

Outreach Approaches in

An International Perspective

Social Work



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Peter Hendriks (Editors)

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Colophon

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Acknowledgments

Within the context of 'Norm', a network on social work research and master development, a proposal was discussed to cooperate in a common investigation on outreach approaches in social work within the participating European countries. 'Norm' brings researchers from different universities together to study, to deepen and to broaden social citizenship, to share knowledge and to initiate and carry out comparative researches and common master modules (or elements). The Centre of Social Innovation of the Faculty of Society and Law (FMR) of the Hogeschool Utrecht is one of the participants of the Norm network. Within this research center a specific professorship focuses at the field of outreach approaches and in this context the opportunity was offered to start a project. The project aimed at starting an international pilot research among Norm partners and to be able to exchange the results. From the Norm network four partners expressed their commitment to join in the project, Vilnius University, Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, Tartu University and Sheffield Hallam University. At the start of this project no funding was available, so we depended on the personal commitment of the staff members involved. Later a small funding from the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) contributed to be able to actually meet with students and staff members in a conference. The research pilot had to be embedded in the educational context of the different social work curricula and we wanted students to be involved. This involvement could be realized by giving the students the opportunity to write their BA thesis about this research pilot.

We want to express our thanks to 'l'Ecole d'études sociales et pédagogiques (HES·SO) of the university of Lausanne for organizing a

conference, the Norm partners for their commitment and the EASSW for contributing with a project grant.

In this report we want to describe the social work outreach practices and the occurring moral dilemmas for social professionals. The results seem to be promising and this inspires to continue with a broader international comparative research.

Finally, special thanks to the students who contributed in this project,

Raymond Kloppenburg and Peter Hendriks

June 2010

1. Outreach Approaches in Social Work

Outreach approaches in social work are meant for people at risk who are not in contact with social services and receive no help. Outreach approaches always take place in the direct living environment of people, both in the private and in the public domain. Social workers contact their clients on the spot: on the streets or at client's homes. Aims are to support people by seeking solutions to their problems, to help people find access to appropriate social services and to reduce harm of individuals and inconvenience in the environment. In outreach approaches empowerment and social adjustment go hand in hand.

Outreach approaches in social work are meant for people supposed to be 'at risk' or 'a risk', on the basis of signals coming from their environment (family, neighbours, school, police). Risks can concern an individual (an individual seriously out of balance or living in degrading circumstances) and also the social environment (causing nuisance or trouble). It focuses on people who are not in contact with social services and thus receive no help for many various reasons. It can be about not knowing how to ask for or where to find help, about not wanting others to interfere or about not being convinced that help is needed. Many of them had contact with social services but broke off this contact. 'Individuals supposed to be at risk or a risk' is of course strongly intertwined with dominant opinions about the quality of life and acceptable living conditions for individuals and society. Outreach approaches are not indicated for specific target groups. In Europe there is a certain tradition in outreach approaches with youth at risk, homeless people, or alcohol and drug addicts, but it can also be successful in contact with elderly people who live in isolation, multi problem families or people neglecting themselves.

Outreach approaches always take place in the direct living environment of people. Outreach approaches can take place in the public domain or in the private domain. Examples of outreach approaches in the public domain are street corner work focusing on youths who cause inconvenience in a district, or mobile services for homeless people. Outreaching social work in the private domain (behind the front door) happens for example to prevent evictions or to visit elderly people who live at home in isolation or to visit a family, about which signals of child abuse are reported. In those cases it's the social worker who enters the physical and social territory of the service user/client instead of the service user/client who makes his/her way to the social service agency.

Outreach approaches generally start when a signal is given in the environment. The signals are screened by the social worker on their importance. Is there a serious problem implying a risky situation for the person, the group or the environment, and are the people involved able to find a solution for their own situation? Finally the screening can lead to the conclusion that making contact is desirable and sometimes urgent. When having contact with persons involved, an assessment can take place to interpret the meaning of the signals and to determine the needs. It can be necessary to motivate people to get help and to find access to appropriate social services.

We distinguish three current models of outreaching social work. The '*Support model*' in which the aim of the social workers is to stand beside the clients to seek solutions to their problems, rather than stay behind their desks and seek what they feel is the best. The '*Catching clients model*' which aim it is bringing into contact clients who are not able to find help with appropriate social services. The '*Options and sanctions model*' where professionals use a certain amount of pressure to reduce by direct

interventions the harm of individuals and inconveniences in the environment. The models differ to the extent in which the contact is made voluntary or under pressure. As such in outreach approaches in social work empowerment and social adjustment go hand in hand.

