Čačinovič Vogrinčič). We retreat to the world of representations, which has no direct practical consequences, in order to take time to reflect, to evaluate joint work, also to celebrate and to reorient ourselves in the space in which we operate. Only then do we return to work, which is what we actually needed to think through. However,

this can be happening in an ongoing, reflexive way, with deeds that are (intuitive) responses to the actions of others, or, as we described in the section on humour, by instantaneous apperception of a situation, allowing us to move forward. Last but not least, the working relationship is something that really exists in the work itself, is formed during it, regardless of how it was outlined during the planning conversation.

The key subsidiary operations involved in an alliance-building operation are therefore (in the order of their usual occurrence): coming together, getting to know one another, deliberating on the situation, determining the objective(s) – creating a plan, project, action (goal-directed) and celebrating. The necessary skills to carry out this operation and suboperations are, naturally, those of conducting the conversation (e.g. active listening, summarising, mirroring), the ability to put brackets around theory and other "prejudices"[81] and the capacity to be (and remain) in the situation with the user – to be direct and flexible when defining boundaries or taking positions in relation to the user, to be sensitive to the operating space and the level of intervention. An additional requirement is the ability to consistently, even radically, identify with the user.

Pitfalls

In our stroll through the operations, we have pointed out some of the pitfalls that snatch the core of social work from them, converting them into something else.

Table 4: Traps by operations.

Operation	Traps
Life-World – access to resources	voyeurism, one-sided emphasis on the mobilisation of own resources or on the import of external ones, normativeness of needs – overlooking contradictions, professional reduction, use of checklists and rating scales
Risk analysis / harm reduction	attributing risk to the personality of the actor – labelling, scapegoating, defensiveness of a guardian
Empowerment	psychologisation and individualisation of power
Working relationship, alliance	absence of context, fetishisation of words and relationships, interdiction of action in the Life-World

An important part of our work was to draw attention to some of the pitfalls that appear when carrying out particular operations, i.e. Sirens, who can lure social work astray – making it impossible, or, placing users, at the very least, in a thankless position. Some pitfalls (voyeurism, fetishisation) exonerate the workers from concrete deeds or even prohibit them. Others mechanise or "robotise" social work, turning it into a mechanical link in the functioning of the bureaucratic machine, or moving the operation from the real world to an overly virtual one – psychological, conversational, or legal and administrative. In this way social work becomes detached from reality, human reality reduced to a single dimension, thus enabling the control of the population, but not enabling work, the creation of something new and meaningful for human life.

Such traps would appear to be the result of an incomplete and insufficient conceptualisation of social work (which we are trying to mend here) and the supremacy of other professions, for which this kind of operational design is, so to speak, innate. However, as we noted in the introduction, this is the result of the weakness of social work or rather of the powerlessness of social workers to really work socially. When social work is inadequately resourced, with inadequate power of action – when it cannot provide housing, and then, in a situation of a family overwhelmed by conflicts (even violence), it instead conducts family counselling (which would in any case be more successful if participants in counselling were housed separately); when the social worker does not have the power to purchase or order services, and instead refers the user to a medical treatment, or even to an institution.

Of course, this is also related to the mandate that, unfortunately, social work has recently been receiving more and more often. It is not a mandate of outright oppression – nor simply one to convince users of the dominant ideology concerning their place in society being right, of the fairness of the division of labour and the distribution of resources, nor of the appropriateness of placing them under institutional control, as was the case in Gramsci's time. Now it is also a question of subordination to a series of impersonal algorithms that are supposed to divide the population in a cascading sequence and thus place them in socially desirable positions. Social work must not remain a passive victim of these two arms of power.

It must stand against them, confront the set of required actions, even if they seem inevitable – and, in social reality, that often is the way they are. We can resist them through sporadic abstinence, dissidence – disputing and opposing such practices or even through local subversions. Even if we do not achieve much with this, maybe we will set an example, and we will definitely feel the personal gratification of having acted ethically, of at least trying to "remain human in an inhuman situation". Maybe these loci of resistance, resistance to the powerful, are more important than they seem (Foucault, 1977). Namely, they have the potential to assemble into the lines of escape from the kind of reality created by the said network of dispositives, potential to create new planes of understanding and action, fields with their own energy, which put in place a real utopia in opposition to the dystopian functioning of the rulers. Therefore it is important not to succumb to (but to "stand up and fight") these alien born forces and, in concert with others – users, colleagues, the collective that occasionally comes together in the community – create alternative sources of power or counter power (Hrvatin, 2016; Funke, 2015). As we can learn from the history of social work, it is movements that can move something – social work must forge alliances with them or even create them (e.g. Walk-out, cf. Rafaelič and Flaker, 2012; Flaker and Rafaelič, 2012).

Modulation

By examining the tasks (and roles) of social worker in the institutional environment, we have decrypted four ways, spaces of social work (Flaker, 2015, pp. 194–197). Fieldwork – working where people live – is the milieu where social work was born.[82] The advantage of a social worker over other professions is said to be "the knowledge of the field" as well as willingness to leave the sterile environment of the institution. In the institutions, the residents, or rather the users, turn to the social worker for they know they can talk to them, because they trust them, they know they will be accepted. Social work namely creates an open space for communication.

Social work also provides a gateway into the "world of social security", entitling a person to become a beneficiary of services and

Table 5: Spaces, their characteristics and ways of working

Space	Way of working	Characteristic of the space
living	fieldwork; outreach	physical and geographical (but lived)
communication	talking and negotiating	linguistic (ideas and representations)
social security	recording and reporting	virtual
organisational	planning, coordination and (co)creation	machinic

Source: Flaker, 2015, p. 130.

resources. The bureaucratic world, while alien to the gist of social work, is also its third home, and bureaucratic procedures (which, anyway, need to be simplified and reduced in scope) are the route for a person to get what they need from the institutional world, i.e. what is lacking in their own world. Recording is the way in which exchanges in the living and communication space become logged, materialised and thereby subject to institutional processing.

Social work is also an organisational space – both at the individual level as well as (and especially) at the (inter)institutional level. In institutions, the social worker is usually also key to the functioning of teams, especially for liaising with other services. This organisational function of social work is even more noticeable outside institutions. This becomes apparent in the activity of (personal and organisational) planning, coordinating various providers and actors in the user's environment, and in the fact that the social worker must often, collectively with other participants, create something from scratch.

It might appear as though the particular registers, spaces of social work, correspond to the four operations, but this is just a matter of similarity of numbers, and of correspondences, which arise from the common matter from which social work forms its content (operations) and their expression (registers). In other words, the operations give off an idea of *what* social work does, and the registers *how* it does it. Correspondences arise not because of the sameness or homogeneity of operations and ways of working, but because the operation requires its own specific expression and, conversely, because the way of working must have its own content.

This can also be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Correspondence between social work operations and registers

Operation	Fieldwork (outreach)	Communication	Recording	Organisation
Life-world – access to resources (being supplied and equipped)	experiencing the user's world in multiple dimensions; integration into the Life-World with the aim of support	connecting the living and the institutional, the map as an anchor of communication, means of expression of will, stories as presentation, exchange of information by participants, new map of connections	log: print vs cartography, stories: interpretation vs narration, human vs bureaucratic claims, "situation assessment" claims, entitlement = redistribution	organisation of everyday life (space, experiences) – housekeeping; – polyphonic, flexible organisation by agreement; orientated towards life, "shadow work"; "hanging out", getting to know the arrangements, to be included into the world of others
Risk analysis/ harm reduction (the reliability of the venture)	observing the physical and social characteristics of the situation, (not essential, but recommended)	direction of activities through feedback, the need for a mandate, communicating to others (benefit) vs restricting freedom	calculating the intensity of probability, action diagram, logical linking of heterogeneous contingencies and events, logical and performative statement – directing action with the support of a concrete risk reduction plan	the risks of introducing new resources and approaches; two-edged sword – reducing poverty, increasing dependency or colonisation of the Life-World, repairing the damage of the intervention ⟶ assimilation of the profession into life
Empowerment (gaining power)	presence in institutions, in informal relationships and interactions, importing power into the user's Life-World	trust, conspiracy – open space for communication; conflict and negotiation – persistence and courage, practical relevance	record – objectification and alienation; reappropriation, authorship and ownership of the documents, storage by the user	organising change of status, of interaction patterns, of taking on roles; network assemblies; changes in the organisational chart to increase user's power, inclusion in decision-making, political articulation of new positions – supported by deeds of actors
Working relationship, alliance	office ⟶ real spaces strengthen the alliance; street work; intensifying interventions; field as intensifier of relationship and talking	negotiating the mandate, goal, (experientially) identifying common values, creating a common space; from words to communication of deeds, connecting levels, transmitting messages upwards, defending the living space from intrusion	note taking as a interaction offence, a symbol of asymmetry in the relationship; the necessity of dialogue, the deciphering of representations of contradictions – the will to make it happen, the matrix log of actions	alliance for work, work and organisational tone of conduct; plan, project, joint work - framework of relationships

Outreach work

Each operation functions in all registers. In the sequence of acts of an operation, one space is important in one step, another in the next, and so on. In this way each register is expressed differently in each operation. Fieldwork is key to getting to know the life world of another – one needs to experience the world of the other, see it three-dimensionally, smell it, let it touch you – sometimes literally. We can get to know someone's Life-World by merely talking, but we will only get an approximate and distorted "sketch of the terrain". For a more accurate and more telling map we have to visit the field. We also have to go out into the field if we want to become part of the Life-World of another (like a suitor visiting the bride's parents) – to provide support, to really help a person, to coordinate the lines of force in the spaces between their life and the institutional world, to organise resettlement if a person wants to leave their current world.

When performing risk analysis, we need to know the hazards and to estimate the probability of possible events (dangers and benefits). Since this is an analytical operation, which can exploit "secondary data", fieldwork is not absolutely necessary, but it is often very useful because, when we actually see the physical and social characteristics and atmosphere of a living space, we can understand the hazards better, and it becomes easier to get ideas for risk reduction (e.g. when an occupational therapist visits the user at home and suggests improvements).

In the empowerment process, field and outreach work are crucial – but the aim here is not necessarily getting to know the Life-World, more important in difficult situations is being there for the user – as an advocate. Institutions (hospitals, care homes, courts, offices, etc.) are the most likely terrain of advocacy, but sometimes also family, workplace and neighbourhood environments. More rarely, and often accidentally, we appear as defenders in the public space, where, the fact of our presence contributes to an enhancement of the character of the otherwise stigmatised and neutralises the fears of the audience – we provide an assurance and strengthen a person's credibility. Fieldwork or outreach work is also useful for reformatting power diagrams, as when we try to include the holders of power in the real user

experience, or when the role of social work, in order to transfer power to a world in which it is lacking, is to form a link between the world of the user and the worlds of others.

If, when establishing a working relationship, we design it purely as counselling, fieldwork is not necessary (some even consider it "contraindicated"), since we can be satisfied merely with the user's verbal representation of his or her own Life-World. However, experience shows that conversations are more productive in the user's real environment (at home, in the playground, at school, at camp), as it holds greater potential for the utopia of reality (Basaglia, 1973/1975/1981). In such environments a greater number and variety of "transitional objects" (Winnicott, 1967) may be found, these enable stronger expression of desires and fears, making them easier to talk about. Through the alliance, we also create a "bubble of the possible", at least a tiny theoretical context (Freire, 1972a) in the user's life field, which enables a productive conversation. The benefits of fieldwork in building an alliance (rather than a working relationship) are all the more evident in street work. This is the same operation, but a completely different process to family counselling, for example. In the field, one must first "hang out", gain the trust of the target group by taking risks, be unreservedly on their side, live with the group, take part in its activities and deal with challenges as they arise. Only then is more planned work possible, such as that involving other actors, problem conferences and similar assemblies of support networks. As we have seen, the intensity of the working relationship increases with the degree of intervention (and presence) in the Life-World of the other.

The communication space

The principal communication we have to establish in the operation of exploring the Life-World and enabling access to resources, is the one between the Life-World and the institutional world (usually social security, politics). In implementation, such communication is usually written, far removed from what the term "communication" usually conveys – lively communion and interaction between people. The latter kind of live communication takes place before the formal decision, be it assessment of eligibility or formal order, and then afterwards in

its implementation. The continuity of the communication space is greater in the case of informal claims to the social milieu. Here, any kind of map can function as the anchor of the communication space. A map enables the two people in an encounter (social worker and user) to take their reality as an object, in order to talk about it and change it. The map is a means of expression of will, desire and goals. A narrative created on the basis of such a map, or summarising it, is a primary tool for presenting goals to others. It expresses more than just a (normative) "need", it is important for whoever is to receive or approve the claim to see the claimants as persons who have their own life and that they aspire to improve it. After approval, it is necessary to exchange information between providers, for example of care, the interconnection ensuring that "the machine runs smoothly". Care must be taken that communication paths do not bypass the user, indeed the user must always be at the heart of coordination. In fact, open messaging and conversation should be a key part of the new map created by the operation.

Risk analysis is usually a means of communicating to others and sometimes also a process for making one's own decisions. When a person carries out such an analysis alone, for their personal benefit, it is their own feedback channel. If there is outside help with this, the risk analysis, like a map, is the subject of conversation and guides the actions of the user or both participants. When the social worker performs their own risk analysis in order to assess the necessity of their mandate or intervention into personal space, their risk analysis forms the basis for communication and possible cooperation with the user. The creation of a communication space has the greatest, most intense meaning when it comes to persuading others (to agree with the actor's actions). At that point the message of risk analysis is that it is worth taking the risk, that the risk can be safer and that there is no need to restrict a person's basic human capacities (which amounts to removal of will and containment). The risk analysis is therefore, a general and special message about human autonomy, an expression of the will for freedom to act that will be acceptable to those who are assigned or prescribed any kind of patronage role. It addresses them not only by a potential danger or harm, but also by the profit and benefit to the user – thus also to them.

The empowerment operation creates two communication spaces, which are fundamentally different in atmosphere. An atmosphere of trust, conspiracy even, must be established between the professional actor (advocate) and the user. That is, a communication space closed on the outside, but completely open on the inside. The two actors must be able to express everything to each other. At the same time, their communication and collusion are instrumentalised with the goal or the task it is supposed to perform. So, even when reservations or concerns are communicated, they relate to the goal or the purpose of strengthening or preserving power and must submit to it. For example, the advocate can express opposition to the user's ideas, but in such a way that it is directed towards achieving the user's goal. This includes withdrawing from the joint venture (for example, because of their prejudices), but this must not be blackmail, but rather a formative act to achieve goals – then it will be necessary to find another advocate without those prejudices. As we have already emphasised, it is especially important for the user to be consistently involved in conversations and negotiations with others that concern them. "Nothing about us without us" is not only an ethical imperative (of camaraderie, alliance), but also a means of expanding the communication space and transforming the user's position in it. This is a space of negotiation, of conflict, in which opposing forces often operate potently. It is about breaking the equilibrium of forces, a balance in which the user is powerless. Here, the ways of entering the communication space range from open conflict, requiring persistence and courage, to more calm negotiations, which bring about a solution that at least satisfies the participants. And usually in that order. Conflict is almost a necessity of empowerment, but it is also the basis for an eventual agreement. The art of achieving this is to accept the conflict and convert it into negotiations by insisting on the practical relevance of communication. The practical basis of the conversation (e.g. risk analysis) undermines axiomatic abstract postulates (about the person, relationship in the encounter) and allows the participants to stay in the situation and to actually talk – also about the way to reorganise their life or work when in opposition to a professional or another representative of the social hegemony. Therefore, this also indirectly changes the power relationships – by directly addressing relationships, we risk fixing them.

Establishing a working relationship or alliance is an operation based largely in communication. It is necessary to find out what kind of mandate the helper has (they must also tell the user honestly what their social mandate is), to agree on joint work, hence on a common goal, and to find out which common values the alliance will be based on, beside the common goal. Values need not necessarily be explicitly stated, but they must be grasped – with feelings and with actions, because the communication space is not just a space of words. Even if the creation of a working relationship starts with an individual, we must invite others who are affected by the intended work to this communication space (actually a bubble). In many ways, the extended communication space is similar to those that we have already created for the family, community or organisation, but it differs from those in that, the individual who initiates it, also marks the space; as much as it is shared, it is above all, that of the initiator.

Shifting between the gears of the intensity of intervention in the user's life, also changes the communication space. When we step out of the conversational level into the real world, deeds communicate more than words. Words can explain, coordinate and direct the deeds. Deeds speak "loudly" though. Deterritorialisation of deeds does not necessarily expand the communication space, it can even narrow it. Communication in such an upscaling of intervention implies also connecting very different levels to each other. Messages generated by the Life-World must be transmitted (and so retain power) to other levels, and messages from above must be transmitted downwards in such a way as to not colonise the Life-World. As we have noted many times before, every movement away from the living world must be accompanied by remedial manoeuvres – that is, communication between losing and regaining the power to act in one's world.

Recording

Writing is the verbal trace of an action or event, an imprint of an image on paper (or some other medium). It always calls for interpretation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 15–20). Like Winnie the Pooh and Piglet, while circling around the larch grove, we can wonder whether the tracks in the snow were left by a woozle or perhaps even

a wizzle, until we realise from a bird's eye view that we are following ourselves (Milne, 1990). A map can tell what happened (and sometimes what is going to happen – "lunch!" as Pooh would say). The map must not be subject to interpretation, as it explains everything to everyone. But we can decode it and find out what might happen on the way to our journey's destination. The problem we have in surveying the Life-World to provide access to resources is that, although a map may illustrate a life situation, it cannot nourish the binary greediness of "entitlement" that needs to be fed with distinctive morsels, standardised needs; the map seems to be too much of a mouthful for that. On the contrary, for the informal community, a map is a much more desirable and useful thing, because it tells not only where the claim is coming from, but also lets them pinpoint their own position in that world. Counter to our expectations, it happens, and not infrequently, that judges accept cartographically designed human stories with both hands. They say, such reports help them to understand the person and judge their actions far better than an imprint of ever the same psychological profile, in which there are just individual deviations (from the norm that the judge knows very well). Perhaps, the contingency of stories and maps failing to fit the requirements for processing entitlement claims, could be a momentum that makes us look for resources in the user's Life-World, since that may feel more like "real social work". However, redistribution of goods must be stipulated (rather than depleting the already meagre resources of users). Therefore, it is necessary (perhaps a Sisyphean task) to humanise the decision-making machine, to also feed it with stories, so that a person gets at least approximately what they need in life, while also satisfying the required binary form. A record, a trail, an imprint objectify an action or situation, alienating it from the community, but the community also gets something in return.