Because outreach social work often takes place in a person's living environment, social workers have to deal with different value perspectives, such as values of the client/user, the agency, the society and their own more personal values. Outreach social work can be characterized by the existence of stressful moments with conflicting values. One of the moral dilemmas for the social worker is 'the respect to self-determination' versus 'the responsibility of a society for the wellbeing of her citizens' As a consequence the social worker has to reflect on values that guide the types of decisions to be made. This requires the moral sensitivity to examine own values and to take multiple perspectives.

Another feature of outreach social work is the involvement of more than one professional organization. Co-operation and fine-tuning are fundamental to the success of outreach approaches. Often the outreach social worker operates at the level of contact with clients and at the level of cooperation between professionals and agencies.

Contact Assessment Teams get in contact with the homeless

In London Contact Assessment Teams (CATs) with outreaching care workers aim to get in contact with homeless rough sleepers. The CAT team contains specialised care workers for care and treatment of drug addicts and psychiatric care. Every CAT team operates in a geographically confined area. They CAT' teams go out into the streets at night, make contact with rough sleepers and motivate them into accepting help and accommodation in a hostel. Rough sleepers that are referred to a hostel by a CAT team can avoid waiting lists and are given a place in the hostel on precedence.

Social workers get in contact with socially isolated elderly people

In The Netherlands there is a tendency that elderly people keep on living independently in their private homes for as long as possible. Some of these elderly persons – in particular those people who live on their own and lack contact with family, friends or neighbors – are at risk of social isolation. To avoid social isolation and loneliness among elderly people, social workers in Amsterdam visit elderly people in their homes if there is an indication that a person might need help but does not ask for it. Indications that elderly people might need help are for example:

- a neighbor who makes a phone call to the social worker to express his worries because the older person has not been outside the house for several days;
- a policeman who calls the social worker because he noticed the window curtains at the house of an old lady stay closed at daytime for several days.

For the social worker these kinds of signals indicate something might be wrong. She visits the elder person at home to check out. During the visit the social worker asks if the person needs anything, such as help with finances, running the household etcetera. If needed, specific help or care is provided.

Examples of social workers confronted with moral dilemmas in outreach approaches:

- A social worker is visiting a poor family with debts and finds out that electricity is tapped illegally. Can the social worker show solidarity with the family and supports all initiatives to diminish poverty or is the worker obliged to report the illegal activity?
- A service user asks financial support to buy clothes for his children. The visiting social worker discovers a new, just bought, very expensive flat screen TV in his living. What if the social worker says: 'If you buy such an expensive TV I will not contribute to your request!'
- A woman (45) lives under miserable, filthy circumstances. She says that she can take care of herself and does not want any help. Should the social worker accept her autonomy or should she insist to help?
- When it's by law forbidden to help illegal people, should the social worker neglect signals of illegal people at risk?

2. Research project

Aim of the project

Overall aim of the project was to realize a research pilot with Norm partners, of which Vilnius University, Tartu University and Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, Sheffield Hallam University and Hogeschool Utrecht finally decided to participate. An already planned conference in Lausanne about social work research could be combined with a meeting of participants in this research pilot to exchange the results. A meeting in Lausanne could be realized with the support of a project grant of the EASSW. We wanted to give students and staff members, who were involved, the opportunity to meet and to exchange results. The first aim is to give a description of outreach approaches in social work in several European countries. Secondly to gain an understanding of the moral aspects in outreach approaches. The third aim is to create an occasion for students Social Work to participate in a comparative international research.

Questions research pilot

- How do social workers with experience in outreach approaches characterize their outreach work?
- Is the outreach approach an individual choice of the social worker or also an institutionalized approach of the agency? If so, is this described within the job description of the worker and are workers trained in outreach work?
- Can social workers give examples of moral dilemmas in outreach interventions and how do they describe the cause of these dilemmas?

- To what extent are these moral dilemmas connected with local and national policies of the participating countries?
- Comparing outreach interventions in social work in the participating European countries: what are differences and similarities in outreach practices?

Research method

The approach of the research is interpretative or qualitative, which means that we were particularly interested in the social workers' interpretation of their outreach work and related moral aspects.