The objectification and alienation of actions, events and situations is a matter of power. With such an operation, the record becomes a commodity, which its original owner no longer has control over. It allows those who receive the records – experts, bureaucrats – to deal with them – they can translate them, change the words or even forget about them. Those kinds of records and their fates deepen the gap between top dogs and underdogs. What can the dog,

put in the middle (to watch over the puppies), do to give the puppies the power to become, at least, dogs? Personalisation, involving power holders in actual situations is one possibility. A second way is the route of re-appropriation of the alienated. In the style of saying "Nothing about us without us", we could write "The people will make their own judgement!" Reports, needs' assessments, assessments of personal conditions, must be authored by, and be the property of, the user even if they were written by a professional. A professional may be a recorder, but not the author. Like a film editor, they must follow the instructions of the director – the user. The documents that contain evidence about the user must be theirs, and preferably also be stored by them. Often, the right of access to documentation is often paper-based and is easily got around by professionals (because they would be ashamed if the user were to read what had been written about them). Following the transition from institutional care to community, in some districts of England the care was provided by several organisations, a problem arose which organisation should keep users' records. The ethical, and more so pragmatic, solution was for each user to keep their own documentation. Any worker who "performed a service" could immediately write down what they did and what agreements or arrangements were made with the user, leaving the record there, so that the notes were available to others – if the user gave permission for that (Brandon, 1995, oral communication).

Risk analysis with the calculation of probabilities introduces a completely different set of maps compared to ordinary maps of the Life-World. In fact, they are diagrams of probability that have to summarise the relationship between the event and the surface on which it occurs, identify chains of hazards and dangers, triggers and events, co-influences, possibilities of unwanted events, etc. In risk analysis, recording is essential to the method. It is an impossible task for ordinary mortals to calculate in their head or in conversation, or even to estimate the probability of, the effects of forces yet to appear. That is why we need pencil and paper (the computer is too unwieldly). To some, it may seem that doing it this way is even more alienated from the world we live in, because of its abstract and analytical nature. Maybe so, but those abstractions are real, and even if they do not come true, they are at work. Putting estimates of the probability of

an event down on paper, even though they are always only approximations of the true values, and calculating them, even though the result is probably wrong due to the considerable approximation of the estimates, result in an appraisal of risk. The appraisal combines a quasi-algorithm with secondary elements of the risk situation (threat density, (ir)reversibility of damage, measures to reduce danger or increase benefit) to make a totality that is sufficient to direct action. The appraisal is a logical synthesis of highly branching, almost impenetrable thinking, in that it is apodictic (logically necessary) and at the same time performative – requiring certain actions. So that we do not stop at words, the performativity of a statement is not only tied to the act of saying it, it needs a plan that will also implement the actions predicted in the conclusive sentence. The record of risk analysis is therefore quite different to the records we are used to in social work – namely, descriptive stories on the one hand, repetitive legal or medical diagnostic forms on the other. It is a calculation of intensity, an extract from a diagram of action, it is a logical consolidating of various circumstances and events into a composite that is expressed in a conclusive statement, which predicts actions supported by a plan. The sole function of the story (description of the situation) is to ask the question: "What could happen?", so that in the end we get the answer, what is going to happen and what we are going to do.

Often, during conversations with people we are working with, a question arises whether note taking might not disturb the conversation. When we are talking to friends or people we happen to meet, we do not record our conversations. Because of the objectification and distancing of an otherwise intersubjective encounter, this would be an interactional offence. When we nevertheless want to write down something that has been said, we usually apologise for it – "I'm sorry, but I'll have to write this down". We give an apology even when it is a task arising from a conversation, information that we need to remember (an address, a phone number) or more rarely an interesting thought that we must note not only in memory, but also on paper. In official, "working" contacts, however, officials have an irresistible penchant for taking notes. Like a diligent schoolkid, they write down everything the client says. We recognise this as their "natural" trait. So, when we ask users whether they mind if we record

the conversation (a corrective manoeuvre in case of an interactional offence), they often say that they do not mind; because they are expecting something like that (whether seeing us as a journalist who values their words, or a police officer who is looking for clues in their statements so they can "stitch us up"). If we ask ourselves the same thing, we will find justifications for note taking; we are showing that what the interlocutor says is important to us, we are showing respect for what was said, taking notes helps us summarise the conversation, return to important issues in the conversation, etc.; but also acknowledging that there is a high probability that we will forget something important if we do not write the conversation down. All this may be (and often is) true, but it is also true that by taking notes in front of the interlocutor, we confirm their expectations regarding the asymmetrical division of roles and power, or we establish such a definition of the situation. We also confirm fears that are "natural" or the logical consequence of the objectification of a conversation, which is owned by the other – what will that person do with my words, will they understand them the same way I understand them, who else will read them, etc.

In the operation of establishing a working relationship, note taking during the initial phase (getting to know and telling) plays a subordinate role to the core of this operation – the dialogue. It is its tool. The conversation (and other exchanges) simply must be recorded, if we want to re-present them to people in the next step. Regardless of whether we wrote down the conversation as it went along, recorded it on tape, or just memorised it, when, after the conversation, we ourselves write out the conversation again – this time not as a verbatim record of the conversation, but as a story, a map that we will present to the interlocutor at the next meeting (as a problem, Freire would say), so that they will make out what is important to them, which they will reformulate, supplement, emphasise or delete. Dialogue is not only reflective, it is reflexive. From the contradictions of their own life, they will express their desires, their will to change. Recorded goals are their crystallisation and the basis for writing down the plan or a project. Here, the record changes its tone from a narrative, cartographic into one of charts, of a matrix – into the organisational.

Organisation

Social work is, in many ways, also an organisational discipline. Here, we are not principally referring to the management of companies and other organisations, system management, etc. although such skills and knowledge can also be of use to social workers when they are managing non-governmental organisations, social enterprises, social welfare institutions or when they want to resist the inhuman dictates of their employers or managers as well as when they get involved in discussions about operating and changing the system. It is about the organisation of everyday life, one's own use of time (e.g. in teamwork) and above all organisation in the world of users – at the level of individuals, families, networks or communities. It is also about organising space and experience (Goffman, 1974; Makarenko, 1951). For example, the way that divorced parents will take turns in caring for the children; deciding with whom the children will spend time, is primarily an organisational problem. If the parents cannot agree about this, and "organise" it, it becomes a relational matter, an interpersonal problem. (The impression is that this happens more often than the opposite, when they cannot come to an agreement due to mutual resentment – this is the difference between psychological and social realism.)

We can say with certainty that organisation of everyday life does not run on the same lines as it does in formal organisations. In formal organisations, "organising" often means very specific, unambiguous roles and tasks, in fact, the fragmentation of the body of employees into departments, units and work groups, while in informal groups roles are ambiguous, divisions are less well defined, more arbitrary and flexible, and processes are less controlled and more fluid. With the exception of the family, membership is also less obligatory or its termination less lethal. Everyday organisation is not economic, it is domestic[83]; it is not oriented towards production, but rather towards life – either its subsistence or enjoyment. Although, in the existing social division of labour, it is subordinated to production, it is not simply the reproduction of the workforce. Household organisation is also much more negotiated and consensual. However, at the same time it is also less rational or rationalistic than formal, economic – there are people who are obsessed with plans, schedules, strictly defined

tasks, etc., but there are probably as few of these as there are very few of those who live from day to day and casually or fatalistically surrender to the flow of life. We usually make rational plans only when we really have to (when we are "up to our necks in it"), when we undertake complex undertakings, occasionally even when we go on holiday, away from our work plans and the routine of juggling between work time and leisure time. When social work intervenes in household, or some other informal (but still organised) arrangements, even if an outsider, it must get included in one way or another. If it is a group, the social worker must "hang out" with it in order to learn how it works and to be accepted by its members. In the case of an individual, it is about getting to know their world, including whatever roles and tasks they have in that world.

Stepping into someone's Life-World is not just about getting to know its (organisational) arrangements and being careful not to damage its sometimes vulnerable tissue, but it also involves the introduction of certain contents into it. That is to say, enabling access to resources also entails a reorganisation of the space. With new opportunities also come new risks. The introduction of resources reduces the household's poverty, but increases its dependence on external resources and the subordination of the household to an external entity. The introduction of professional, non-native knowledge can enrich exchanges in the household, give more say to otherwise neglected members, add creative spirit and increase sensitivity to the predicament of the members. On the other hand, it can cause deculturation (as is often the case when working with Roma, immigrants, etc.), denial of local patterns and values of community life, or colonisation (medicalisation, economisation, bureaucratisation) of everyday life. When this happens, it is not sufficient to simply weigh the benefits and harms that the group (or individual) gains or loses due to the intervention. As we have emphasised several times, it is about mending any potential damage, always returning to the starting point – to the mandate obtained from the users, to the contradictions overshadowing their Life-World, to the assimilation of professional practice into their Life-World rather than the opposite – the assimilation of the group into an abstract world dominated by economic, often exclusionary schemes.

Thus empowerment is the operation that most closely overlaps with the register of organisation. Changes in status as well as the assumption of new roles and even self-presentation in interaction with others are all organisational challenges. Arranging a "permanent address" is not just a bureaucratic act, but also involves organisational work – not least to prepare the user to undertake the action, usually even more, to obtain the landlord's consent, to intervene at the administrative department or to accompany the user during this task. The coordination of different roles in life or, for example, the question of whether to hide one's stigma or "getting out of the closet" is a question not only of attitude, but also of concrete implementation. Hiding stigma, for example, requires at least as much organisational effort as it does psychological (Goffman, 1963a, pp. 73–104). To hide a relatively banal trait that we are ashamed of, we can engage in a series of concealing actions that organise our lives – we have to change jobs, move to another city, and end a relationship with a lover, etc. (cf. a fictional example, *The Reader*, Schlink, 1998). Shame and fear of loss of status are indeed the original motivations for concealing stigma, but their persistence is primarily a function of the organisation of identity involved in the concealment. The power needed for concealment is part of the power we gain or preserve as its result. When the stigma is (re-)exposed, we gain power of action, which is no longer tied up in maintaining appearances, although we are, at the same time, threatened with the loss of status, if the disclosure damages our reputation or is not consistent with the status we occupied up to that time. In the context of informal exchanges and statuses, such empowerment draws from "celebrations of promotion", which, as professionals, we can organise (stage) in the form of team conferences (Flaker, Mali, Rafaelič and Ratajc, 2013, pp. 154–168) or family conferences (de Jong and Schout, 2012), open dialogue (Seikkula et al., 2006) or some other professionally supported meeting of a person's support network.[84]

In order to strengthen the contractual power of an individual and occasionally also of groups, it is often enough to make "micro-organisational" interventions, which are mainly aimed at changing the position in the field or making a social adaptation to the environment of the person whose power is being strengthened. This can also suffice for situational, instantaneous changes in power relationships. More

lasting shifts and changes in inert organisational constellations require more. For an advocate to be available to people in trouble, there must be an advocacy service; if we want to ensure that the voices of users are heard in the organisation and that the users as a minimum co-manage the organisation, we must introduce not only their "witness statement", but also the possibility of their involvement in actual decision-making in the organisation. There must be user councils, committees, assemblies. Of course, these bodies and gatherings must not only have symbolic meaning, they must discuss and resolve all the key issues of the organisation, and their decisions must be binding on the authorities (the organisation's management, professionals, key workers) – these decisions are not just words to express the plight of users, they are directives that must be taken into account and embodied in real measures, actions of the collective. Organisational changes that guarantee the power of users must be supported on the one hand by methodical empowerment at the level of human encounters, and on the other by systemic and legal solutions. With general duties and rights (such as the recently acquired right in Slovenia for people under guardianship to vote), the status of users in general is empowered, and with changes to the legislation that regulates care systems (e.g. the Act on long-term care), the position of users in relation to providers and services is strengthened. The position of the user in interactions with professionals and other helpers should change dramatically, at least at a legal level, with the changed concept of eligibility and the redirected flow of money that is supposed to "follow the users". Of course, this is not enough for real changes in the user's life. Legal changes must be supported on the ground and be repeatedly enforced by human acts. In order for the spirit, and not just the letter, of such changes to take effect, it is necessary to see resolve from above and the willingness, the attitude of actors and others to take such an approach.

Working relationship and alliance, which we otherwise use as synonyms, are slightly different when talking about power; alliance applies more to the desired outcome of the operation, as it is a new power that arises from the relationship. However, when it comes to the register of the organisation, it is also necessary to talk about work. An alliance is not an end in itself, we create it to do something. This also creates a special ambiance of working together. In counselling

conversations, under the influence of the psychotherapeutic tradition, we usually emphasise the emotional and relational moment of how we are in a certain situation, while the fact that we have to do something introduces more mundane registers of work and organisation, which are characterised by an inclination towards activity, a feeling for "the real," concern for effect, result and deliberation on the strategy and tactics of how to deal with something (Flaker, 2022a, pp. 53–54 after Southgate, 1985). These registers, which are often, because of their mundane nature, overlooked, or even neglected, are crucial to the working atmosphere of the relationship. In order to do something, we need the commitment (conspiracy) of the participants – a coming together that generates power, but also an idea, a plan of how to carry it out. We also need coordination and compromise between the campaign participants. Its framework is the very work that we have to do, the goal, and the relationships are subordinate to the goal in action and working together creates them.

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The fundamental operations are expressed differently in different registers and operating media. At the same time, all operations and their combinations are given a specific tone and value by each modus operandi. Field and outreach work brings a touch of reality to social work, while at the same time it requires social workers to be present in the user's Life-World, thus intensifying the work by anchoring it in the user's world. The communication space enables spheres (mainly life and institutional) to be connected, messages to be transferred between them and creates a common space – of deeds. Recording, records objectify the action (operation) (as an imprint into the object of processing, as a map into a tool for orientation in a space), also raises the issue of authorship and the (a)symmetry of the relationship. The organisational mode of operation, even if virtual in its core, enables the actuality of the operation, its real effects – in the fluid "household" space, as well as through the appropriate organisation of the more rigid spaces of the formal organisation.

In the operation of investigating the Life-World and enabling access to resources (being provided and equipped), fieldwork enables us

to directly experience the user's world, learn about its diverse dimensions – and also to get involved in it and support the user in concrete ways. The communication mode enables the essentials – connecting the living and institutional worlds, expressing of the will, narrative presentations, and exchanging information between various participants and creating a new map of connections. The documentary (recording) mode can assume two contrasting forms: as an imprint (of actions, words, states) or as their cartography, their story. Although both aim to achieve the same goal, getting from "assessing the situation" to making claims and determining eligibility – that is, to the redistribution of goods – they do so in diametrically opposite ways. The imprint prescribes an interpretation, creates bureaucratic application forms and standard allowances, cartography enables storytelling, human claims (from others) and the appropriate provision to the author of the writings (the user). The organisational mode of this operation aligns us with the organisation of everyday life (space, experience) – with the household – this is a polyphonic, flexible, consensual organisation; it directs the organisation towards living, reducing "shadow work". By "hanging out", getting to know the essential arrangements, the organisational method enables a subtle integration into the world of others.

When we engage in risk analysis or harm reduction (safety of the undertaking), fieldwork is not absolutely necessary, as this is mainly a conceptual operation, but taking a look at the physical and social characteristics of the situation provides a better foundation for the analysis. Risk analysis is a communication tool primarily intended to communicate the value (benefit) of risk to others, most often in order to prevent, or at least limit, the restriction of freedom, but at the same time it is a feedback to a professional (about the need for a mandate) and, on that basis, directs joint activity. Writing in risk analysis not only provides a documented expression of one's will, it is also a tool for accurate risk assessment – it enables the calculation of probability intensities, draws an action diagram and enables the logical connection of heterogeneous circumstances and events into a logical and performative statement – that is the basis for further action, which is reliant on a concrete risk reduction plan – an organised approach to risk. To reduce the risk brought by the introduction of new resources

and approaches, we must use the organisational modality of working, since this is often a two-edged sword – reducing poverty vs greater dependence. The threat of colonisation of the household space can (and must) be neutralised by repairing the damage caused by external intervention, i.e. by organisational assimilation of the profession into the life situation.

In the empowerment operation, working on the side of the weak and redistributing power, the outreach work mode presumes a presence in institutions, informal relationships and interactions, through which it brings power into the users' Life-Worlds. Outreach work requires the creation of trust, a conspiracy, an open space for communication between the user and the advocacy-oriented professional. Simultaneously, this operation creates a communication space of conflict and negotiation, which requires persistence and courage on the part of the advocate, and above all insistence on the practical relevance of conflict resolution. Empowerment also reveals the problem of writing as objectification and alienation and requires (re)appropriation or authorship of documents (e.g. storage with the user). The organisational mode is particularly conspicuous in this operation. Namely, it is necessary to organise changes in status, interaction patterns, assumption of roles; also meetings of personal networks. Changes to organisational schemes beyond the Life-World are also required to ensure the greater power for users and their involvement in decision-making. In addition, there is a necessity for the political articulation of the users' new positions – but in such a way that the words are supported by the deeds of the actors and funds provided to improve their status.

In the establishing of a working relationship or alliance, fieldwork and outreach work take us out of our offices. Real spaces strengthen the alliance (e.g. in street work). By intensifying the interventions in the Life-World, we have seen that the terrain is an intensifier of relationships and conversations in itself. The communication space or the mode of operation is the very core of this operation. It presupposes an agreed mandate, a goal, as well as (experiential) identification of common values and the creation of a common space. It acts as a guide from the communication of words to the communication of deeds, enabling the different levels to become interconnected, supporting

the transfer of messages upwards, as well as defending the living space against imposition from above. Taking notes while in a relationship is moreover an interactional offense, a symbol of the asymmetry of the relationship, but also a necessity if we want to encode the situation for the purpose of a dialogue, in which we decode the representations of actual contradictions and express them as a volition that needs to be realised. For realisation, we need a matrix-like record of actions (an action plan). The organisational procedure pronounces the alliance to be a work and organisational practice. At the same time, the operation itself establishes a plan, a project of joint endeavour, which at the same time is a framework of relationships, i.e. the operation itself.

Conjugation

The operations and their modes overlap in many ways, so much so that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The same applies to the syntax between the operations themselves. When we combined the operations of empowering users and creating a working relationship (Operation C ∩ D), especially in the intensifying of intervention in the living space, we were able to determine not only the effect of the type of relationship on the type of empowerment (Figure 8) but also the effect on the type of power thereby created (Figure 9), as well as the pitfalls and opportunities individual activity intensities create (Figure 10). This experiment showed that, even though they can be conceptually separated, these two operations, at least when performed, combine into a single effect. We can pose the question whether operations are just a way of conceiving, understanding our work, different facets of one and the same issue, or do they exist as distinctive categories of action that are only combined in effect? In Table 7, we will briefly test their combination.