Each of the participating universities approached max. 5 social workers in agencies who have experience with outreach interventions. To collect data, semi structured interviews have been held with each of the social workers. Each of the participating universities developed their own questionnaire based on the same research questions which simplifies a comparison later on. The interviews were executed by students and/or a lecturer. To prepare students for the interviews an interview-training could have been offered within the own university.

An audiotape was made and transcribed after the interviews and an analyzes of the transcribed text was executed on themes related to the research questions, especially to experiences with outreach work, moral dilemmas and reflecting on values. All universities were expected to write a report in English, which contained of a short description of the interviews, a summary of the results, an analysis and a conclusion. (max. 5 pages)

Next, in an international meeting in Lausanne the outcomes were presented and a comparison of the presented outcomes illuminates similarities and differences was made between the participating countries.

Project results

- The project gives a description of the range or variety of outreach approaches in social work in the participating European countries
- The project gives an idea about the different perspectives of social workers when they feel confronted with moral dilemmas in outreach social work.
- An analysis of the interviews by each country followed by a comparison between outreach approaches in the participating countries.
- A two day conference for students and staff to meet and to discuss the outcomes.
- A dissemination of results at the website/conference of EASSW and local national networks.
- A decision will be made about a follow up by a research at larger scale, if the project is successful. The results of the project can be used to raise funding for a wider international research.

Partners

Vilnius University (Lithuania)

Alice Salomon Hochschule, Berlin (Germany)

Tartu University (Estonia)

Sheffield Hallam University (UK)

Hogeschool Utrecht (Netherlands)

Time schedule

Period	Activities / results
November 2008 January 2009	Sheffield meeting (Dec. 1,2) Conceptual framework (selection of literature)
February 2009 April 2009	Research plan Application EASSW Recruitment Ba/Ma students, tutors Bilateral meetings in Dubrovnik(April) and Berlin(May)
June 2009 July 2009	Recruitment Social Professionals Preparation of(Interview training) students
August 2009 December 2009	Interviews /transcribes Data analyses/ Report in English from all countries
Spring 2010	International meeting exchange and comparison of results
Autumn 2010	Exploring possibilities of funding a follow up research

3. Research pilots

3.1 Outreach approaches in Germany

In Berlin two BA students each did their own separate research. The first, by Sophie Maasch is called 'Moral dilemmas in outreach social work in mother/father-child-institutions'. The second, by Fotios Papadopoulos is called 'Moral dilemmas in outreach social work in social-psychiatric services'

3.1.1 Moral dilemmas in outreach social work in mother/father-child-institutions

Sophie Maasch

Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin

Introduction

In Germany the term "outreach" is rather unfamiliar. It describes all settings and contexts in which professional social workers (as an agent of an institution) contact their clients in their living environment, for example at the client's homes or on the street (cp. Krafeld (2004), p. 7ff). Streetwork is the most frequently occurring sphere of action in the context of outreach approaches in literature. There is no uniform or precise definition of outreach approaches in the (German) literature. Hence a lot of things could be part of it: independence of institutional basic conditions in practice as well as outreach work. The last one can be seen as a part of the institutional work like for example home visits by social workers in a mother/father-child-institution.

My main research question was: “Which moral dilemmas in outreach work, social workers of a mother/father-child-institution are faced with?”

But there were also questions like:

- How does outreach work will be understood and practised in the mother/father-child-institution?
- Are there certain examples of moral dilemmas in outreach work especially at home visits in the mother/father-child-institution?
- To what extent social workers can/are able to recognise and reflect moral dilemmas in outreach work?

Social work is a profession and questions arise continuously in its spheres of activities. These questions cannot be answered easy, clear and doubtless in each case. There are many moral precarious situations (dilemmas) in professional routine of social work (cp. Lob-Hüdepohl (2007), p. 117), which especially appear in following conflicting fields:

- Social work at the conflicting field between “nearness and distance”,
- Social work as dual mandate between “help and control”,
- Social work at the conflicting field between “compulsion and voluntarines

Conception of a mother/father-child-institution in Berlin

According to § 19 Social Code VIII the mother/father-child-institution was established by the youth welfare for young pregnant women and single mothers or fathers with at least one child younger than six years. There are eight places for a daylong care and three for supervised housing. It is designed as a low-threshold offer. There are no general rules for the clients.

Arriving at the institution an individual and flexible care concept is communicated and elaborated with the pregnant women, young mothers/fathers and their children according to their needs. The clients of the institution live in “their” own flat including two rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. They have to care for themselves and their children as well as they have to keep house and are supported in the arrangement of everyday life and childcare by social workers. For these reasons the social workers often come to visit the clients in their flats. In the explored institution four social workers/pedagogues (three women, one man) and one educator are working. For them home visits mark a very important instrument of action, in order to stay in contact with the clients and to build up a kind of attachment. To accompany the clients to the agencies and physicians etc. is also a part of work. As I already described the social workers support their clients in their everyday life but being responsible for the secureness of the children they also have to check the actual living situation permanently. This includes controlling the cleanliness (hygiene) of the flat and keeping an eye on how the young mothers/fathers handle their child/children.

Method and analysis

For the interview I choose one of the social workers. She is employed at the mother/father-child-institution for more than twenty years and was my field instructor during my internship there. She has a lot of experience with outreach approaches. At first it was important to define the term “expert”. I did not interview her as an expert in a conventional sense since the interview was not about expertise of a special kind of work or clientele. Instead it wanted to provide information about the social worker’s interpretation of her outreach work and also about related moral aspects

particularly her personal experiences during her employment. Therefore a semi structured interview was held with the social worker. Preliminary the interviewee only got to know the issue of the interview, that is no particular questions from the interview guideline were communicated before. The interview lasts about 55 minutes. It was recorded by a dictating machine and transcribed afterwards. The analysis of the interview happened on the basis of the qualitative content analysis according to Philipp Mayring. The transcript was structured in different topics and gradually executed. The main focus was formed by a theoretical guided set of categories based on the guideline and transcript. With its help the aspects which should be screened out of the transcript were defined. Then a further differentiation of the categories took place and sub-categories were developed. The aim of this method was to achieve an accurate definition of the set of categories which allowed an explicit classification of the interview's process. First the categories were developed deductive which means on the basis of the interview guideline. Afterwards they were generated inductive from the transcript. The relevant text passages are structured amassed and processed.

Results

As already mentioned home visits can be understood as a sensitive sphere of activity. Social workers/pedagogues are persistently exposed to paradoxical professional problems that evoke conflicting situations, in which social workers are asked for a decision/a salutation.

Dilemma: "help and control"

As described in literature the child and youth welfare office (normally the

general social service) is instructed to achieve the “state sentinel”. At the same time social workers have to provide the clients with help and support. Consequently they have to be helping and controlling at the same time. The effect of this dual mandate can be characterized as a dilemma: available help and support capacities in the context of home visits always go hand in hand with a controlling view (cp. Hensen; Schone (2009), p. 21). The interviewee also documented that there are prejudices against the clients during the run-up to the controlling function (cp. interview line 346 – 347). As it is an institution of the youth welfare all members of staff according to § 8a (2) Social Code VIII are obligated to appreciate the “protect instruction” to the best interests of the child. The social worker as extension of the youth welfare confirmed that it is her job to support the clients but also to perform a controlling function (cp. interview line 342, 351, 374). Therefore it seems to be necessary to balance between these two sites. This is experienced as very hard sometimes (cp. interview line 349, 363 – 364). To the extend that the controlling function hindered the direct work in building a stable relation with the client. As a result the clients withdraw from the social worker or even elude the influence of the social work (cp. interview line 378 – 381, 443). The fact that clients isolate because of an unbalance between help and control, especially if the control aspect comes to the fore, is also mentioned by the author Urban-Stahl (2009). A difference in theory and empiricism is to notice relating to executed unannounced home visits because of the controlling function. In literature there is the thesis that clients are only visited at home unannounced in context of crisis interventions. But on the other hand the social worker described that there are many different reasons for it, for example if there is a request on the part of the carer or if it is necessary (to control) because of the actual situation e.g. when a child does not stop crying (cp. interview line 176 –

179). If they assume that there is a matter of imminent danger and the client does not open the door, the spare key is used and the social worker will enter the flat arbitrary for the protection of the child (cp. interview line 192 – 196). By contrast the authors Neuffer and Ollmann (2000, p. 21) assert that the police has to be consulted in cases of having a suspicion of urgent endangering of a child's well-being when a permission to come into the flat is denied. This approach was not mentioned by the interviewee.