In the table, we present the conjunctive effects of the operations in such a way that we can read the horizontal lines as the effects on the operation that are created by the operation at the intersection with the column. Thus, in the operation of exploring the Life-World and accessing resources, which in itself creates a field of striving for a better life, the operation of risk analysis enables the transformation of resources, the operation of empowerment creates a field that should

Table 7: Interaction of operations

Operation	Life-World – access to resources	Risk analysis/ harm reduction	Empowerment	Work relationship, alliance
Life-World – access to resources	**better life**	transformation of resources	sources of power	intervention
Risk analysis/ harm reduction	realistic changes	**life events, harm and benefit**	power to change the world	changing things together
Empowerment	tangible power, everyday sovereignty	power of risk, (courage)	**contractual power – changing the power diagram**	power stemming from the relationship. Intensity of intervention
Work relationship, alliance	real relationships	safe but experimental relationship	empowering relationship	**words and actions, dialogue**

give rise to resources of power, and the operation of work relationship is expected to create a field of interventions. In the field of life events and the weighing up of benefits and harms created by the risk analysis operation itself, the operation of connecting the Life-World to access to resources, modifies the changes in the Life-World so they become more realistic, the operation of empowerment introduces power to change the world, and the operation of alliance induces a field, in which one is not alone in changing situation – it becomes a common, collective effort. The empowerment operation, which in itself foregrounds contractual power and change in the power diagram, when it acts in synergy with the operation of the Life-World, creates a field of material power and everyday sovereignty, with the operation of risk analysis it creates the power to take risks, courage, and in conjunction with the operation of the working relationship it creates power, arising from the relationship, and increases its intensity. The operation of the working relationship, which in itself creates a field that enables the transition from words to deeds – dialogue, creates, in compliance with the Life-World, a field of real relationships anchored in the Life-World. Risk analysis provides a safe relationship,

but one in which it is possible to experiment, or, together with an empowerment operation, can ensure that the relationship will indeed empower the participant. By reading the table horizontally, we can inspect the modifications of the field, while if we read it vertically, by columns, we can understand what the operation at the head of the row does in the source field of the operation. It relates to events, happenings, even processes.

We have also found that often, perhaps even always, the process of social work consists of several operations, or even all of them. In the comprehensive methods, probably regularly. Personal planning, based on the operation of exploring the Life-World and enabling access to resources, often includes at least a brief and superficial analysis of risk, which must necessarily be accompanied by an operation of empowerment. The creation of an alliance is a primary condition for the planner and the user to start working together. The same applies to the process of risk analysis. The risk analysis can focus on the elements of the situation that predict a hazard, but without contact with the Life-World, we cannot deduce the hazards appropriately. When anticipating measures, it is often all the more important to enable access to resources – those we need to reduce risk or harm. In advocacy (as a wholesome method based on empowerment), of course it is necessary to learn how the user lives, and often the advocate must make some kind of action plan, deploying services that will convince the decision-makers that the person, despite, for example, remaining in their own home, will have guaranteed care and be provided for. Risk analysis is one of the main tools of advocacy. It is often necessary to convince decision-making bodies that a person is not "a danger to themself or others" or that a hazard can be neutralised so as to make the risk acceptable, to the same level of probability as risks we, as humans, otherwise take. Of course, the participants in the advocacy action must first agree both on the mandate and what they want to achieve with their common activity. Even if the working relationship remains at the level of counselling, operations will often take place in the sphere of verbal representations. The counsellor will become acquainted with the Life-World indirectly, through conversation, and will help to facilitate access to resources with suggestions and advice. They will often talk about ways to tackle changes, risky situations

or how to ensure a higher level of security, as well as about available sources of power and how they can be used. If the counsellor steps outside the office, however, as we have already shown, he or she will have to take the user's reality into account, the subtraction and addition of power, and also the risks – his or her own as well as the user's.

The hidden corner of social work

The living space[85] is in fact a space in which many forces are at work. These forces act either to attract or repel. Our movement through space (which also shapes it as a living space) is the result of the action of these forces and their fields. The forces are the consequence of various induction fields (power) – including our own activity – which feed the field and make it dynamic. If we want to move a body in space, our force must have a grip on that body, and we must have ground to stand on from which to move it. In the case of linear movement (moving in a straight line), our standing ground must move parallel to the movement of the body. If the stand (fulcrum) remains stationary and we place a lever between it and the body, the body will rotate or oscillate around the axis of our stand. In order to exercise our own power, we always need the *ground beneath our feet* – that is to have a foundation, a substance for our deeds. Otherwise we remain hanging, depending, or else we revolve around our axis.

The internal forces in the living space generate the power of this space – life power – the ability to exist, function and connect. External power also affects the living space. To recap, power is not a directed intensity, it is a field that induces forces (Lewin, 1951, p. 29). However, such power is selective – with the bipolar values it can align field forces, by rules indirectly support, or inhibit, determinable forces in a concrete living space (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p. xvii). Traffic rules, for example, determine how we should behave on the road, but not where we will travel. External power is the power of others – either actual people, groups outside our experience, or impersonal instances of authority. In both cases, there is a paranoid effect on the actor functioning in their living space – they sense forces originating outside their space, but do not perceive the actual originator – they have to fight against phantoms (Lemert, 1962). These sometimes also

appear in our concrete world – first, as demands specifically addressed to us, then as agents of external authorities, which we usually locate not only "outside", but also "above" our world, which they enter with the specific goal of asserting a "force majeure" – be it the "will of God" or the "will of the people" (policemen, bailiffs, even social workers). That kind of force is nothing but coercion, enforcement. External power fields that we position "above" (hence, not adjacent but superimposed) have the effect of turning paranoia into dependence. When the ground is cut from under our feet, we dangle on threads that reach beyond the horizon (or ceiling) – we cannot move, we can only swing round in a circle.

Several force fields are in operation in the living space. They can oppose each other, thus reducing power, or they can reinforce each other, adding power. In the case of overlapping, opposing forces, we experience conflict, frustration. If the vector sum of the opposing forces is zero, if the forces cancel or are in balance, despite the underlying dynamic structure, the result is a deadlock, the nullification of movement. In this case, the actor is not left hanging, but remains still (in their place). The movement produced is not oscillating but circular, around the standing position. The circle is bedevilled by the impossibility of linear motion. Equally, a goal can direct forces towards coordinated action. A goal is a field of forces that are structured so that the forces are directed towards a single area of space. Goals arise, or rather we create them, from the cognitive structure of the field in the living space – the multitude of points and areas that we perceive in that space, including the future and the past – important areas of our living space, our world. Expectations in the present and hopes for the future are shaped by longings and fears about that future, alongside guilt and satisfaction from the past. Action is also steered by values (transmitted or self-directed), but values differ from goals in that they guide conduct, not just the attainment of objectives. They are fields of power, rather than of force. As such, they can, on the one hand, empower our action towards a goal, and on the other, help to determine the goal (Lewin, 1951, pp. 39–42).

In this frame, will, the capacity for volition and enactment, is a strengthened desire that is able to realise the goal, to cope with obstacles and other opposing forces. Similarly, the strengthened desire that

draws virtue from the living space itself provides us with "the ground beneath our feet". It is a force arising from contradictory positions in our living space and the dialectic between them. When we lie down, it wakes us up and helps us get to our feet and when we get tired, to lie down and fall asleep. It is (literally) the base for standing or being prone, but also (virtuously, virtually) the base, "sub-stance" for the acts of standing up and lying down. It is a strong will that lets us stand our ground when that ground is shaking beneath our feet. It is the base that we carry along, it is the basis for autonomous behaviour. Regarding the operations we are dealing with, we can talk about A) the will to live, B) the will to take risks, C) the will to power and D) the will to help, better for camaraderie (since only together can we can move bigger things). The very imperative of comradeship extends the notion of the working relationship beyond the binary one between social worker and user, hence beyond mere professional definitions of the relationship, to more complex, community relationships. In the living space, such a will, the imperative of camaraderie works with the will of others – either of those we meet and have to share the same living space with, which is often conflictual, painful, exhausting – or it joins with the will that only radiates from others into our space, influencing it indirectly (although the influence can be very strong). When it is about what we can reconstruct as the will of the powerful, of capital, this is actually a drive to annihilate the will of the people, by imposing what they should do, buy, how they should behave.

The thread running through our discussion was precisely the coexistence of the Life-World and that other world, which we have called the institutional world. We have examined access to the resources accumulated by that world, we have emphasised the administrative situation in which it is anchored, we have demanded a change in the diagram, or rather, that virtual power structures be brought closer to human life, and finally we have explored ways help destabilises the ground beneath someone's feet, and ways of shifting from the Life-World to the institutional one. The first world is very real, concrete, we can experience it and live it, it is not only life-like, it is also alive and lively, events really happen in it. The other, though powerful, is virtual, without life, where no living thing resides, only apparitions (be they menacing ghosts or beckoning Sirens). The only

things that happen in it are those that living people put into it; it is constant and fixed, something that exists somewhere out there (usually above but, when it comes to crime, also below). It is formed of utterly abstract schemes (legislative, political and economic systems, values, cultural patterns, etc.) as well as very real apparatuses that embody these schemes. Total institutions are a prominent example, as well as other hybrid spaces that operate along similar axiomatic principles and with an appointed (but not elected) authority, while at the same time creating a homogeneous space with their characteristic rules (Flaker, 2022b).

Although these two worlds coexist and collaterally influence each other, they are separate.[86] For the transfer of messages, resources and other exchanges between the two worlds, there are a series of intermediate spaces between them. These are similar in function to an anteroom or the reception room in bourgeois apartments, where visitors can be received without seeing behind the scenes. In the official world, these are windows, "counters" that open and close, lobbies or waiting rooms through which we get to offices and surgeries, or bars where traders and restaurateurs offer goods or services, which, of course, come from behind the scenes (kitchens, warehouses, supply chains and banking transactions). From the point of view of the living space, these are sometimes appreciated openings, intentional cracks (also occasionally unintentional – "data leakage") that allow welcome escapes from our own reality when that is unbearable; but primary they are an apparatus of often painstaking placement in the institutional social structure. The properties of these spaces, which may be relatively permanent physically, are of a provisional and transient nature. The lights in the bank go out at night, except maybe in the manager's window, as he pretends to live in the bank.

Social work, perhaps more than other professions, is amphibious, able to live in both environments.[87] It also has the ability to create a virtual space in between the two, which we have called an "arc" or "vault" of help. In it dangles a person who has lost the ground beneath their feet – they do not stand their ground for a longer or shorter moment, but they have not yet been transferred to a completely institutional environment (social work creates a limbo). The questions that arise out of that moment are: A) How am I living and how do I

want to live? B) What do I want to do in life, no matter what the odds are? C) How do I escape the subordination I am subject to? D) How do I meet people, be together with them, without pretending that I am the way I "should" be?

These questions should not only be asked by the user, but also by the social worker. The use of the operations we have described and analysed is a special privilege of social work. The virtue that the operations have in common is honesty. It is not a matter of internalising the demands that others have on us – we are already pretty sick of that. It is about externalising the internal tensions of our living space. Desire is a dart that stings, so it hurts. It is a claim (not just a demand) against a debt that has been built up by those who have been squeezing us all this time, saying that it is we who owe them. It is about deeds ready to go to the end and beyond; about the perpetually returning work. Happiness is an encounter, however anxious, with no pretence.

I did not write this book for others, I wrote it for you.

Appendix:
The Breakthrough of the Social – Dubrovnik Manifesto 2019*

The Necessity of the Social

In September 2019, over one hundred people active in social work praxis gathered in Dubrovnik to explore some of the most urgent current challenges and to reassert and reinstate *social work.* This manifesto, discussed before, during, and after the event, is our collective statement on the importance of social work praxis in the contemporary context.

Facing an increasing brutalisation of society that goes hand in hand with the destruction of welfare systems, encountering old and new forms of structural and concrete acts of violence, we set out to explore how we can contribute to re-emphasise and revive the critical tradition of social work, and reinforce solidarity with those who are oppressed, at-risk and vulnerable.

After decades of a diminished *social*, in a neo-liberal conjuncture that has privileged the *economic* and neglected, marginalised, and thoroughly downgraded the social dimension as the basis of our existence, there is an urgent need for the breakthrough of a brand-new *social*, analogous to the one superseding classic liberalism at the end of the 19th century in the Global North.

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* The manifesto is based on ideas for the conference *The Breakthrough of the Social: Practical Utopias, Wisdom and Radical Transformations – Social Work @IUC: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges;* held at Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, 2–6 September 2019, organised by the IUC ‘School of Social Work Theory and Practice’.

Social work has not only to be a part of this breakthrough, and would be strengthened by this emergence, enabled to survive as an essential feature of society – it also needs to play an active role in bringing it to fruition.

In order to do so we have to defy notions of 'professional neutrality', reclaim social work as a community-oriented, relationship-based activity that goes far beyond academia, and build strong coalitions of workers, academics, service users, movement activists, trades' unionists and everybody else working towards social justice.

Radical Social Transformations

We are living through yet another *great transformation.* The transformation of the future will be *radical* – whether we give up and merely observe the collapse of civilisation, or if we try to bring about a more socially just world: based on the common good and on the values of care; of living together with profound awareness of both our vulnerability and strengths as individuals and as a society. We need to actively preserve what is good, including the natural world and the eco-system, and radically change that which does not work.

Globalisation, digitalisation, forced migration, demographic changes, a changing division of labour, etc., have exposed us, in different ways, to unprecedented, and sometimes unseen, risks that are greatest for those who are excluded from privileges and experience exploitation, discrimination and poverty. The radical transformation has also created numerous new opportunities in terms of communications, mobility, diversity, productive capacities and culture. Yet we crave for *security* (both social and physical) and fear *violence*, which keeps emerging in new forms and with a growing intensity.

The *natural and political* dimensions of the *catastrophe* merge into one through global warming, caused by fossil capitalism and the rush to turn natural resources into profit. They are epitomised by migration, including migration forced as a result of conflicts, climate change and economic misery; by fear exploited by authoritarianism (fuelled by fundamentalisms of many different kinds), by increasing inequality created by neo-liberal regimes, and by the removal of liberties and freedom (gentrification for the rich – immobility for the

poor), enforced hatred and discrimination towards all who do not conform to what is set as the male, white, heterosexual norm; growing exploitation through new forms of work in the so-called gig economy; and an expanded precariat, with deep psychological and social consequences, making human existence precarious indeed.

Yet, there have been important developments towards an inclusive society. The rights of people with disabilities and children have been clearly stated, enshrined in global Conventions, albeit with some hiccups and never fully implemented in practice. Deinstitutionalisation and *long-term care* have been introduced, albeit not without obstacles, contributing to a re-*evaluation* of old age (old is good), childhood, madness and disability.

New social movements keep arising desiring a better, more dignified, life connecting the grassroots and global scales. New, alternative, forms of economic relations are being developed and a new kind of urban revolution seems to be imminent, not least in the Fearless cities movements. Trades' unions, including trades' unions of social workers, need to be established where they do not exist and strengthened where they do, and to adapt to new forms of work and to advocate for measures to benefit the whole of society. New forms of fighting racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination and fighting the global, life-threatening, climate emergency are emerging, calling for no less than a radical system change!

Although the age of austerity seems to be waning, what post-austerity will look like is still under construction.

Wisdom of Social Work Interfaces

To steer the transformation toward human solutions, *practical wisdom* is needed. The role of social work is to do just that; furthermore, it has to safeguard and promote marginalised and disrespected local or indigenous knowledge so it withstands and has impact on the global rule of abstract schemes. Ordinary everyday life – the Life-World – should become the basic and pragmatic criterion of policy change and adaptations – ensuring the sovereignty of people.

Besides the unalienable mandate of social work to provide the everyday, users', perspective on life and the world, the strength of

social work lies in bringing together unseemly combinations of knowledge and logics of action. The major sources of social work action syntheses are *ethics, organisation* and *politics*. There is the need to know what is the right thing to do, how to organise the transition and where to obtain the power to do it.

Social work's Ethics of Inclusion and imperative of non-exclusion provide the humanist synthesis of the broken dialectics of Reason/Unreason. To follow its ethical imperatives, forms of *self-management* (rather than *social service management*) should be sought. Social work engagement in politics needs to stem from popular *activism* and an intersectional understanding and way of working, mobilising and struggling together, acknowledging and seeking understanding of existing differences and constructively using them as a collective force for change.

The practical power of social work lies in its transversal, inter-disciplinary, approach and inter-sectoral position. The Welfare State and Welfare Society needs to be reinvented on the grounds of a critical evaluation of the post-socialist (with post-austerity in mind) syntheses (South East European, Global East, and Global South) and social work's role in the bottom-up construction of progressive social policies asserted.

Social work has to create productive links with other human disciplines and sectors. In education, social work can contribute to *learning in action* and provide the solutions to schooling problems (bullying, teacher protection, supporting teachers in building solidarity). In health care, constantly in relation to social work, it can bestow the importance of the user's perspective, involvement and participation leading to an holistic approach to health and well-being, while still keeping existing specific needs in mind. In both challenging and strengthening the *legal frame and combining it with social processes* (in the law and administration), it can counter debasing practices and bureaucratisation with empowering practices and advocacy.

Practical Utopias (Challenges for Social Work)

Social work is a practical, everyday Utopia; it is always about becoming, searching for a better place, more human and more social. It has

to have a (utopian) sense of desire – be it about changing for the better or conserving what is good and it has to live up to the dictum that "action is the sole medium of expression for ethics". Throughout its history, social work has developed many productive tools, which need to be re-strengthened and re-loaded, with new alternatives sought and built. Social work's classic tools and stories must be joined by new ones and governed by the notion of users' emancipation and the emancipation of society as such.

Comparative social work should enable the transfer and translation of good practices, not only across diverse national and local contexts, but also over the life-cycle in working with children and youth, older people, families and groups facing multiple challenges, with people with diverse labels – poverty, delinquency, disability, challenging mental health concerns and so on. An *intersectional approach* should focus on the inter-relationship between gender, age, 'race', class, sexuality, and disability. It needs to focus on building solidarity and alliances with networks and self-organisation of marginalised groups such as LGBTQ-identified persons, refugees and migrants, homeless people, and initiatives and campaigns such as "Me too", "Me two", "blacklivesmatter" and many more.

Deinstitutionalisation, which has, in recent decades, become a global platform, needs an overview and a context, an appreciation of its achievements, obstacles and traps and a vision how to handle it as a techne and an ethical imperative. Simultaneously, it has to be sensitive to, and in a polemical relation with, the remaining elements of oppression, detention, constraint, punishment and even torture in the care system and beyond. *Long-term care*, which aspires to become a universal provision, is a challenge *per se* and needs to be consistently and radically implemented as such, to connect with other types of existing provision in order to become universally available. Attention needs to be given to instances of *increased power* of service users (e.g. shared decision-making, co-managers, co-trainers and co-researchers) and more collaborative ways of working on the basis of self-determination and self-advocacy need to be realised.

There are *new areas* social work is entering into (such as green social work) and *new means* of performing social work (such as through social media and new technologies). There is a constant struggle

between social work and fragmenting governance and management. In the past decades social work has been *under attack from 'proceduralism' and projectisation*, even if social work has invented practical solutions to resolve the formal contradictions between protection (care) and freedom.

Increasing atomisation and individualisation of a practice based solely on individual social work, calls for a reinvention of community social work and action (also to challenge the rise of religious fundamentalisms and authoritarian neoliberalisms).

The challenge for social work today is to build a vision that will guide us through new areas, foster and preserve freedoms based on (social) security, dealing simultaneously and comprehensively with diverse adversity and enabling people (both professionals and users) to address life issues in a transversal and intersectional manner. In this way, social work will enable people to live together with minimum exclusion and maximum availability of support for personal and communal projects, without fearing the consequences of oppression and without becoming prey to authoritarian power.

Staying neutral is not an option. Working passionately and fearlessly towards turning our social utopias into the reality of a good life for all is what is needed today!

Notes

On construction of operations (Preface)

1 The word "operation" is derived from the Latin word opus – "work" (very appropriate when discussing social *work*). The Cambridge English Dictionary defines it as "an act or process of working, doing something, being in action, or having an effect". We are most familiar with medical and military operations, but they were not our model when we started using the term to describe strands of social work. We were closer to mathematical, logical operations, i.e. the assembly of elements into meaningful wholes, which give a result (in mathematics) or a conclusion (in logic). In social work it should be the rearrangement of a life so it improves. Perhaps the closest we came at the time was Piaget's conception of operations as the ability to act on an object in one's mind (Piaget and Inhelder, 1973). Indeed, Piaget believed that knowledge comes from action. A child acts on the world and thereby learns how the world works through direct experience. As does social work. Especially since it is operational intelligence that is responsible for representing and handling the dynamic or transformational aspects of reality, and figurative intelligence for representing its static aspects. So says Piaget, and we with him.

2 *Centres for social work* are public social services. They were established all over the former Yugoslavia in the 1960s. Unlike in many other countries, they are not part of local authorities but autonomous professional bodies with statutory powers. As a statutory agency they are under an increasing pressure to perform administrative duties. The purpose of the mentioned analysis of their tasks was to assert the social work component of statutory work and render the prescribed administrative and legal procedures to social work use and ethos.

3 We derived four spaces of social work and connected them with the ways of performing it, on the one hand, with the help of registers that we extracted when creating the catalogue of tasks of the Centre for Social Work, and on the other hand, based on the activity of the social worker in the institution (Tilbury, 1993). The pairs of space and mode were: living space and outreach or fieldwork, communication space and conversation and negotiation, social security space and recording and inter-institutional space and teamwork (Flaker, 2012a, p. 57; Flaker, 2015, pp. 129–130, 197).

4 This does not work effectively in the English translation, though, since a number of references are in Slovenian. Where possible, I substituted those with English equivalents. To give an English reader a pointer, the Slovenian titles in the list have been translated.

5 The refrain, like many things in social work, is a double-edged sword. It can reinforce the meaning of what is repeated or it can empty it. Constant repetition of a word, a term, consolidates it in the professional discourse. On the one hand, we refer the audience to a concept that is crucial to the discourse; on the other hand, if it is too often taken out of its context of occurrence and use (theoretical, and even more so practical), it becomes an abstraction, technical jargon. It loses its content and refers only to the importance of the speaker and their assumed expertise, which is only implied, not performed. It becomes an empty word, full of nothing but professional puffery.

When Gabi (Čačinovič Vogrinčič, 2016) recites for the umpteenth time about "co-creation", "the strengths perspective", "verbalising the process", "actionable knowledge ", "ethics of participation", she sings a lullaby, comforts us, gives us a sense of security in the chaos of life that social work has to deal with, a homely feeling, that we can recognise things, as well as giving us the courage to step outside this home, go among the people, while humming the basic tune of social work. However, it is precisely in leaving home-ground that we need to use variations on a theme in the refrain, to look for what it actually refers to and, still as a chorus, to say it in many different ways – so that others will understand us, but above all, so that we understand, know, exactly what we are saying. Instead of "co-creation" (which, by the way, has a slightly patronising connotation, since we might think of the user as merely our co-creator), we can talk about creating, working together, about joint efforts, etc. So that it does not become empty, the refrain must be constantly fed, with its concrete manifestations. Even if it is abstract, it must always have the potential to be

realised in a plurality of points, only in this way can it truly return to itself (freely based on Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 299–303, 310–350).

On social work (Introduction)

6 Social policy is related to social work not only in that it is "social", but also in that it has a similar position on the map of professions, sciences and activities. It is claimed by politics, where it originated, by sociology as a part of the study of society, and it is at home in social work. At the same time, they all also struggle with it, seeing it as an extension of themselves. Even social work. Social policy and social work have a close but problematic relationship (Stritih, 1995; 1998). At times, especially after the Second World War and the introduction of the welfare state, social work was considered a tool of social policy. And so it was. Especially here, in Slovenia, since in the foundational years and the early development of social work, social policy was mainly created by the political nomenklatura. Once social policy itself had started to shift towards a bottom-up policy and its autonomy strengthened, we can see (and demand) from the changed perspective, that social policy is (or should be) a tool of social work. We confirm this imperative below in Operation A: the Life-World and access to resources, because social policy must be a tool to improve people's lives, and not just a tool but a tool in people's own hands (Operation C: empowerment). Life is the criterion that should regulate (social) policy, not the other way around, policy governing life (usually in the interest of those with power – capital).

7 From the viewpoint of our discussion, there is no key difference between psychotherapy and counselling. Ethnographically speaking, they are identical forms of action and relationships between two people or, in group formats, between the counsellor or therapist and the group. The difference in the naming is partly historical and partly related to the location of such activity. Psychotherapy was ordained by medicine and, despite Freud's affirmation of "lay psychoanalysis", a guild-like stance defended against the entry of all comers. A caricature of the situation would be that those who were not admitted to the "guild" simply called themselves something else. This is widely accepted even today, when anyone who has finished secondary school can apply to study psychotherapy. It is apparent that psychotherapy is more codified and has greater aspirations to "regulate the profession". The difference is also acknowledged in the definition of the

situation contained in the names themselves. Therapy is treatment, while counselling is aimed at improving human functioning. However, counselling encompasses the idea and purpose of changing a person in a slightly more hidden way, it leaves a bit more room for manoeuvre for something else, even if the starting point is the same. It is not surprising, therefore, that, despite the strong dominance of the psychodynamic orientation, in social work the Rogerian orientation – person centred counselling (Rogers, 1961) – eventually prevailed. It is not only simpler, but also more in accord with the original alignment of social work with human self-determination.

8 At the fringe of psychotherapeutic or counselling practices, several important trends have developed that have crossed this boundary. Among the more important ones was "milieu" (environmental) therapy, together with the therapeutic community movement (Jones, 1952). Because it takes the environment and circumstances into account and it wants to dynamise them, Goffman (1961a, p. 357) saw this orientation as providing the possibility for psychiatry to escape the dilemmas of its version of the medical model. Basaglia's journey also began in Gorizia with a similar approach, however, when consistently applying democratic principles of the therapeutic community, the residents at some stage "voted for" leaving the hospital (Basaglia, 1968/1998; 1987) – setting the limit to the method that brought the motion about. For more about this and the "limits of method", see Flaker, Jović, Cvetković and Rafaelič (2020, p. 304) also Rafaelič and Flaker (2021, pp. 217, 219).

This kind of milieu, community, is still provisional, created elsewhere for therapeutic purposes. It is still a stopover, a refuge, an asylum in which a person takes a break from their real environment, reorients themself and gets different experiences to be used where they really live. In Slovenia, an example of such a milieu approach is the "therapeutic camp", as introduced and led by Bernard Stritih and Miran Možina (1992). Even if we recognise them as a therapeutic activity, rather than a primarily social one – as the inclusion of children with various labels, a change in the organisation that can also have an impact on what happens in the community (see the discussion about camps in Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, pp. 87–89) – it is not completely clear whether it is a provisional community, aiming for mainly therapeutic effects, or whether it is the creation of a new community that takes care of its members, or still more, that changes the social arrangements in its environment.

9 We deliberately use verbs rather than just nouns to refer to disciplines that intersect with social work. We signify an activity that is specific to a profession, but not the profession itself. Social work is clearly not psychotherapy, pedagogy, medicine, penology, administration, psychology, sociology and social workers are not judges. At the same time, it is also clear that these professions had (and still have) a great influence on the development and substance of social work, and that in social work we often – due to a lack of tools, self-confidence, courage – look to these professions as paragons. We strive to be professional, so we use the forms of operation of other professions. So that explains the verbs.

10 Many specialists in various fields work along the lines of the repair service model. At the start of his discussion of this model as a basis for the medical model, Goffman (1961a, pp. 321–325) suggests that there is yet another type of service – not repairing but making and creating. On the basis of this distinction, we can build the idea of creative service professions (architect, bricklayer, designer...) and the creative service model (Flaker, 2019a). Social work is an "amphibian" even in this case; it can be used in both ways, and we can never completely eliminate repairing from social work. We can, however, hope that the paradigmatic shift, which we are promoting and implementing here, will place the repairing, instead of being a point of departure, as becoming a supplementary creative manoeuvre. And that it will mainly be involved in correcting situations and arrangements, rather than people.

11 Many colleagues consider the administrative procedure to be the brake on, or the yoke of, social work, preventing us from actually doing social work. They experience it as an intruder in the tissue of social work. Which it is. Administrative procedures and social work procedures are two incompatible ways of dealing with reality. Each works according to its own logic, in its own tonality and with a different aim. The fact that they cannot be compounded does not mean that we cannot combine them. Like oil and vinegar, which do not mix, but can be blended into a delicious salad dressing, which we would find almost inedible with one ingredient alone.

In some cases, the administrative procedures need social work. When it comes to unpredictable, knotty (complex) situations involving several people and their complicated relationships, when a special sensitivity and in-depth understanding of the situation are required, such as, for example, when it comes to children, old people or people

with mental distress – the robustness, orderliness, predictability, impartiality and distance of administrative ways turn out to be not only a toothless tiger but a bull in a china shop. The reverse is also true, social work has to turn to administrative procedures when it comes to access to resources (operation A), when it comes to high risks (operation B), and also when it comes to empowerment as we want to improve someone's social status (operation C), and to alliances when intrusion into a person's world is such that their rights need to be protected (operation D).

Thus, the problem is not with the combination, but with the dominance of one framework or the other. If the initial frame of a particular social work operation is an administrative procedure, our actions will very likely be determined by the administrative procedure, which will "overcode" the social work. This probability is also reinforced by the notion that law is "above" social work (since it "comes from top down"). This is confirmed by management and inspectors who insist that "the paperwork be in order", that we have followed the legal procedures, since the actual effects of social work (how people live) are too elusive. Using the administrative procedures within the social work framework from the outset, diminishes the chance of the administrative process prevailing, since it will be used as a tool to achieve a goal (set in unison with the user), to which the administrative process will be subordinate. When the opening framework is administrative, we must still use such an instrumental logic. We must remain true to our profession. Together with the user, we need to identify the sense of the procedure and appropriate its purpose. We need to critically read and evaluate the referrals and initiatives of others, as well as the documentation we receive. We must pay attention to the possibility that the initiative, which has instigated the procedure, is hiding another motivation such as the search for a scapegoat, exclusion, etc. It is better for the procedure to be the subject of dialogue rather than determining or even preventing it. Papyraceous procedures must be given a human twist and we must resist becoming social robots. For more about the assumption of roles in such frameworks see the subsection on the dance between the guardian and the advocate (pp. 50–55).

12 The right to not know is a revelation when social work steps out of the office and into the street (as happened to the author during street work with youth, cf. Flaker, 1982, pp. 389–390). Classical social work, under the influence of the medical model and following the example

of psychiatry, had a compulsive obsession about knowing everything about their client. "Everything" of course meant everything that a certain profession or orientation explicitly, and even more implicitly, constituted as its theory of what a human being is. Usually, in social work, this meant the dark side of someone's history, which in turn supposedly created their problems. Concretely, this was recorded in the "social anamnesis". Among other things, the social worker had to find out when the person stopped "wetting the bed". Hence, the obsession over data, totally irrelevant to the joint work and, moreover, humiliating for the user. For decency's sake, we cannot do this in street work, it would jeopardise our work, a completely banal human trust. What is obvious in street work, also applies to social work in general. The professional's right to not know is the user's autonomous right to make information about themselves available. Information about the other will emerge at the right time, when it is important for the joint work. Dialogue is only possible with fundamental mutual respect and must be based on the life situation and its contradictions, not from an abstract conception of humanity that manifests itself in professional superiority.

13 The text of this introductory subsection is the first part of a plenary lecture (echoing the Occupy Movement and the Direct Social Work) at the Social Work Congress in 2013 (Flaker, 2013), available in English (Flaker, 2016, 2023b)

14 The first book about the experience of the concentration camp (Auschwitz), which was published directly after the war, in 1947 with the original title *Se questo è un uomo* ('If this is a man'). Both the title and the book itself raise the question of maintaining humanity under the conditions of a death camp.

15 Gramsci's (1971) idea of the "long march through institutions" (as a way of changing society) takes on an ominous and perverse meaning, when we talk about the thousands of residents found in various institutions.

16 It is estimated that in the European Union alone there are at least 1.2 million residents in long-term care facilities for adults and children (excluding facilities for old people) (Mansell, Knapp, Beadle-Brown and Beecham, 2007). We are still waiting for the global estimate.

17 It is necessary to oppose the abominable social order that is being forced upon us, and move away from it. It will not disappear on its own. Our indignation must be expressed, even through the occupation of public spaces and the re-appropriation of such assets, through political revolution, or in any other way that will work.

18 Given the three welfare regimes, we can outline a general welfare triangle, which should be used to describe or evaluate each "welfare mix" (Evers, 1988; Evers and Svetlik, 1993; see also Rode, 2005). This model was very popular during the period of transition from the classical welfare state, as it allowed a more postmodern view and affirmed the non-governmental sector. However, it is ideological in several ways. First, it overlooks movements as a source of welfare. It also creates an image of harmony between, and the complementarity of, various resources, but in reality, there is a struggle for resources and a drive for the dominance of one principle of generating resources at the expense of others. The ideology of the triangle, which is supposed to affirm the non-governmental sector (not informal forms of welfare) often, in reality, enabled the privatisation of social care or its neoliberal transformation. For more on this see Flaker, 2012b.

Life-World (Operation A)

19 The Life-World is both an everyday and a philosophically scientific concept. In everyday speech, we usually call it "life", sometimes also "the world" (usually with the possessive adjective "my", "our", "their"). In both everyday and scientific speech, it is also called "the living space". It was initially introduced into philosophy as a category by Husserl and later developed by Habermas. It has often been used by phenomenologically oriented sociologists, led by Schütz. It is an important item in the work of Bourdieu. In social psychology, Lewin (1951) used the term "life space" for a similar concept. This concept became important in Slovenia, while it was used in action research in the community (*The impact of social space on the socialisation of children*, Stritih et al., 1980; in it the introductory chapter on Lewin (Stritih, 1980). Otherwise, for a good summary of relevant theories concerning the Life-World, see Nastran Ule (1993).

In the process of creating the catalogue and thinking about the operations of social work, we did not base the concept of the Life-World on any particular theory, but on the entire tradition and on the meaning as defined here. In social work we are not interested in the Life-World or life space per se, in so much as in its relation to the veiled worlds beyond it, even more so the role of social work at those interfaces. This is what, at the same time as creating the catalogue, Nino Rode addressed in his dissertation (Rode, 2005), taking account of Habermas's theory.

20 The consideration of the matrix of action, which is formed by the physical (as well as virtual) space of the institution, the profession that controls it, and the esoteric language of that profession, is inspired by the previously mentioned work of Jordan (1987), supplemented with Ilich's treatise on how the spatially organised temples of discrete specialised activities determine human needs (Illich, 1992), which we combined in an article on the ways that space determines social work (Flaker, 2012a; 2015, pp. 193–211).

21 The term "duties" is often understood in only one direction, usually as taxes and levies, but there are duties to the state and duties of the state. Taxes are duties to the state, and social benefits are a duty of the state. The one directional understanding of the term is a symptom of our greater awareness of our duties than our rights. In this text, we are dealing with the latter, what a person must get from the state or some other (perhaps informal) source.

Maps

22 The English term "mapping" is sometimes uncritically and inappropriately borrowed in Slovenian and other languages. The original meaning of the Slovenian word "mapa", however, is "folder", a usual office tool for storing documents, as also used in computing. In terms of its operation, it is, on the one hand similar, making an overview of a multitude of items easier, while on the other, more important side, it performs the opposite function. Folders provide a means of collecting and condensing material, while maps disperse ("ex-plain") material across multiple dimensions.

23 Not only in social work. For Deleuze and Guattari (1988, pp. 12–20), mapping or cartography is a rhizomatous, tuberous alternative to a tree-like, axiomatic-deductive understanding of space and events in it. After Spinoza, they note (ibid., pp. 260–261) that the body is defined neither by form nor substance, nor by the subject nor by the organs nor the functions it performs, but by its cartographic position, which is determined by movement or rest, or speed and slowness (latitude) and ability to act, power (longitude). Deligny's method of drawing movement maps of autistic children is fascinating, allowing us to grasp (though perhaps not fully understand) how people who are seemingly in their own world live, what is important to them – what are the established paths, what are the detours, deviations and routes of paths that escape them (ibid., pp. 14, 202-204).

Similarly, Lewin (1951) notes that living space is hodological (Greek ὁδός, hodos – path, road), a space created by movement (on a path, e.g. walking), in which forces attract or repel us. Such a space is always "subjective" in the sense that it refers to a body (or even several bodies) that complete the journey, but this is precisely what makes it always objective, real. It is also dynamic, always changing. That is also how the maps change. Consequently we are not interested in the footprints, traces in a "given" space, but in the space the steps create.

24 For the purpose of exploring the Life-World the method of *eco maps* is often used. These lay out maps of resources or sources of power (with several cross-sections), important relationships, the "road", as well as the "river of life", useful when working with an individual (Raposa Tajnšek and Šugman Bohinc, 2007, pp. 103–124; Hartman, 1995). A map of the distribution and interaction of group power in a community proved to be very useful in community or street work (Flaker, Pavlović and Peček, 1982, pp. 417–436; Flaker et al., 2007b). More on the importance of and use of maps in social work in Flaker (2015, pp. 198–200). A good chapter on mapping in Wilson, Ruch, Lymbery and Cooper, 2008.