Dilemma: "nearness and distance"

But theory and empiricism agree on the fact that this behaviour leads to an invasion of the client's private sphere (cp. interview line 186, 272 – 273; Neuffer; Ollmann (2000), p. 14). The social worker also mentioned that it can be seen as a kind of "living together" because of the daylong care at the main building of the institution (cp. interview line 296 – 297). They (social workers) try to form an attachment and a mutual trust to the clients (cp. interview line 350). According to that a development of a face-to-face contact between the social worker and the clients can not be avoided (cp. http://www.assista.org/files/paedagogischer_grundsaeetze.pdf). In literature this is discussed in context of the conflicting field "nearness and distance". Social professionals are noticing the necessity of confine and inner distance. If the social workers do not find a balance between "nearness and distance" there could be a risk that the essential objectivity gets lost. As a result professional acting is not guaranteed to the full extent anymore (cp. http://www.assista.org/files/paedagogische_grundsaeetze.pdf).

The interviewee sees herself and the other team members as a family substitution to a certain extent. They seem to have a "lightning conductor function". During the interview the balance between "nearness and

distance” was not mentioned literally, but according to her statements (e.g. “be a family substitution”), we are able to assume that this conflicting field “nearness and distance” is an issue of everyday action in a mother/father-child-institution. The “close” contact between clients and social professionals can be leading to risks if there is no balance between these two poles. Incidents like the described situations above can be referring to the own person and also endanger professional action ability

Conclusion

The bachelor thesis has demonstrated that professional work in the field of outreach approaches in social work, especially by home visits, are exposed to versatile moral dilemmas. The close workaday life of professionals and clients in a mother/father-child-institution is affected by paradoxical interests. There is a huge responsibility especially in the context of the “protecting instruction” which is established to conduce to the best interests of the child and which requires a clear inner confine. Furthermore the social worker is considerably strained to secure professional action ability for achieving and providing collaboration with clients as good as possible. And there is a high request to satisfy the described quality demand which results from the conflicting fields.

During the interview the social worker also demonstrated that emotions are a central issue. She described different emotions like anxiety, hate, rage and helplessness which she had experienced during and after home visits. In order to prevent a burn-out-situation and the keep out the quality of home visits it is important to communicate these problems with the team members and to reflect the conflicting situations in supervision continuously.

During the interviews the social worker had to admit that she had given just a few thoughts on moral dilemmas in her outreach approaches in front of the interview. Her thoughts were mainly related to her own feelings which came along with home visits. The interviewee seems to be an example of unawareness for moral dilemmas in outreach approaches in social work. That refers to literature as well as to the practical social work itself. In literature the main focus is generally on the conditions of clients and how the behaviour of social professionals can affect clients. In my opinion the focus should be more detached from the view of the clients. That means that the situation of the social workers should also be considered. Raising awareness to the moral dilemmas themselves as to the requests to which social work as a profession is exposed to should be the aim.

3.1.2 Moral dilemmas in outreach social work in social-psychiatric services

Fotios Papadopoulos

Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin

Introduction

The term and concept of outreach work is relatively unknown in Germany. Outreach is a method and concept of social work, with the main focus on accessing hard to reach clients, with no contact and connection to the social work support and with the urgent need of help by the professional helping system. In academic discourse outreach in social work is a topic with insufficient attention and notice. In fact, most people link outreaching social work with classical social work methods like street-work.

I focused my research on outreach social work in a social work institution called *Sozialpsychiatrischer Dienst (social-psychiatric services)* in the city of Hamburg in Germany. This institution works as a counseling center and is part of the public health department of Hamburg. The main function of the “*Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst*“ is supporting, supervising and counseling of psychic and mental disordered persons.

This institution was established in 1957 as a part of social helping system but the remit was changed 1977 with the hamburg law of *help and precautionary measures by mental and psychic disorder (Hamburgisches Gesetz über Hilfen und Schutzmaßnahmen bei psychischen Krankheiten)* due to *Psychiatrie-Enquête* in 1975, which included state supervision and aid for clients with mental disorder.

Today this institution works with adults who suffer from mental disorders, mental disability, suicidal ideation, addiction issues and acute crises. The

team is multi-professional and includes doctors, psychologist and social workers. The main outreach method in their work is the professional home visit.

Research questions

The main research question was: How does outreach social work look in international comparison and what are the moral dilemmas that confronts the professionals doing so? My personal research topic focused on the moral dilemmas that confronts the professionals within the scope of professional home visits due to the outreach work in the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst*.

Other topics that were also part of my research are:

- What is outreach work in this agency and how do the professionals understand and practice it?
- What are possible examples for moral dilemmas in outreach work?
- How can professionals perceive and reflect moral dilemmas in their work?

Method and Analysis

Interviewee:

For my research I decided to interview my supervisor Mrs. Dobberstein from my internship in the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst*. She has long-time experience with outreach social work and works for over ten years in the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst*. Through my internship I had a good

professional relationship with her, many shared experience on outreach cases. I also made the experience, that as a co-expert I can get more straight answers than an extern expert.

Semi-structured interview

From our outreach-research we decided to use the method of semi-structured interview. This interview form has a set of formalized central questions and a framework of topics that should be explored in form of a guideline. A semi-structured interview is flexible and allows new questions to be asked during the interview as a reaction of what the interviewee says. The main interview consists three parts. The first part are the probing-questions. These questions are open formulated access-questions that allow the interviewer to determine the subjective understanding of the interview topic. The second part contains the manual - question that allows the interviewer to approach and explore the main topics of the framework. The third and last part are the ad-hoc-questions that allow the interviewer to ask questions on topics that are not part of the framework, but contain important or relevant information on the research topic. The interview should be recorded on a dictaphone, to ensure a correct processing of the data and information.

Qualitative Content-Analysis by Philip Mayring

I analyzed the interview content with the content-analysis by Philip Mayring. Philip Mayring created this method of analysis, which is not only focused on the analysis of text information, but also allows conclusions to the social reality of the interviewee. One of the biggest benefits of this analysis

method is that the process is strictly methodical and allows a step by step analysis of the data. The main part of the qualitative content-analysis is the theoretical work on the data with a developed category-system. The process of creating this category-system is to be made deductive with focus on the theoretical content and with the objective of the research.

Through a step by step processing of the data with this category-system one can determine and decide which data is important for the research question and create categories and sub-categories. Whenever you find a passage that fits in one of the categories, you filter it out and bind it to the fitting category. As a result of this process you have a set of categories and sub-categories together with the fitting text lines.

Results

The analysis of my data showed that experts who work with outreach approaches are primarily confronted with two dilemmas. The first dilemma is “compulsion and voluntariness” of help- and access - possibilities in outreaching social work and the second dilemma is “closeness and distance” between the social worker and his/her clients.

Dilemma “compulsion and voluntariness”

My research showed clearly that the dilemma of “compulsion and voluntariness” is of major importance for the experts in the Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst in outreach approaches, because the experts have to act on reports from third parties (police, family members, neighbors, et cetera). This fact has been confirmed by the interviewee. The experts are forced to check clients against their will and compulsory admission if

they are a danger to themselves and third parties. Especially the fact that they have the legal right of compulsory admission against the will of clients is a fact, which plays a major role in this dilemma. Although the compulsory admission is implemented by psychiatrists, social workers are in most cases present and involved. This coercion and regular checks can be of specific cruelty for social workers in outreach approaches, a fact that also has been confirmed by the interviewee.

The acting in coercion and the regular checks against the will of clients can lead to a dilemma in the professional identity from experts. This feeling is also described as especially difficult by the interviewee. In general she sees her role confronted with the issue of force, because in case of reports from third parties she often has to act against the will of her clients and approach them. This feeling is described “like forcing help on somebody” by the interviewee. Also the feeling to get over her personal role and “force” a check in outreach approaches is also of major importance to her.

On one hand, the interviewee wants to do clients-centered, preventive and low-threshold social work, but on the other hand it is clear to her that it is her institutional duty in the Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst to sometimes force client contacts and do regular checks but with the view of helping her clients and preventing self- and other-endangering acting.

Dilemma “closeness and distance”

This dilemma was not explicitly named by the interviewee but could be identified as a dilemma and major topic in the analysis. Although this dilemma seemed to play a big role in outreach approach social work, the interviewee showed a much stronger focus on the dilemma “compulsion and voluntariness”. A possible explanation for that can be the fact that the

interviewee has longtime experience with outreach approach in the scope of work in the Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst and therefore this dilemma was not so present for her. This topic showed to be of importance during my internship as it was often thematized and reflected between the interviewee, who used to be my supervisor during my internship, and me.

The interviewee described the situation of this dilemma with the picture of to be caught between two stools. On one hand experts have to fulfill their professional and institutional duty and on the other to fulfill the interests of their clients. The difference here seems to be the personal way of how to approach this dilemma. This dilemma requires a “balance act” from the experts between closeness on one side and distance on the other side. This fact has been confirmed by the interviewee. Additionally she mentioned the importance of the clients will and that it should be considered and respected.