25 Goffman (1961a, p. 363) notes that mental distress and hospitalisation occur due to very different life contingencies, circumstances that trigger them. However, in hospitals, since maps of values, forms of conduct, etc. characteristic of a particular subculture and life milieu are not available, these contingencies of hospitalisation cannot be understood in this way. However, an ethnographic cartography of typical human situations has developed since Goffman's time. Although derived from empirical ethnographic material, such general maps are still fairly abstract. However, they can be used as a background and as an orientation to create more specific life maps. At the level of the community, they will outline the spatial and power relationships between groups, at the group level the relationships between members, and for an individual they will sketch their personal living space.

26 When we are put in any role of a professional, the situation requires a "professional" response. We need to answer the question, to offer a solution. Under this pressure we are happy if we find one. The situation, and our position in it, will be resolved by anything that at least roughly answers the question, the quandary of the interlocutor. We are usually satisfied with our immediate first thought. Regardless of how many solutions fit a person's situation and to what extent they resolve their plight, we have done "our job". A solution at the first

attempt, even if good, is also a trap. It is literally a "magic solution" – a rabbit pulled out of a hat. Human situations – quandaries, hardships, problems – never have just one solution. When creating an index of needs and a catalogue of responses (Flaker et al., 2008, pp. 399–444), we found that a total institution is one and the same answer to a thousand and one life situations. Long-term care or and deinstitutionalisation require a thousand and one answers to one and the same situation. And we actually could count over a thousand of them.

Solving at the first attempt might allow us to maintain our reputation as a professional expert (and the trust of the interlocutor), but when we "stake all our money on one horse", we increase the probability of being left without any winnings. We will overlook other possible solutions, some better, some worse. And there is even a point to the bad ones. Not just that they may come in handy, but – when we create a list of possible answers, some of them quite foolish – we outline the field of possible action, we get a more comprehensive, holistic perspective – it can help by giving us a grasp on all possible actions; it also enables various solutions to be combined – assembled so that, even while none of them answers the specific challenge, in conjunction with one another they can respond to it.

Needs

27 Necessities are all those tasks that need to be done. However, this has to be taken broadly, for example as in interaction necessities (which are not all important and necessary, as they arise from an obligation of the interaction patterns – if someone greets us, we greet them back). Necessities are also acts required by other acts, those, which are done because of a desire, when in order to fulfil that desire, we must do something else, namely something not the very object of the desire or intention. If we wish to visit a friend, we need to travel to where they are. In fact, desire is a composite comprising several acts, most of them instrumental in nature, but directed and given tone by the desire itself. Desire is expressive, while necessity is instrumental.

When 20th century social policy combined desires and needs into a single category, which enables the management of the population, to a large extent it personalised, personified the needs, but on the other hand it depersonalised the desire, and instrumentalised it (in one period obsessively shaping it as an instinct, a drive). In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, the necessity territorialises the deterritorialised desire – it captures the escapes from necessity (cf. Cohen and Taylor,

1978). The universality of needs has provided security of rights, but has robbed us of the courage to secede from what every fraction of the mass is supposed to wish. Thus, we perceive needs – even when they are more desires than necessities – as something very instrumental, but also as something that we have to justify – to ourselves and to others.

28 When talking about needs, we usually use generalisations, abstractions. For example, we talk about the "need for food", "for contact". When it comes to such broad generalisations, the content is lost (the extent of a concept is inversely proportional to its content – the more different things a concept means, the less meaning the concept has – if it means Everything, it means Nothing). "The need for food" does not even tell us whether a person is really hungry, much less what they would like to eat; nor do we learn anything about whether they have enough food and what difficulties or pleasure eating gives them. We could say that the function of such generalisations and abstractions is to recognise in principle a person's right to "be sated", but we are not interested in why they are hungry, much less how satisfied they will be. Therefore, to decode needs productively in the Life-World, we must shift from passive, sub-standing abstractions to active concepts. Abstractions are the names of phenomena, amassed by their similarities, while concepts bear witness to the differences, the relationships captured by a particular category (for the significance of the distinction between abstractions and concepts, cf. Gilli, 1974, pp. 121–123, 139–165). Abstractions view a series of phenomena from the outside, while concepts allow us to understand phenomena from the inside (ibid., p. 140). This applies equally to the micro-level of functioning as to macro-social phenomena, or social work theory or policies.

Theoretical introductions to dissertations or research on needs often cite abstract theories of needs, usually of a psychological origin. These, for example, classify needs according to the dimensions of BEING, HAVING, LOVING, and even more frequently writers refer to Maslow's theory of the "hierarchy of needs" (Maslow, 1943; 1970). Although they do provide an "idea" about the distinction between different types and orientations of needs, these very texts, due to their robust generality, turn out to be more or less useless, especially in practice. Because of their generality and universality, they are very far from the context of the occurrence of "needs"; they are devoid of context. As such, they are an ideological construct of what a human is supposed to be. (It is precisely in this way that, like

many psychological theories, they are more like religion than science). We need to believe that needs originate in the person themself, that they do not arise in contacts with others and the world; and that we must begin with satisfying "basic" (biological) needs and only then "higher" – psychological and social ones. And although, at the time of its creation, Maslow's work marked a break with a purely physiological, homeostatic mechanical view of human motivation, needs are still understood as a lack, that must be counterbalanced, gratified (and only upon satiation can we become people who can transcend our existence). This kind of theory is appealing, even though it postpones our humanity to some distant ideal, yet uncertain, future or to an elevated level, since it is consistent with capitalist axiomatics, which still has hunger (and other physical discomfort) as the main motive for waged labour, but is recently adding to this very basic impulse more pleasing ones, corresponding to the society of abundance that has emerged meanwhile. Empirical verification of the "hierarchy of needs" theory has shown that such a hierarchy is by no means universal, that the importance of needs or motives change according to the context in which they appear. That is, the hierarchy of needs changes with general social changes (for example, with war, cf. Tang and West, 1997). It has also been shown that such a model is individualistically designed and does not correspond to priorities formed by societies with strong collective values (Hofstede, 1984; Cianci and Gambrel, 2003), and that the hierarchy of needs is different in different periods of life – in old age, for example, security becomes more important (Goebel and Brown, 1981). For more on the critique of the "hierarchy of needs" see Flaker (2019b).

29 It is characteristic of abstractions that they not only represent phenomena outside their context, but also that such representations are one-dimensional, that they represent only one pole, only one determinant of reality. And that, in any case, is an ideologically distorted image of reality. Even when the abstractions occur in pairs, as in the case of Health and Disease, only one dimension of the phenomenon of disease or health (whatever they may be) is signified. In particular, we are looking at a deeply asymmetrical pair. Medicine knows very well how to define a disease, to diagnose it ("get to know it inside out"), to confirm it (even in this, it has problems in some areas – in the mental field it cannot find the cause in the body, "under the skin", and pronounces the "disease" to be a "disorder"). Medicine can define health as the absence of disease, but since this is an insufficiently

positive definition, it provides a very general, vague and elusive definition of health. But even the exact positivist definition of disease, as presented by medicine, is not enough to be applicable to reality. The disease cannot be really recognised without the patient's complaint (Canguilhem, 1991). The power(lessness) of the doctor and the patient meet in sickness. Learning about the disease and dealing with it are therefore also determined by their complementary social roles (Parsons, 1951), and thus also by their social and class position. Another determinant is the clinic – a specialised space, an observatory of the universe of diseases (Foucault, 1973). The understanding of disease and its course is also determined by the entire medical complex – including health insurance and medical bureaucracy, the separation between public and private health care, etc. on the one hand, and the immense pharmaceutical and other medical industries on the other (Illich, 1975). At the same time, illness is also a life event (Nastran Ule, 1993, pp. 121–128; Lamovec, 1998, pp. 215–218) (conversely, health is not an event!), which turns our life upside down, gives it a completely different meaning and sets new priorities, while also interrupting everyday routines and the course of life, pushing us into completely different roles both in relation to our loved ones and the environment in general and changing our productivity and income value etc. So the disease will not be found (or fully understood and treated properly) only in the body or in the clinic, but in the life (disease as an event does not happen beneath the skin, in the body, but between people and in connection with other events). Nor is illness the opposite of life, but rather, as noted by the two well-known Triestinos, Basaglia (2018, pp. 87–97) and Svevo (2001), it is an important, even constitutive, part of it.

To unpack the concept or the phenomenon encapsulated by the term, we must find its concrete and internal contradictions (and make a map of them) (Freire, 1972a; Gilli, 1974). Rather than paying attention to semantic or logical contradictions and paradoxes, as fascinating as they may be, we will be interested in those contradictions that form opposing lines of force in the living space. These will be found in concrete attractions and repulsions between people, objects and situations; in structures, the segmentation of living space – in social roles, the division of work, space and time, which possess the power that generates active forces. (And it is precisely these contradictions that create the human will.) But the lines of force, like magnetic poles, also bring thematically important values into line. Values are, namely, always bipolar. If, in the space of the social imagination, we

have a "need for security", at the opposite pole we must be willing to take risks. When we analyse the moral mandate during the process of risk analysis (Flaker and Grebenc, 2006), we always encounter two ethical imperatives. At the level of formal logic, these two are mutually exclusive, whereas in real life, together with other forces in the field, they make up a functioning, albeit contradictory, whole.

30 As a term, "needs" usually refers to several referents. The term (the need) can refer to the state that we want to, or even must, change, or it can refer to the means by which we will do this. We may announce that we are hungry, or we may find that we "need food"; or that we are lonely or that we have a need for company, and all this means that we want to (or even must) eat something or socialise with others. In other words, "needs" refer to their source, but also to their goal or target, and through the verb – in our examples "eat", "socialise" – we traverse the path from source to goal. We tend to think that it is more accurate and more appropriate to refer to needs as their source (the state, the contradictions in the situation or field) rather than their target (the means of their gratification, the desired or required change in state, situation, conditions...). The latter are probably "responses to needs", not the needs themselves, they are their *metonymy*. The use of this kind of rhetorical device, the transfer of meaning from the source to the target, goal and activity, can be productive in everyday speech and action, since it acknowledges the polyvocal, multi-signal nature of our actions. For example, "going for a walk" responds simultaneously to several needs or contradictions that have arisen in the space from which we want to walk (physical and social stuffiness of the space, sitting for too long, the division of work into mental and physical, routine thinking, etc.). The metonym (e.g. "the need for a service, resources, accessories") of need becomes problematic and introduces a one-dimensionality of needs when in the grip of social security, unfortunately often also of social work and probably in any other situation where power is unequally distributed or where there is an asymmetrical exchange. In this case, the response offered will determine the need (while negating the part of the need that it does not respond to). The need will not arise from the user's life, from their life's contradictions, but will come as an intruder (trampling on the contradictions to create the appearance of a non-problematic situation). For example, no-one has a "need for institutional care". We have deciphered this "need" as the still quite abstract need for relief from the situation, for certainty and for meaning (Flaker

et al., 2008, pp. 44–48, 106–110). Nobody has a "need for home care", not even for the individual services provided in this package of services. For example, they do not have a need to transfer between bed and wheelchair. But they do have the need to get up, because it is tiring to spend days in bed, in a wheelchair they can do more of the things that they are still able to and they no longer look at the people they are talking to from the perspective of a frog, even when sitting. Decoding the set of contradictions hidden in a category of needs allows the acceptance of the subjectivity of someone else, accepting their view of the situation (the user's perspective), moreover, it also allows services to be adapted to the situation. If, for example, we cannot move someone from their bed, we can at least allow them to do something that they would enjoy in it, such as talking more often while sitting up etc.

Talking about needs (or desires and necessities), demands and necessitates metaphors and metonymies. That is to say, needs are categories without a real referent. They are not a concept that describes something – a thing, an action, a relationship – that is to say, something that exists, but they are a prediction of something that is yet to come. They are a commanding and intentional category (Flaker, 2017, p. 139; 2019b), and its referent is a purpose and an imperative, be it one's own and ethical, or a demand from someone with more power. Metaphors of needs must be deciphered (ibid., p. 143) not only so they gain meaning, but above all to gain direction and an owned power of action.

31 When needs emerged as a concept, they were grounded in deficit, but not as a biological or psychological concept. Lack is an individualised collective *scarcity* that arose as a postulate of classical liberal political economy (Adam Smith), which saw in it (mainly in hunger) the driving force of capitalist production (deficit as a counterbalance to surplus capital). The "Great Transformation" (Polanyi, 1957) was needed, an operation carried out by classical liberalism separating the economic from the social (in effect, abolishing the social). The "liberation" of the population, the labour force, from belonging to the land and the community, and its reterritorialisation in factories and mines was made possible only by the simultaneous breaking of the ties with the community, so the community could not take care of those of its people in need, which was prevented, prohibited by new legislation for the poor (New Poor Law 1834). A class without anything was created, the class of "the needy". The masses who flocked to the cities

became strangers in their own land. The stranger (even more than a baby or a child) is a paradigm, a model of neediness (as well as of a deviation from the normal, Ignatieff, 1985). Locals do not perceive most of their own needs. What we need in life becomes apparent only when we meet strangers – as they are without all the resources, means and connections that we as natives have.

The biological and psychological (scientific) articulation and elaboration of needs as a deficit came with the notions of homeostasis, instincts and also eugenics (degeneration) towards the end of the 19th century and the turn of the 20th century, alongside the crisis of classical liberalism and the restoration of the social – the simultaneous discovery of society and the psyche; the birth of psychology and sociology. On the other hand, the social (and public health) expression of need was found in the sanitation of urban space, as well as in the struggle for workers' rights, in reformist and revolutionary efforts to improve the living conditions of the proletariat. Needs were therefore located in the body, in the psychological depths and in the chaotic living conditions (poverty). The practice of such articulation was class-based. The bourgeois class could express its "needs" as desires (based on a deficit – of parental love), while the proletariat was subjected to sanitary measures, regimentation (cf. Foucault, 1978, pp. 129–130 on the confession of incestuous desires in psychoanalysis, and on the legal and public hygiene prosecution of incest in overcrowded and cramped working quarters). *A king is never an orphan, a proletarian always*. At the same time, the abstract science separated from the context made "needs" universal. We no longer have a "needy class" but a class of needs.

The conception of need as something universal made possible the welfare state's post-World War II ambition to distribute social wealth so that everyone would have their "basic needs met." In the affluent society of abundance of that time, this became more possible than previously in capitalism. Needs became a leading concept in such a political-economic framework – they needed to be identified and classified according to how "basic" they are (sic Maslow and the hierarchy of needs), defined quantitatively – to measure and standardise the eligibility and entitlement. Needs became a statistical category, which made it possible to manage them – and the population.

"Needs" enable a truce between the classes – "social peace" and the basic provisioning of the population. In the Global North, consumerist abundance and scarcity of labour have enabled a kind of normalisation of needs as something common to everybody. Placing

needs in the social insurance system has also given them a normative function. As long as a person is employed (or has been, or has employed parents), they are basically provided for. In practical terms this means that every time we make a social insurance contribution, it is clear to us that we are "normal" or that we have a reason to fear that, if we are unable to continue contributing, we will no longer be normal (and will no longer be provided for). This is confirmed by those who live on the streets or have been sent to institutions. The "welfare society" makes it appear as though there is something wrong with those who are not included in it (through the mechanism of employment) and that this is the result of their personal deficit, defect, deviation from the norm. (Farmers and artisans had to deal with this stigma, until they were granted the right to participate in social insurance). Social insurance creates a virtual panopticon that the workforce must internalise (and must be imposed on the non-working). The outcasts of such a system, the "scrap heap", the unusable workforce, are either reserve workforce which needs to be "rehabilitated" or a waste workforce that must be put away somewhere, stored, so it will not disturb the work process or introduce confusion into the orderly division of labour. These people's common human needs are replaced by the need for "special treatment", euphemistically "special needs".

The welfare state crisis was the result not only of the aggressive attack of neo-conservatism or neoliberalism, the broken truce when the opposition became almost nonexistent, but also of its own internal contradictions. Apart from increasing bureaucracy and inflexibility, the oppressive dependence of people on the state or the patronage of experts, there has often been a critically inadequate universality of responses to needs. Each category of beneficiary received what was supposedly lacking. People, who at that time were still called "invalids", received various aids and accessories from the welfare state, the confused, the mentally ill, alcoholics, etc. received psychological treatment, those with a low IQ were placed in special schools, adult training centres, the poor received material resources (money, housing...). But if that was not enough, they could still be locked up in some institution; and this happened quite often. It soon became clear, even before the 1980s, that the something they were getting was far from enough for them to be really included (at that time we said "integrated") into the social flows. Accessories can help, but they do not guarantee inclusion – the environment needs to be changed, adjusted. For those who, because of their faults, were placed in various institutions, this turned out to be a greater

handicap than whatever they were sent there for, and that they would more easily integrate into the social stream if they lived an ordinary life together with others. It has been shown that mental distress is better resolved in the location where it arises and through conversations and joint action with others who experience something similar or are directly affected by the distressing situation. It has been shown that rather than "fixing" people, it is more important to enable them to participate in social processes, to strengthen their power, and last but not least, to organise their care according to their personal pattern, taking into account how they see their life (and their "needs" in it). The crisis of the classic system of the welfare state was also a crisis of professional knowledge and the primacy of the profession in determining the needs of the population.

With the crisis of the system and with the new, neoliberal economic regime, the concept of needs has also changed. Now the needs have to be identified and taken into account in a different way. In the "post-" era, needs are shaped by the addiction, risk, individuality and born-again genetics. These notions form an interpretation that conforms to the ideology of neoliberalism. No longer is need the elimination of scarcity, lack (and deficit), it is a hedonistic longing for abundance, it is no longer a means of ensuring security and certainty, but a means of dealing with the hazard of uncertainty, vulnerability. It is no longer a modest desire for similarity, but a hunger for individuality and self-promotion; there is no longer a desire to change people, to fix them, but rather to order them – to place them in their proper position in the social system. This new shaping of the concept of needs brings not only new solutions, but above all new contradictions. An important aspect of our discussion concerns the changes in the concept of needs from scarcity to deficiency, then to fault, and finally to its opposite – abundance. It is also significant that this is not a sequence with a different concept of needs replacing the previous one, but rather a series of additions, each adding its own layer of meaning to the same concept – meaning that, despite the changes in the original designation, each layer persists and is contained in the new form of the concept. But it is also true that each stage of the development of the concept represents not only an opportunity for emancipation, but also for more effective control. The understanding of needs as created by postmodernism and neoliberalism offers both a utopia of liberation and a dystopia of total control. When we recognise the needs fully, we can manage them more easily – both at the macro level of system management and at the level of the individual. The key handle

of the system is no longer scarcity, but abundance – people are no longer renting themselves out in order to avoid hunger or not being provided for, but for pleasure. The *spiritus movens* is now hedonism. The paradigm of needs is now the addiction, the longing for pleasure – which is always elusive (Flaker, 2002a, pp. 252–261; 2002c), the fear of the unexpected, as well as of being lost in the crowd.

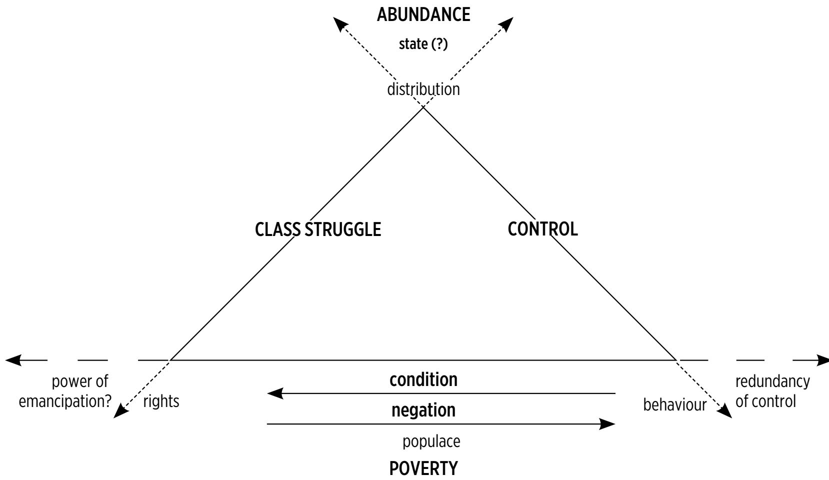
32 When someone fails to meet the social expectations contained in the normative need behaviour, they are punished. Experts view the failed expression of a need (deviance) as a delict; tortious act, or a symptom of mental illness. The need becomes a metonym for the person, who becomes a thing, paradoxically without will, even though they are expressing it. Need is criminalised (Basaglia and Ongaro Basaglia, 1975; Basaglia, 1987, pp. 202–223). Even when a person who expresses needs in the "wrong" way is not imprisoned or confined to a mental hospital, they are subject to specific treatment. This means that they become an object and they are separated from others due to the stigma of their actions. Any metonymy of need, not only an extreme one, is objectification of the need. From this perspective, a need stays a mere something that has to be acquired, that is lacking and must be supplied by someone. By the objectification of an (authentic) need (desire and necessity), the expression of life contradictions, a human becomes an object. The nominalisation of the process hides the agent and itself objectifies the person. Two senses of the word "object" are present here. On the one hand, an object that consumes, gulps the needs, on the other hand, an object of action by professionals who, rather than unravelling the contradictions that a person is expressing in this way, must convince the object that its real needs (or more precisely their expression) are an illusion, an error, a mistake and that it must accept "normal" needs – those that have been constructed for it by society (often on "its commission" by the profession itself). The needs expressed are described as "artificial needs", and artificially created needs as real. Even when we locate needs just in the body, within the individual, we alienate that person from the community, and they remain alone with their needs – a stranger. Separated from the community, ready for the industrial production process, one is a response to the needs of the social division of labour.

33 The affirmative, productive view of need is not actually based on lack and scarcity, but on abundance and excess. First of all, on the abundance created by lack, scarcity – the scarcity of "the needy" is merely a consequence of the abundance of the rich. Overcoming the

population's scarcity requires sufficient social power (such as was generated by the reformist and revolutionary movements at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries). In a welfare state and a "society of abundance", it is the abundance that generates needs. The excess that the state generates through taxes (on richness) is being distributed; in this way the abundance generates dependence on the state, which is to be determined by individuals' deficits. In the neoliberal arrangements, however, needs are determined by the craving for abundance, which, in the end, is always frustrated – when we achieve what we want, we realise that it is only a simulacrum of pleasure and that we need more. Such an articulation of needs is precisely the thing that, at least on a micro level, allows for a crack, in which the need, even if we formulate it as a deficit, is a surplus. Namely as: "a surplus of a certain life situation or a will to change it" (Flaker, 2019b). It is human to transcend a human situation – it is transcended by the goal (purpose, desire) and the will. Will gives power to the change (or its force), and the goal directs it. The will is a resistance, a confrontation with the forces that oppose it, an escape from them, as well as transversal cross-linking and drawing strength from other registers, planes of being.

34 "Needs" arose as a political-economic category, then became an established concept as a socio-political category, and now function as a category of the management of people (as individuals). As we have already noted (Flaker, 2019b), three normative axes intersect within it: the norm of redistribution, the norm regarding behaviour and lifestyle, and the norm of rights to state benefits. It is therefore a normative concept that governs the state's attitude towards (poorer) citizens, in fact a triangle of contradictions dominated by the constitutive contradiction between abundance and poverty, scarcity. On the one side, the dimension of population control is introduced by the dynamic contradictory dimension, the side of the triangle that goes from distribution to the norming of behaviour. On the other side, the redistribution of wealth is articulated in the rights of the population through class struggle. The contradiction indicated by the third side of the normative triangle of needs (pictured below) is the fact that rights are conditioned by appropriate behaviour (to be entitled to something, "we have to be diligent"). At the same time, the notion of rights denies such conditioning or normalisation of behaviour – not just conceptually, but also in actuality. This occurs when rights are exercised consistently and radically.

Figure 11: The normative triangle of needs



Rights, just like needs, are abstractions. Pure form, without content. They get content only when concrete injustices happen, which people experience and feel (rights themselves cannot be felt). At that point they become an active tool – for correcting or preventing injustices. Rights draw their power from wrongs. In the normative triangle of needs, rights are an expression of entitlement to a limited amount of redistributed means and resources, while on the other hand such entitlement arises from a personal deficit, which is only an expression of collective lack, poverty. Such a constellation completes a vicious circle of disabling: "To stop being poor, I have to be poor (but the crumbs I get do not eliminate my poverty, they only relieve it a little, while above all, confirming it)". The vicious cycle, maintained and completed by the triangle, is further strengthened by the control dimension as it places the condition of appropriate behaviour on the enjoyment of rights. At the same time, precisely because they are abstractions, rights make it possible to deny the desire for conformity. Their abstract nature gives them an air of absoluteness. And rights must be absolute, unconditional, to truly be rights. Therefore, the right to madness, to transgression, must be asserted. The exercise of the rights of people with disabilities to live in the community, to make their own decisions (Articles 19 and 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), must be demanded irrespective of their capacities as human beings *qua personae*. Beyond this corner of the triangle, on the lines that escape it, one must ask: "are the rights sufficient to achieve human emancipation?", or in what other

ways can emancipation (in this case, from this normative triangle) be supported, where else can one find the power to escape its grip or to make our claim from others.

Similarly, the lines of escape must be followed to the other two corners, where the lines intersect and go beyond the triangle. The redundancy of bureaucratic control raises the question as to whether the rituals of control that have been established (and are still axiomatically being established) are still productive or do they actually prevent greater social production; what is at the core of new (virtual) forms of control and what effect do they have? At the same time, one must ask whether the state really is the only way to (re) distribute social wealth, or whether there is another way to arrange this (not that this is advocating the provision of social security by corporations or charity).

35 On October 15, 2011, during the financial crisis and the global Occupy movement, in front of the Ljubljana Stock Exchange we launched an initiative, calling for "direct social work" (Rasza and Kurnik, 2012). This initiative did not, as is sometimes misunderstood, merely celebrate working directly with people (rather than with paper), but emphasised the direct mandate of users, not only individuals in advocacy actions, but also the direct mandate of groups and communities. The imperatives of direct social work included, among others, the abandonment of "indirect" social work, i.e. work that is not done jointly with the user with their mandate, but at the behest of another, without the user's will – the most prominent examples are labelling, issuing decisions, guardianship, placement in an institution, etc. in short, the creation of arrangements that contain the users and objectify them (Flaker@Boj za, 2012, pp. 35–43; for this and similar forms of social work see also Hrvatin, 2016).

Among the manifestations of the direct social work, there was also a short-lived occupation of the ministry responsible for social affairs, under the title "A programme bailing out the people!" (not the banks). In it, we outlined three axes of "bailing out the people": 1) provision of stable social security, 2) protection of people from economic and social exhaustion, and 3) empowering the community.

Figure 12: Axes of bailing out the people

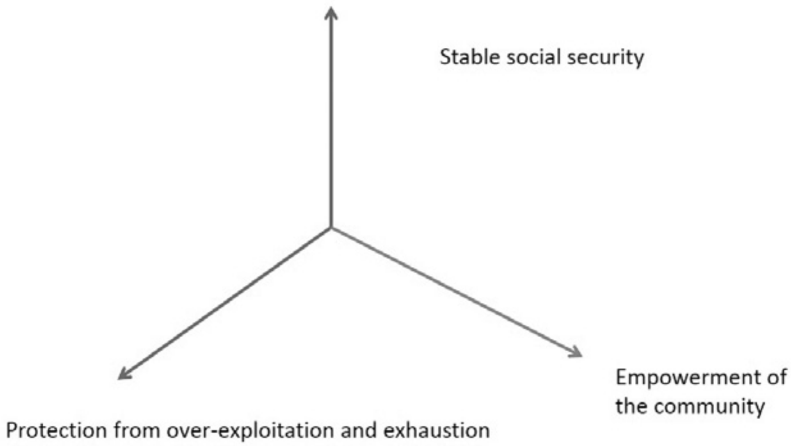
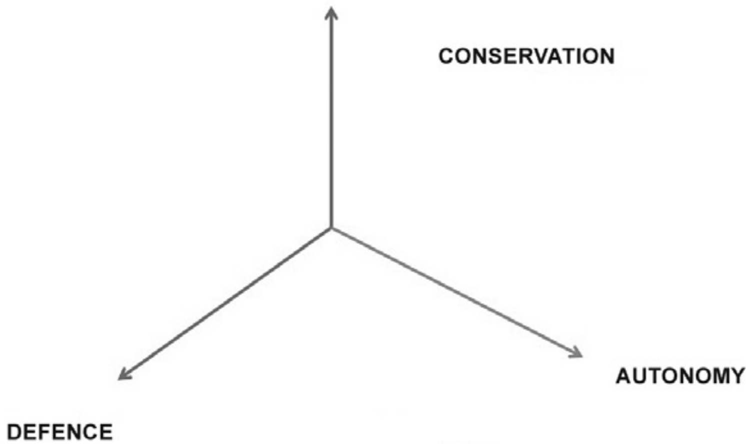


Figure 13: Triple action



The first axis demanded measures that would allow people to live a generally decent life: universal basic income, a low threshold of social assistance for a decent life, access to welfare (education and training, health care, sociability, housing, social care and support, etc.), the unconditional possibility to live at home (FOR EVERYONE) or

deinstitutionalisation, an insurance and long-term care system, direct financing of services as well as reducing bureaucracy to a minimum, enhancing the development work and consultative support for social care activities, investment in knowledge and in users as quality assessors. The second axis projected measures that were meant to protect people against the rampant exploitation of capitalism by employing safeguards: guaranteed payment of liabilities to employees (workers' compensation funds), a housing fund in the event of eviction or other loss of housing, counselling and support services, including bridging schemes and debt relief for personal debt crises, advocacy (professional, lay, civil and collective) for all discriminated against, socially weak groups and crisis situations, independent outreach advocacy, bridging arrangements to solve acute hardships (e.g. shelters, intervention housing, temporary financial assistance) – combined, naturally, with stable possibilities for a decent life (employment, salary for work done, independent living, participation in the community, housing...). The third axis – empowering the community – should ensure: people's independence from the state and the market, direct association, without intermediaries, in local and interest communities, which would strive for common prosperity and have autonomy; self-care, self-organisation and self-management, cooperatives (housing, labour and social co-ops, time banks, self-help clubs, etc.); also the re-appropriation and (self)management of institutions and the launch of a shift of care from institutions to the community as a factor of solidarity; pilot and experimental projects of shared living technologies would be needed this purpose, with community workers to support self-grown groups and initiatives, alongside community budgets to support such actions. (Flaker@Boj za, 2012, pp. 313–321).

36 Sometimes it appears as if there are two archetypes of social work style. There are colleagues who are extremely good listeners, and users in contact with them feel "accepted". But then they are often disappointed because they do not get anything real from them. On the other hand, we have those who are very skilled at providing for people, know how to get missing funds, to arrange legal matters, etc. But for what purpose, if they do not listen to what a person wants!? Or as we heard in the Occupy movement: "Dreams without action are just daydreams – action without dreams is a nightmare." In personal planning, the planner, in the initial phase must take the role of shaman, creating reality out of the impossible, while during implementation the role is that of priest, officer (or engineer) devoted to the practical aspects of realising the vision (Brandon and Brandon, 1994).

37 As we introduce long term care, this is exactly the issue we are getting to grips with. The legislator (the power) does not have the courage to allocate funds for long-term care solely on the basis of the needs identified during personal planning or based on a personal plan alone. Therefore, eligibility for long-term care benefits is determined using an assessment scale that we have adapted from the German model. In the pre-pilot study (Lebar et al. 2017), we suggested, to no avail, that, in the pilot, we should also try to determine the precise amount of funds needed with regard to the services and funds provided in the personal plan, as we did in the direct financing pilot project (Flaker, Nagode, Rafaelič and Udovič, 2011, pp. 159–200). Even when the use of the rating scale was agreed, we placed it in the process of mutual acquaintance and recording the person's story – it was intended to be part of a holistic approach and an orientation so that, while planning, we already knew what resources we could count on (Lebar et al., 2017, pp. 20–33). It is important that the social workers who will lead this process also introduce this holistic dimension. And we'll be glad if they do.

38 Even in the case of rationally oriented actions or activities (as social work is supposed to be), the postulate of rationality can never really be met (in social sciences). Since the indexical values of the statements cannot be replaced by objective ones, we compensate for this deficit with a programme based on the everyday, reflexive world. At the same time, this reflexivity "need not capture our interest", it must remain in the background of practical self-evidence (circumstances, situations) and, paradoxically, objectivity establishes itself as the very practical achievement of our "rational" action (Garfinkel, 1967). In social work, we reflexively return to reflexivity, and it does actually become the object of our interest. This may resolve the paradoxes between objective cognition and action, but, at the same time, it complicates them.

39 The "interaction order" can be considered to be a special layer of social reality that has its own consistency. It is ordered by rules, which, like in road traffic, are primarily assumptions of encounters in space (Goffman, 1983). Among the more important rules are: behaviour that is relevant to the situation, proper involvement, availability or accessibility and civil inattention, while elementary assumptions about other people's assumptions give such rules a common ground (Manning, 1992, pp. 72–93). For social work, interactional offenses, acts that infringe this order, but are also a necessary part of it, bear a great importance. They create "residual deviance" which is the real basis for

the label "mental illness" (Scheff, 1966). But they are also the glue for any kind of stigmatisation (Flaker et al. 2008, pp. 231–257; Flaker@ Boj za, 2012, pp. 159–169) and also the subject of "remedial actions" in the interaction itself. The rules of interaction work in such a way that they must be broken and then mended – they are also an expression of respect for the other in the interaction.

Risk (Operation B)

40 In some circles, they have developed "risk assessment" tools, which are highly arbitrary and, to say the least, misleading. Usually these are based on a rating scale, in which certain aspects of risk are listed quite arbitrarily, and the evaluator also evaluates those aspect arbitrarily, e.g. like school grades from 1 to 5. Then these estimates are added up to give a result that is supposed to express the amount of risk that the user will be exposed to in a given (as well as an unspecified) situation. It should be emphasised that such scales are not made on the basis of the analysis of actual data – a point that applies to all aspects of this "calculation" operation. The aspects of risk that we assess are not selected through empirical analysis, they do not have their own weighting that is taken into account when summing up – each aspect of risk has its own effect on the "riskiness" of doing things. Nor is the assessment standardised so that, even with the same assessor, we do not know what level of risk the assessment expresses. Let alone being able to understand the risk situation itself and the place of the person in it. An assessment of this type, which mainly expresses the compiler's and the assessor's ideology of risk (and the users), is a good example of how the profession presents a very common sense thing as an imaginative and precise professional, even scientific apparatus.

We were developing our method of analysis, which we summarise very briefly here, in the second half of the 1990s (Flaker, 1994a; for the logic and process of the method's development, see Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, pp. 133–141; for its application in the process of the transformation of the institution, see ibid., pp. 213–217). In many respects it is the very opposite of the procedures described above. In using it, we want it to understand, unravel and disassemble the risk situation itself into its component parts. Such an analysis is qualitative, but also quantitative. In contrast to those evaluations that only give the appearance of quantity by adding up numerical evaluations, in our procedure, we also try to estimate the probability of an event, expressing it in terms of a probability fraction, for example,

the percentage probability that something will happen. (We do not add the values either, but multiply as is the case in that type of mathematical operation). Even if we only have a "rule of thumb" estimate of the probability of an event, the calculation gives us an insight into the dynamics between chains of events and their effects – between the risk and the benefit that we can expect from an action or process. Until now, this method has been described in instructions (Flaker and Grebenc, 2006) and some texts that dealt with this topic, albeit more in passing (Flaker, 2003; Grebenc and Flaker, 2007). Simultaneously with the release of this text, we will (finally) release a manual.

41 Although risk taking is a leading and productive principle of the capitalist society and is sustaining the whole industry of risk (insurance, gambling, extreme sports etc.), its darker side is risk avoidance, marked by the whole, massive apparatus of risk control (safety, security, etc.).

42 We have already established that risk is a simulacrum, a falsification of needs, an abstraction that replaces or supplements their previous meaning (p. 155). Risk, which is primarily an event and a property of the situation, becomes an attribute of human personality. Thus, it is necessary to assess the probability that someone will commit a dangerous act (usually a crime, it could also be self-harm, but it can also be something incomprehensible to others). Given this assumption, it is the task of science and professional practices (criminology, probation, also social work) to create a tool that will detect such risks. Several evaluation scales have been created (many displaying similar methodological flaws to the previously described, home-made ones), the main effects of which are stigmatisation and the transformation of people into material for processing. To do this, theories that place the deviance or risk within the individual are employed. Risks are attributed to behaviour, which is based in terms of personality flaws, often justified by supposed genetic "defects". Thus, we can hear that it is possible to identify, even in a baby, the risk of being antisocial – a criminal or even a terrorist. Of course, it is not about theories of academic pretensions, up for discussion, but rather the basis of standard behaviour in relevant services (the goal of such a theory being to justify the dispositive). This is the "pre-emptive treatment" of such specimens. With appropriate (psychosocial) treatment – early restraint, conditioning, education and guidance – control.

The replacement of needs by risk also had consequences for the concrete functioning of the social welfare system. At the school of

social work in Dubrovnik, for example, we heard years ago from our English colleagues that poor parents, in order to get at least some help and support, decide to self-stigmatise by reporting child abuse, because they no longer received the traditional help that was once intended for the poor. Such blatant criminalisation of needs is done on the backs of "at-risk" parents. Therefore it is necessary to put the child and their needs, before the offense or, more precisely, the risk of offending – "*Positive Youth Justice*" (Yates, 2012; Case, 2014; Haines and Case, 2015). Another error introduced by this type of practice is the expansion of the subject of criminal law into actions that have not (yet) been committed. This is completely unacceptable in the theory of criminal law – a person can only be judged for the actions they have already committed, and not for those that might happen, and this is self-evident in the case of children and lunatics.