Conclusion

The work on this research showed clearly that moral dilemmas are very present for social workers and their outreach work in the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst*. Especially the moral dilemmas “compulsion and voluntariness” and „closeness and distance” seem to be of outstanding importance, a thesis that this research confirmed. Social work in the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst* often shows forced context. Through reports from outsiders the social workers are forced to reach clients without their permission. This research showed that work in force-context is a complex and difficult situation. Experts often see themselves forced to act against their own personal conviction of helping clients to fulfill their institutional professional tasks. This is confirmed by my research. The dilemma

“compulsion and voluntariness” is the most often described dilemma in outreach work by the interviewee. A main reason is that the tasks of the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst* in most cases include some kind of force.

Another dilemma with which social workers are confronted in their outreach work is the topic of “closeness and distance”. Social work is a profession that interacts with clients and other experts. This interaction makes the topic and dilemma of closeness and distance to clients inevitable in professional outreach social work. This dilemma is mentioned many times in chase and emotional descriptions and by the interviewee, but not clearly named as the dilemma “closeness and distance” to clients. The interview data also showed that dealing with this dilemma is an individual aspect of outreach work and every social worker decides which grade and way of closeness and distance they need for a good and trustfully professional relationship with their clients. Ultimately outreach work requires a balance-act between closeness and distance from the experts in social work.

Also notable is the fact that the interviewee did not mention the dilemma “help and control”. A possible explanation for that may be the fact that the interviewee does not apprehend her outreach work under this dilemma and is more confronted with the two dilemmas “compulsion and voluntariness” and „closeness - distance”. This shows that social workers who work with outreach approaching often don’t recognize moral dilemmas in their daily work. Another possible explanation can be the fact that researches and professional literature didn’t show a noticeable interest on moral dilemmas in outreach work.

The outcome of this research also showed that it is very important for the social workers who work in outreach contexts to have the opportunity of a professional supervision, with the objective to reflect their own role as

professional social workers and their professional work. This is also something the interviewee confirmed.

The data from the interview confirmed most of the facts, that professional literature states about the moral dilemma that “closeness and distance”. It is one mayor dilemma in social work, something that has been confirmed by the interviewee. Although professional literature in Germany does not put a strong focus on the dilemma “compulsion and voluntariness”, it seems to be the most important dilemma for the interviewee, as it was mostly named by her. Another dilemma, that has a huge focus in professional social work literature in Germany, is the dilemma “help and control”. Outstanding noticeable is the fact, that the interviewee did not mention this dilemma during the interview and seemed not to have a strong focus on this dilemma, like the professional literature.

My target in this research was to focus my personal emphasis on moral dilemmas in outreach social work in the *Sozialpsychiatrischen Dienst* and to explore this topic. My research showed that it is necessary and advisable that this topic should be approached in researches as well as international comparisons and should get more attention from professional literature.

3.2 Outreach Approaches in Lithuanian Social Work

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Introduction

„Outreach” is a concept which does not have a precise word in Lithuanian social work field. Most often the term, „open social work” is used to describe methods which have to be applied in order to reach most excluded clients. Government does encourage social work with such groups, but transfers responsibility to social work institutions, which however find it difficult to balance between the need to help and a lot of bureaucratic rules which hinder provision of service. Therefore a social worker finds herself in an ambiguous situation: on the one hand she wants to help clients, on the other – tries to obey to the rules of the institution and ethics of the profession. This process often makes a deep personal impact and causes moral dilemmas.

Method

4 half structured interviews were conducted, recorded and then analysed. Research was based on the Grounded theory. Codification of the interviews consisted of 4 stages: 1) transcription, 2) para-phrasing, 3) conceptualization, 4) categorization.

Respondents: 4 social workers who use outreach method. Average age – 33 years. Average experience with this method – 5 years. Respondents

were found by questioning social workers in various institutions to find the ones that use outreach method.

Results

I. How do social workers with experience in outreach approaches characterize their outreach work?

„The Outreach method – offering support to those, who do not ask for it“

Lithuanian governmental as well as non-governmental social work organizations work not just with motivated clients (and groups), who seek support themselves, but also with social groups, which need to be *offered* support. Such groups are different: for instance, „*independent youth*“, who „*do nothing*“ or are very unmotivated in their daily (often obligatory) work: do not attend school, do not engage into after school activities. Other examples – social risk families, persons addicted to drugs, etc.