43 Risk is not just an economic virtue of liberal capitalism, it is also a way of transcending our human situation, whether we understand it in an existentialist or Nietzschean way (Deleuze, 1983). Rolling the dice is challenging fate or playing with probability. Both of these are contained in the single action of a throw of the dice. When we hold the dice in our hand, it is about the probability, when they fall on the table, they become fate. When we throw the dice, we transcend (ordinary, normal) humanity, which we otherwise usually defend even at the expense of our will, our desires. Risk taking requires courage, the willingness to take the risks regardless of the consequences. The negative consequences – damage, loss – are of secondary interest to us. If we do not foreground the courage to take risks, we will definitely become defensively stuck with what we are already getting, what we are subject to.

44 The concept of harm reduction first became established in the field of drugs (Erickson, Riley, Cheung and O'Hare, 1997; Dekleva, Grund and Nolimal, 1997; Marlatt, 1998; Flaker, 2002a; 2002b; Rhodes and Heidrich, 2010). The question of how to reduce the harmful effects of drug use was especially relevant during the AIDS epidemic, as it also embraced reducing the transmission of the disease. In this respect, it was the continuation of resistance to prohibition and had similarities to the idea of normalising drug use (as an alternative to the "war on drugs"). This concept shifted the centre of interest from matters of principle to pragmatic devices. The pragmatics inherent in the concept need to be emphasised also as a general feature and a fundamental principle of social work, applying not only to the issue

of drugs, but to all those constellations of events, situations in which there is a willingness to take risks.

Guardianship

45 Guardianship is also an informal pattern of relationships between people. It often arises spontaneously in everyday interactions – when, for example, we meet a man in a wheelchair and address his assistant (who is pushing the chair). It emerges as a form of responsibility for the other (and takes away the will of that other – which is often appealing to the subordinate as well; more on the complications of responsibility in Flaker, 2023a). However, this is not a pattern, which would fit as an integral part of the "interactional order" (as we briefly summarised it earlier with reference to Goffman), but one that is introduced into everyday life by the contractual order or from its inner contradictions, which actually make equality and parity impossible. It arises from the contractual responsibility (to fulfil what is announced in the contract) and the (structural) inability to fulfil it. It can only be fulfilled through a "legal representative", in the informal world of the patron. Sometimes this presents itself in a very banal way. By redirecting the interaction, we avoid the discomfort that a direct contact with the "protégé" would cause.

46 Article 12 of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* grants them the power of decision-making. On the basis of this article, we now have a new statutory provision in Slovenian law, which no longer explicitly refers to the deprivation of legal capacity, but nevertheless establishes the institution of a guardian, which is, in fact, the same as the deprivation of legal capacity, since the guardian has to make decisions in place of the protected person.

47 This is not just about the formal roles of guardian and advocate that social workers sometimes take on, it is about a broader concept of the role they always play – and usually both at the same time. In the following, we present the adapted scheme and its interpretation, as we presented it in the *Outline of social work methods* (Flaker, 2003, pp. 41-42) and in "Science of doing" (Flaker, 2006).

48 Professionals stepping into the position of the ultimate guardian of the people, vacated by the monarch, is a necessity at the beginning of the bourgeois social order (Castel, 1976). Apart from an enlightened expert (who is replacing an enlightened monarch), this operation requires an appropriate ideology and legislation in its field (criminal, labour, social, school, mental health) as well as spaces in which to

place the protégés (prisons, factories, workhouses, schools and lunatic asylums). Social workers are among the professionals who have such a role (Flaker, 2006, pp. 55–57). They do not appear as administrators of workhouses, but at the deinstitutionalisation of such institutions at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The profession of social work has emerged from deinstitutionalisation. Despite this, social work was unable to give up the guardianship role; social workers were guardians in the area of people with an apparently deficient will. While the format of guardianship requires the existence of a custodial (and closed) space, its implementation is independent of it. The emergence of social work and other peripatetic services that roam the field must also be understood as the "sanitation" of the living space, and thus also certain measures of guardianship over "vulnerable" population groups. The development of public health care was, for example, the basis of the social work we developed with Andrija Štampar in our cultural and political space.

49 Article 264 of the Slovenian Family Code formally obliges the guardian to strive to eliminate the causes of the guardianship and to "train the protégé for independent life and work". Above all, it should be emphasised that the guardian is obliged "within his abilities to make it possible to shape life according to [the protégé's] own wishes and ideas". This very important component of the law, which in fact preserves a note of humanity (freedom of decision, will), is, however, often forgotten by social workers and others who take on the guardian role. In current practice, guardianship is often unfortunately the last (final) solution; guardians usually do not have a programme, a plan or simply the willpower to get rid of their burden, so that someone could live without a designated guardian. (It is not only through psycho-pedagogical means or by training in making independent decisions that we restore the decision-making ability to a person under guardianship. We can create various forms of "supported decision-making", i.e. decision-making in which others also participate, but which is derived only from the person's reality, not from general assumptions about human behaviour.) Perhaps for many, a specific (and even more so general) termination of custody is too much of a challenge, seemingly unattainable. However, asking a person what they want in life, how they would like to live and what is important to them, is not such a big deal. Nevertheless, guardians generally avoid it. They probably do not do so out of arrogance or haughtiness derived from being entrusted with power over another person. The most

obvious reason is that they feel that by making smooth decisions and not taking the user into account, they save the time and nerves that would be dissipated by constant negotiations with them. This may be true in the short term, "at the kick-off", but not in the long term, as it makes the protégé passive, increases their incapacity and also gives others the perception that they are incapable of decision making. This type of vicious circle means that, in the long run, the guardian will have to do more with their charge, take more responsibility for them, and often that they will refer them to an institution, and thereby transfer responsibility for the users to it (and therefore basing the responsibility in imprisonment).

Another reason for this "abdication of duty" is that the stipulation of what constitutes the wishes of the protected person is aimed at a completely different register of conduct. Guardianship and the tasks of the guardian belong to the legal register, to a sequence of actions that are legally codified and expected of the guardian in the legal context. The actions of "shaping life according to one's own desires and ideas" belong to the intersection between the Life-World and a person's power within it, and to the methodical overcoming of the situation. If a social worker is in the grip of legislation (inspections, court procedures), it is difficult for them to switch to the level of everyday life, dialogue and the risk of confusion in an otherwise orderly legal space. Nevertheless, the social worker must withstand and maintain this tension, because otherwise they will be trespassing in a different profession – becoming "a social lawyer", "a clerk" or, to say it in a wicked way, a bailiff – a distrainor of human will.

Power (Operation C)

50 As we know from physics, power is a scalar, not a vector quantity like force. This is also the case when we apply the concepts in the field of social science. Lewin (1951, pp. 39–42) points out that power is not "in the same register as force", not directed, "the concept of power refers to the possibility of inducing forces". Similarly, Nietzsche also distinguishes between active and reactive forces, but their origin is not a property of power, but of the will to power, which is to life – either affirmative or destructive (Deleuze, 1983). Since, in colloquial as well as journalistic language, the concepts of power and force are interchangeable, we often make the mistake (e.g. Dragoš, 2005) of attributing intention, direction to power, which are properties of force that are otherwise induced by the force field. The interest of power is

power itself or in maintaining and strengthening the power of those who possess it. Force actually acts on an object in the field, moving it around the living space. Thus force is the coefficient between the work we do and the path the object takes in the field. Power is the ratio of the work we do and the time we need to do it.

51 Forces in the everyday world form a relatively unified field of actions, activity and work. They complement each other, contradict each other and, as a vector function, redirect each other. This, however, occurs at the same level as concrete actions and events, or the work they do. In this case, the power source (the hand that moves the body) must be in contact with the body, or close enough to the body it is moving. I experience my force (and the power it exerts) only as the resultant of all the forces in the field acting on a body. I feel active, even though I know that I am only one of the factors, the agents of the movement that I co-cause. Regardless of whether I feel the cooperation or opposition of forces that are not the result of my own power, I feel the moment of my power and my strength, I feel active, because I am active.

The help of another, if defined in terms of the semantic difference between support and help – someone doing something for me – makes me inactive. When someone helps me by carrying a suitcase for me, I will just follow them empty-handed, passively – whether I like it or not. (I will be relieved of the physical burden, but burdened with gratitude to the helper). I will not have the suitcase at my disposal at that moment, nor will I be the agent of its conveyance. In fact, the suitcase will be lifted out of my Life-World (sphere of action), or, as ridiculous as it sounds, it is more accurate to say that I have disappeared from the suitcase's "world". I have only risen above it as its formal (virtual) owner, but I am no longer its actual handler (and this is also the beginning of the transformation of the real power of action into a more formalised contractual power). With this my helper became more than an agent acting on the body of the suitcase, they became the subject both of the act of carrying and of helping me – the inactive one.

Thus, through help a deterritorialised layer is created above the level of actions and functioning in everyday life. This is a layer that, despite being related, adjacent, to the real world, it is also a trap of dependence on the actions of others and no longer a co-effect of their actions. We can have it as an intermediate layer between the actual (active) Life-World and the world of organisations, the institutional world. Institutional aid also has the attribute of being immovably

tied to a certain point on the perimeter, an arc that stretches over the plane of the Life-World. Among other things, this means that the power driving the force in the real world is distant from the body on which it acts – the object of the action. It is thus fixed and distant. We transform from a car into a tram, which has to run on rails and always be connected to centrally generated energy. If a point on the arc is not dynamic and does not follow my movement and my intentions in space, I am actually hanging from it, I am actually dependent. The result of such an arrangement, when a power remote from the body on which it acts is connected by a lever, is to produce a circular or oscillating motion about an axis determined by a point on the circumference. (Perhaps precisely that type of constellation is the explanation for the various vicious circles in which we move.)

52 There are always two registers, two sides, to social role and (moral) career. On the one hand are our own feelings for it – our self-image, identity – and on the other hand, official positions, legal relationships, lifestyle – publicly accessible aspects, as well as a reflection of the institutional world (Goffman, 1961a, p. 126). It is therefore a grouping with its own personal and public expression.

The concept of the role is most easily understood as a set of expectations that others have of us, which we ourselves also take on by fulfilling them, and when we realise them, they become part of us, an expression of ourselves, which we also experience as ourselves. We distinguish between two types of tasks that belong to a role assumed that results from actions we take in response to the expectations of others. We have to perform the role, we have to play the prototype of the role holder, who personifies the role; from early childhood, we all know how to play madness (Scheff, 1966), and we have to have props that characterise the role (for example we recognise the doctor from the stethoscope that can be seen peeping out of their pocket), the appropriate scene (and with it the backstage area, in which we the cast prepare our "performance") and, of course, the audience who will enjoy our play or participate in it in some other way (Goffman, 1956). At the same time, we must also carry out the work that the role requires, "deliver the goods" that the "clients" (who from this viewpoint are not just the audience) expect from us. We must perform tasks that have a very real meaning for the participants in the situation – such as services, good turns. The latter is the content of the role in the interaction, and the performance is its expression (according to Hjelmslev in Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, pp. 43–45).

Social roles have their own dramatic and functional dimension. It is difficult to imagine the role existing without either of these. The customer must be invited, but the goods must also be sold to them. The contract expresses and contains both. It expresses the interest of both contracting parties, while at the same time it gives substance to that expression, so that a person can perform the content of the contract. Contractual power is actually the basis, the substance of the term, of entering into contracts. The bases of its execution are the actions, the tasks that someone performs.

Moving away from the role, getting distance from it (Goffman, 1961b) allows us to resist the dictates of the role, to preserve the identity we otherwise have outside the performance of that role, and also to distinguish between the dramaturgical and functional dimensions, and so to devote ourselves to our tasks. At the same time, it can strengthen the other person's trust, because by staging a distancing from the role, we let them know that we are not in the situation simply because of our role and that we will try to carry out the planned tasks as another human being, bypassing the role that the performance of the tasks anticipates. Rather than displaying an interest only in the role, we express our interest in the action that is mutually agreed in the contractual relationship. However, the departure from the role or its dramatic staging should not be too radical, or we will lose credibility (the mechanism of madness). This is a shift from psychological realism to social realism, from personal assurance in a role to its mutual evaluation in joint action.

53 When creating the Catalogue of Tasks of Centres for Social Work, we felt that, just as we have a personal plan and a risk reduction plan, we also needed to create an "empowerment plan". When we imagined it based precisely on the described elements of contractual power, it turned out that, while in practice we could put it together, it was still not useful. Empowerment was never designed as a well-rounded method with its own established process, because there was no need for that. Empowerment is always a means for achieving a goal, but is not an end in itself. We must intensify our power in order to live better, to take risks. "The will for power" (at least for now) is not yet the purpose of social work, or rather it is encompassed by the will to live. The elements of contractual power can therefore be used as a subsidiary tool in our work whenever we come across the question of power and the will to intensify it – e.g. in personal planning, advocacy, termination of guardianship, etc.

Working alliance (Operation D)

54 The encounter is an important concept in social work. It is also an existential or existentialist category. When *I* meet *Thee*, if our encounter is not burdened with instrumentality, it is an opportunity to become human; this is the foundation of our intersubjectivity (Buber, 1970; Lamovec, 1994). Not every contact is also an encounter, but it is an opportunity for it. As Gabi Čačinovič Vogrinčič reminds us repeatedly, even a fleeting encounter can be an opportunity for a real, authentic relationship (cf. Goffman, 1961b). A truly human encounter can also happen in the cracks of instrumentally conceived attitudes and relationships.

55 Social workers are often subject to pressure, urged to treat someone "because something is seriously wrong with them". As we have already noted, this can fairly often be a search for a "scapegoat" for the distress felt by a group, an environment, a community. When local discontent is combined with public resentment in a sensationalist way, a "moral panic" can arise (Cohen, 1980; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009), and a certain social group (Roma, migrants, youth subculture, etc.) can become "folk devils ", a bogeyman. The fears that dominate such panics usually have no factual basis – the events that are supposed to trigger them, the actions that upset the public, are at least exaggerated, if not invented, a fictional embellishment, the emotional basis of the narrative. If the interest of such a panic is purely sensationalistic, the emotions subside over time. In order for panic to persist, political interest is necessary – be it a specific individual (e.g Anslinger in the case of cannabis prohibition and the start of the "war on drugs"), a group, an office or a corporation. If someone takes the morally "sacred" right to persecute an (imaginary) enemy and, for their own benefits and interests, systematically attacks them, we can speak of a "moral crusade" (Becker, 1963). This can take place at all levels – from international to local.

In social work, we need to be particularly alert to such processes or urgencies by others to "do something" about a "social problem".

If we notice straight away that this is a moral panic or the search for a scapegoat, and that the distress of either the initiator, the "whistleblower", or the person who has been scapegoated is not great, and that the panic will soon subside, it may be best to do nothing, to politely reject the initiative. If the distress on one side or the other is great or if we judge that panic, vilification, suppression of the alleged scapegoat can escalate to disastrous consequences for the person (as

well as for the community), then action must be taken. Our actions will be targeted in both directions. In one, we will "return the ball" to the instigator, offering to discuss their plight – we can inform frightened parents who have caught their child smoking cannabis about the real circumstances of their cannabis use (responding to the bogeyman charge), while at the same time discussing the difficulties they have in living together with their child, with their parental role. We will also make clear to them that without the child's mandate, we will not deal with the child, but we can deal with their distress. We will only visit the other side if we deem that their distress may be great or escalating to the point where the person in distress needs an ally – presumably not to deal with it (this would be to accept a division of roles in which the person in distress becomes a scapegoat, a mark), but to support them in resisting the pressures and deterring or minimising the harm that may befall them in such a role. In the first case we will be more in a counselling role, in the second more in an advocacy role. In both cases, we will have to meet one side or the other – and if we are lucky – we'll come together as three.

56 If we are to really meet the interlocutor and if the exchange is to be truly two-way, the acquaintance must be mutual, reciprocal. Otherwise, we turn the interlocutor (in social work, the co-worker) into an object (of the encounter), and at the same time we deny ourselves human subjectivity. Staying hidden behind the screen of professional distance turns us into a robot that regulates social reality. In such a case, it is a "failed encounter", a systematic (and systemic) error, which actually distorts the acquaintance and, above all, makes it impossible to work constructively together. (More on schemes of getting to know each other in Flaker 2001; 2015, p. 145–191.)

57 Values, like goals, guide our actions. However, they do not direct the actual action to achieve a specific goal. Their effect is a more general one, inducing force fields. They are a special type of power field (Lewin, 1951, pp. 39–42). Common values will therefore form a common power field that will direct and generate common efforts – a field of forces that will enable the achievement of goals.

58 At a first glance, old people do not disturb the social order, on the contrary. They do not organise themselves into gangs of "senile delinquents ", they do not terrorise people in the street and they do not rob shops (as in the old, prophetic Monty Python sketch). Their deviancy lies in the fact that they disrupt the social organisation of work. They need to be cared for, dealt with. Placing an old person in a home, and

prior to that marking this person as needing help, being incapable, together with other stigmatisation and marginalisation, are primarily a response to the fact that the people who are supposed to take care of them (relatives, friends, neighbours and others) need to have time for their own work, to devote themselves to it. The deviance of the old is not that they hear and see poorly, walk with difficulty, are forgetful and get lost – their deviance is that with this and other matters they disturb those who work, produce.

59 The roles of watchdog and consent officer are highly complementary, so much so that they can be combined into one. It is obvious that the guard function also has an ideological message, that by taking away freedom and excluding from the community, it confirms the ideology (of exclusion and exclusivity). On the other hand, less obviously, the adviser, the ideological worker, also keeps the person in the place to which they belong, to which they are assigned within the social structure. The behaviour is different, but the goal is identical – the maintenance of the existing social order.

60 In the well-known case of Mijo (Flaker@Boj za, 2012, pp. 323–328), the movement was able to ensure, through advocacy actions and also through concrete care, that Mijo did not return to an institution. However, the movement was not able to provide the fully decent and effective care that he could have had (in a functioning long-term care system). It should be noted, however, that the starting point of the movements is precisely the reframing of the social framework. This means that they are shaping their own mandate (counter to the existing order), but the aim of this mandate is primarily to change the social order, not individual lives – which is both their strength and their weakness.

61 The semantic difference between "help" and "support" seems to be right in this dictionary definition "of doing something instead of the other" (Dictionary of Slovene literary language). This difference is not so obvious in English dictionary definitions. However, they do imply "extraneous" intervention or resource in the meaning of "help", "while "support" denotes upholding, sustaining, maintaining (Webster).

62 The paradox of help is that on the actual level it produces powerlessness, while on the level of relations it creates relationships of power, often of opposite value. Help namely creates a relationship that is either empowering or its opposite – disempowering. The more helpers one has, the more powerful one becomes, on the other side, the more one needs help, the less power one has. The master has the power

to order his assistant to do something on his behalf, instead of him. Simultaneously, the master has the power to do something instead of his assistant, something he cannot do. Hence, when we commission, order the help of somebody else, our power is increasing, when we ask for it, we are losing it (the exceptions are relations of mutual help, in which the process is symmetrical, and we gain as much as we lose).

The effect of change of power, when we help somebody, is always deterritorialising, it detaches the actor from the actuality of their Life-World. When someone does something instead of the other, the other one loses the possibility to act on things or in the relationships. Detachment from the actual world transposes the actor (who cannot act) into the virtual relations. If one gains power, one becomes a subject of the acts of others (subordinate helpers), when help is the matter – the subject of helping. If one loses power, he or she becomes the object of help. In both cases the helped gets inscribed into registers, which are separated from the actual, ordinary, everyday life. He or she leaves the everyday, egalitarian and symmetric relationships and becomes either "the master" or "a servant". The more one is receiving help, the more one migrates from the everyday, common domain into an institutional one; from the village to the Castle.

63 Of all the other social work interventions, the removal of legal capacity, or the appointment of a guardian, is comparable. Often, these interventions – displacement and disqualification – happen simultaneously, as part of one and the same combined operation. In the removal of legal capacity, the "object" of the operation may remain in place, but is "ungrounded" because they cannot enter into meaningful exchanges. In the displacement, the de-grounding is necessarily also physical. It is not only in the figurative sense of the word that they lose the ground beneath their feet.

64 Abductive reasoning is the third type of logical reasoning. It differs from deductive and inductive in that it serves to discover hypotheses, not to confirm them. It is a logical process supposedly used by Sherlock Holmes (incorrectly called the "power of deduction" in the literature) (Carson, 2009). Peirce (1931) summarises the process of abductive reasoning as follows: We have observed the surprising fact C; but if A is true, then C would be self-evident, so there is reason to suspect that A is true. In other words, we always have an opinion, or at least an implicit theory, about facts or phenomena. It must be logically developed and tested. In social work situations, this can be done either through experimentation or through critical comparison

with other possible explanations. Abductive reasoning is productive in social work because it is a way of orienting oneself in unknown or unpredictable situations, rare phenomena, and at the same time it allows for a creative approach to the matter, as opposed to merely confirming existing hypotheses.

65 "Being there", besides being a title of beautiful book of Jerzy Kosinski (1972) and film with Peter Sellers, attests also to the phenomenological approach and an existential stance, which underlie much of what we try to convey in this booklet. For the social worker being there – for the users, witnessing their situation, distress and joy, present in their lives is basic. Going back to "working with no words", to Peter Sellers – it is sometimes better to be dumb than clever – helps with the being-thereness.

66 In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault derives the genealogy of the psychoanalytic dispositive, the pattern of the relationship between the analyst and the analysand, from the pattern of confession, and in *The History of Madness* (1972), also partly from the asylum pattern, from the dispositive of the madhouse. Castel (1976) also does this from a different perspective, showing how the tradition of psychosocial disciplines was formed from the feudal guardian role of the monarch.

67 Paranoia and the decryption operation are justified in the opposite direction, against those who have an excess of power, who have hidden interests and who want to use the relationship or the conversation primarily for their own benefit, that is, those who by definition lie – politicians, merchants and other meddlers with people's souls.

68 As said, the operation of establishing a working relationship could be a finalism that goes beyond concrete work, the creation of camaraderie. While this can be seen as a constructive contribution to general social solidarity, making social workers or the social work environment the primary reference group for users and making it into their primary or even exclusive connector to society would almost be a capitulation, and in any case, misery for users. Unfortunately this happens, and relatively often. Sometimes also because of the fetishisation of relationships, but mainly because people find themselves in such a lonely situation that they have no one else – everyone has left them, even died, they are in an institution, etc. In such situations, relationships, even bonds (McGee, Menolascino, Hobbs, and Menousek, 1987), are the key, sometimes the only, tool of social work. But even here, such an intense relationship and connection must be taken as something

that is transitory in nature. As a means for a person to eventually (yet again) expand their network, to get involved in other important relationships and social events. In the same way that parents are not a baby's final destination.

69 Talking is not a linear, logical exchange, exchanges do not follow each other in a logical order of direct responses to the interlocutor's statement. Very often, the interlocutor responds in their statement to something that was said in previous exchanges (and has ripened in the interim) (Goffman, 1981).

70 We titled the section of the chapter after the comedy, or rather farce by Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Ernest (1999). In this comedy of mix-ups (which was first translated into Slovenian as "It is important to be serious" and later as "It is important to be called Ernest"), the point is that it is important to stay honest, true to yourself. It is impossible to render the English pun "Ernest – earnest" into Slovenian. Earnest is not so much "serious" as "sincere" (in line with our discussion, even better – "witty", and preferably "real"). When we talk about humour, we cannot say "it is important to be serious", but we can say "it is important 'to keep it real", since farce is one of the better ways to discover the truth, and it is certainly really amusing. More about the translation of this play into Slovenian in Lavrin (2011).

71 Although we know that this is not possible, in the classical sense we still expect impartiality from experts. If it is impossible to achieve to an absolute extent, we expect judges, for example, to be as impartial as possible, to asymptotically approach this ideal. Even if their judgements will be generally and on average be biased in respect of class, gender, race and in many other ways. At the same time, there is a general bias in judging, since it is based on the axiom that it is the individual who must be judged, his or her guilt adjudicated, even if the crime is of a structural nature. It is not just a question of whether justice should be retributive or restitutive – it can also be *transformative* (as Asja whispered to me when we talked about it in Dubrovnik). The court could also impose societal changes – not just individual ones.

72 It could even be said that anthropologists become social workers when they cross over to the other side. Cases where anthropologists who went to study the natives in the Amazon forests joined the tribes and really lived with them bear witness to this. Thanks to their dual existence, their knowledge of the two Life-Worlds and the institutional world, they were able to contribute a lot to the defence actions of the natives.

Intensifying intervention (Operations C ∩ D)

73 For nomads, one important source of the power to displace, ramble is the capacity for movement. Too much personal property, except for a herd that moves with a power of its own, is a paradoxical burden, a source of powerlessness. Property is power in sedentary cultures. Here it is precisely the accumulation of property that enables the de-territorialisation of power, and the loss of property the de-territorialisation of labour force. Actually, in this framework, it is the power of displacement, of relocation, the power of re-territorialisation, of re-grounding. For someone to "go on one's own" or "to find a better place" they need to accumulate sufficient means, or at least knowledge and education. On the other hand, someone who has nothing is already "on the road", they do not need additional power for such an emancipation of departure, but they lack the power to create a new home of their own. For this, the employer or the source of accumulated power provides, be it capital or the institutions of social power.

74 A meal with the same calorific value will be used by a person with more muscle strength and a more efficient metabolism to get the job done faster. A larger capacity engine will travel faster on the same amount of petrol than a smaller engine. A person with greater personal or social capital will use care allowance money more efficiently than someone with fewer such assets.

75 If a social worker comes to help with pouring a concrete slab, they will bring the relevant skills with them by chance, not because they are social workers. The only thing they will bring from their "professional" life will be the reputation of the social worker – be it good or bad. (Of course, the reputation of a civil engineer would be greater in this situation, together with skills and knowledge more relevant to the situation.)

76 One of the major deficiencies of social work in Slovenia is that it has very little power to commission, much less to buy services. Social work centres, for example, are tasked to provide services of one kind or another to the population, according to their general mission and under a number of laws. The coordinator of mental health community treatment in a centre for social work has, for example, the task of making a personal plan that should provide personalised services. This often means that they need to create new services or at least a new way of implementing the existing ones. However, they can create them on their own behalf, or through collegial persuasion of colleagues in some services with a similar provision. They have no financial resources that would

enable them to pay for any service, no statutory power to order it from any contractor. The latter do not have the same legal obligation as the centre does. Thus, centre workers as referrers are both under pressure to provide "something" and powerless to do so. Often, the worker at the centre knows, and is sure, that sending the young person to an institution will harm them, but if a provider of a community option rejects them (usually saying that they are "not suitable for their programme"), then the worker has to send them to a correctional institution despite his or her conviction. On raising the entry threshold and "skimming", see Flaker and Rafaelič (2023, pp. 19, 48–49, 136), and on the inability of the coordinator, ibid. pp. 311–312.

77 Of course, moving from one room to another does not require all these conversations, support, help and organisation. The social worker could arrange the relocation from the kick-off without any further ceremonies. We have described these for illustrative purposes. But even if it could be done in a few minutes, this action would recapitulate and encompass all the lower levels – i.e. conversation, support, help and coordination. But it can also be like a car – when you shift up too quickly, it can grind and the engine can break down. In other words, moving from one level to another in a stacked and sequential way is not necessary, but it is good if you want to get things done. Of course, to continue the analogy with car gears, in due course we need to shift up a gear if we want to get far enough.

78 It is true that some old people, as well as younger ones, "want" to be settled in a "home", an institution. But this is not, except in exceptional cases, their authentic desire, but rather a combination of various contingencies or a lesser evil choice. For more on this see Flaker et al. (2008, pp. 31–48).

79 Home is not just a location, it is a place of one's own (maximum) sovereignty. But it is also a site of vulnerability and is by no means immune to interventions in the Life-World, and its colonisation by the institutional. In extreme cases, home can become a total institution. The only difference is that there is only one internee and, as Goffman (1961a) would say, there is less room for situational retreats or secondary adaptations. Being in a total institution, alone without fellow inmates, is even worse. There are known Austrian cases of kidnapping or locking the family in a cellar. Still extreme, but borderline cases, are those in which relatives learn the "craft of the total institution" in a series of institutions where their "children" have been placed and then, because the real institutional treatment was unsuccessful, assemble a

similar total device at home, consisting of the various elements they learned in the institutions (Žarkovič, 2002).

Resisting the end

80 In fact the institutional world is virtual, virtuous. It is abstract. It is formed by axioms, postulates, rules, norms, values and other abstract schemes. These are made concrete (one could hardly say enacted) through their material "branches". They establish themselves in people's lives through spatial and relational arrangements, their agencies and agents, or internalised mental schemes (e.g. prejudices). Life in them is always provisional (Lamovec, 1993), and can only be created through secondary adaptations (Goffman, 1961a, pp. 173–207, 304–320). It is not only temporary, it is also underlife and there is always something missing. This is most obvious in total institutions, but it also applies to other institutional or hybrid spaces (from shops to courts, from theatres to factories and offices). It is also true in official relationships, which are also hybrid, because in them we simultaneously act as public and private people, but in reality we are defined by a framework, by the definition of the situation. In such relationships, only contacts, exchanges, are possible. If we really want to have a encounter, to connect, to create a relationship, we have to lure the other person out into the open, or home (at least metaphorically).

81 Putting theory in parenthesis – epoché – is a fundamental phenomenological method (Lamovec, 1994). Bion (1962) also notes that theory can be a distraction while working with people, but it is necessary before and after the seance – to prepare for it and to reflect on it. If we read theory into a person, there is no room for an encounter with them.

82 The dawn of social work coincides with the dismantling of the work-houses. These institutions for the poor were much criticised and became obsolete in the second half of the nineteenth century. Mostly they were transformed to medical hospitals. Their staff who stayed in the newly furnished places were a fundus for the new profession of nursing, while outdoor relief workers, now an organ of local government, gave rise to the social work profession (Crowther, 1981; Flaker, 2006). This might be an oversimplification, and it certainly, even if true for England, does not account for the developments in many other countries. However, it does provide a good illustration for the exigencies of the moment in history. Not only was there a pressure to set poor people free from internment, but also an urge to provide health care for the poor and support to them where they live.

83 The household as an "organisational unit" and as a way of dividing up the work or participation of those involved is paradigmatically important in social work. It is a striking example of "shadow work" (Illich, 1981); that is, work that is done in favour of wage labour, as opposed to self-sustaining, vernacular work that produces only use value for the group that produces it. This is work that we do either so that we can do the work for which we are paid, but which, such as travelling to work, does not count as part of our working time (we only get a travel allowance, not paid hours); or so that someone else can do the paid work – for example, when we are in the waiting room, waiting for a medical check-up. At the basis of shadow work is status differentiation, various forms of apartheid, where a group of people, simply because of their lower social status (different race, gender, caste, devalued social roles, etc.), have to do the same work for less pay, or even for no pay at all. The household is, to the greatest extent, the "reproduction of the workforce", the work we do to keep ourselves rested, focused, fed, washed and ironed at work – shadow work.

Housework is important in social work also because it introduces a female perspective, as it is traditionally a woman's domain. It is not only evidence of traditional women's roles, of the injustice of women's position, their exploitation and devaluation, it is also evidence of double or even triple burdens (the double "shift" that a working woman has to do, or even triple, when she takes care of her own family and that of the family she comes from), it introduces also a completely different logic of the division of labour, of cooperation, and even of the work itself. It also bears witness to a synthesis between the economy of the hearth (Hestia versus Hermes – Robert, 1992) and traditional women's roles – a very different organisation to the one that dominates formal organisations and the industrial division of labour (Oakley, 1974).

Besides that, social work and the transition from institutional to community care have created many 'households without housewives" (Flaker, 1993). Living in group homes, having caregivers enter households and take over housework tasks, living with a personal assistant raise many new questions and compels us to think and act differently (Flaker and Rafaelič, 2023, pp. 59–63, 68–75).

84 By the *celebration of promotion*, we want to set the opposite to what Garfinkel (1956) termed "degradation ceremonies". These typify a person and their actions as unworthy and as an obvious opposite to the good, desired, even sacredness, while the denouncer presents

themselves as a representative of the community and its supra-personal values who has the right to speak for the group, ritually distancing the denounced from the community, making them seem different, a stranger, celebration of promotion needs to be something completely opposite. The person and their acts need to be seen as unique and laudable, consistent with the group values, the celebrated must be in that moment a personification of the community and its values, the promotor must announce their contribution to the community, promote them as its valued member, elevate them, acknowledge their worth and membership in the community of equals.

85 Up to this point, we have used the terms life space and Life-World more or less as synonyms, and they are. Here, it is necessary to distinguish between them in an important nuance. When we use the term "world" here, we are referring to a wider scope, to everything that humans experience, remember and anticipate in the future – it is a person's universe. "Life space", on the other hand, comprises primarily the actual happenings in space, which at a given moment are controlled and created by a subject's movement. This also includes memories and hopes, plans for the future, but above all those which are current at the time and which are connected with subject's activity in this space.

86 The Life-World and the institutional world are co-existent. In fact, the institutional lies on top of the Life-World. Not only because we usually project it upwards and because we have a real sense that this world is superior to us, it is also the case that the Life-World is the substance of the institutional world, which cannot exist without the Life-World. The latter exists, at least theoretically, without the former. Practically, the former is present in it, but it is less bulky, bloated, and above all more under the ownership of the people, more as a tool of coexistence (this is also its ideological justification). Despite the fact that we often have the feeling that we are dependent on the institutional world (market, state) and that we often hang from it (or it hangs us), in fact the institutional world depends on us. It is more of a parasitic creation that draws its life from ours (a vampire) than a symbiotic partner. This is such an obvious truth that we may be ashamed to repeat it. But it is clearly necessary to do so, since we act in exactly the opposite way.

87 Sometimes it seems as though social work operates in the cracks in a solid social edifice, in fact, it flows like living water wherever it can find a way. Whether it is undermining the solidity of the edifice or holding it together by its oozing action – who knows? Probably both.

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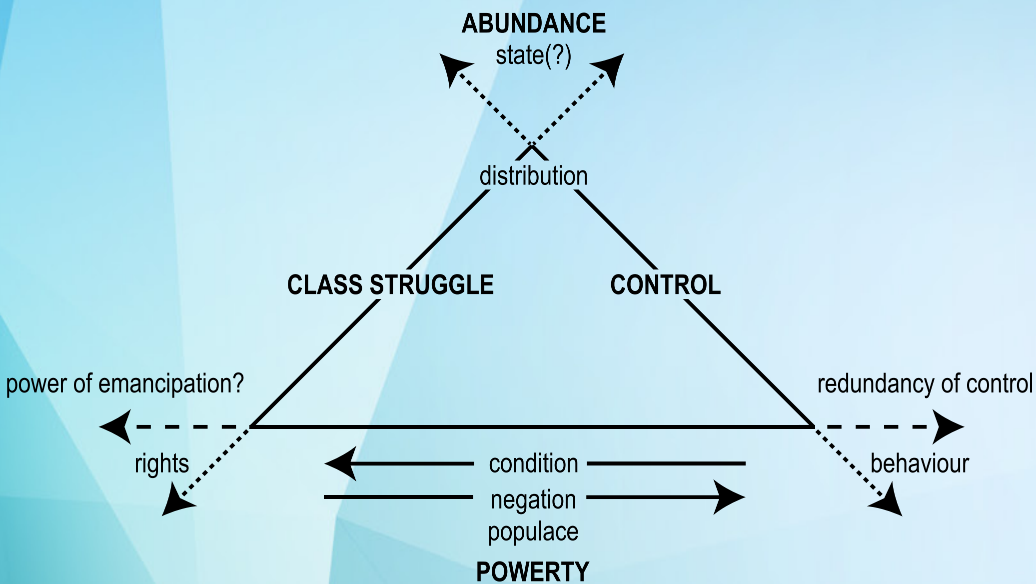
Extract from Bojan Dekleva's peer review

This monograph is a seminal work in the field of social work. It is a synthesis of the efforts, over the last twenty years, of colleagues at the Ljubljana Faculty of Social Work as they have worked, together with practitioners, to develop knowledge about social work and, above all, for social work. From a pretty complex field, which traverses many life situations and contains a wide variety of practices, the author has succeeded in extracting the basic forms of action, which he quite correctly terms "the fundamental operations of social work". These are four activities, complementary in terms of purpose and method of implementation, each with its own internal logic and each addressing important challenges, both to users and to social work practitioners.`

The monograph addresses the reader directly, presenting complex problems in a sometimes aphoristic style that is straightforward enough, without simplifying or even trivialising the material. It does an excellent job of combining practical tips and guidance with references to theory and conceptual implications. This makes the text readable and intriguing.

Extract from Rajko Muršič's peer review

The author develops arguments for the co-constitution of four fundamental concepts and operations of social work: empowerment, establishing a working relationship, risk analysis and exploring the Life-World by providing access to all key resources as operations around which social work takes place. He presents each of these operations in its fundamental purpose, analyses the main features of its implementation and points out the main pitfalls that can defeat their purpose. In so doing, the author appropriately addresses and exposes the key contradictions of social work, while also suggesting practical syntheses that can resolve them.



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