In order to apply outreach methods, a social worker must:

1) first, to recognize these groups in the social context, to define, to understand their peculiarity:

Such social groups often vary by their visual appearance, for instance, clothes: „*there have been few hiphop-ies, also some not clear...you know, you can recognize hiphop-ies almost only from trousers, maybe also from a bit more peculiar hat or shirt*“...

Social workers must find their clients themselves, because those do not recognize their personal problems and often lack basic information. Often the source of information for a social worker is community, institutions, but

sometimes, assuming that one needs help, social workers look for the contact independently.

Individuals, who are socially excluded, do not believe, that someone can understand them and help them („*family members do not want and can't help anymore*”). Therefore an attempt to approach a potential client must be responsible, well considered, his/her environment must be observed, type of personality studied, exceptionality of his/her group taken into account. Positive thinking of a social worker is also very important. Only then „*the right key to the client*” can be found. Then/along with this a social worker tries:

2) to get into contact with them.

It is essentially important to make a first contact. One respondent defined the beginning of such as an „*intervention into his/her family and trespass of his/her private space*”. First meeting must be neutral, without any extraneous thoughts: „*Hi, I am ... I work here. And you – what are you doing here?*”

The process of setting the contact and further communication is very important. In the beginning it's essential: 1) not to hurry, 2) not to moralize, 3) not to importune.

Hurrying may create the impression of pressure and a client will feel uncomfortable, may resist and break the contact. Preachment and moralization may lead to a client's objection and withdrawal, because clients do not acknowledge their problems and have a distinctive value system. The aim of the outreach work is not to change their value system - a social worker must work with it as it is. Communication with a client can not be an accusation either, for instance, „*it's wrong you drink*”... Instead: „*I will not change their values*” – I just want to help clients live their life „*with as much dignity as possible*”, not essentially „*changing their world*”.

One respondent stated, that one should not regret if part of potential clients disappear immediately after the attempt to make first contacts: it is important to work with those, who „catch”. The most obvious result of a successful contact is when a client starts to show interest in a social worker: „well, so where are you going)?”.

Every client is different therefore the first contact and the further relationship may be different each time.

3) It is also important, that a social worker demonstrates *not formal* interest in this client/group.

After the first contact next important step is to demonstrate interest in the client and unobtrusive subtle attention („usually I ask what is interesting to me, in order to more clearly imagine what kind of person he/she is”). It is important not to take on a formal role, try to identify oneself with the client, to consider them as equal, to speak simple, understandable language. One respondent emphasised the importance of agreement and openness: she tells clients that she is not their inspector, makes them feel safe, helps to understand that they themselves are responsible for their change.

„Not everyone can do this work”

4) A social worker must be ready to test her/himself (as a professional and as a person) and to see the meaning in the process.

Social worker has to have insight into the clients’ problems, imagine the ways, how this problem can be solved, raise realistic goals to her/himself and a client. It is important to see the meaning in the help process, and „...to value every positive change”....

However, in the beginning, the client’s resistance can take place: a social worker may experience sneering, she/he might be driven out of client’s

home, etc. But one has to understand, that this is also an input into creation of a contact.

Further in the process, after the contact is set up, it is important to recognize the field of client's interest or things that are important to him and to try to engage him/her into a certain activity by offering social worker's help.

However, a social worker must be very careful not to suggest any serious formal ideas, because formalities can scare. In general, such clients feel uncomfortably, when others communicate formally with them.

After clients are motivated for a certain activity it is important to encourage them to proceed, to take on responsibility. They assume responsibility only when they see meaning in what they do, believe in themselves and a possibility of change.

Confidentiality is important in the whole process. Clients may be involved into criminal activities, but a social worker often has to conceal clients' actions which contradict the law (for instance, one respondent has information that her clients steal and buy drugs on that money, but she doesn't report to the police). In order to apply the outreach method a social worker must be a sufficiently strong person, not to be afraid to contradict certain attitudes, rules of society, to be able to believe in clients who, at the first glance, are in the hopeless, meaningless situations, in their potential to change. Social workers using outreach method always tend to excuse their clients. They excuse inadequate behaviour and try to see positive things – this very much coheres with professional knowledge and attitudes. For instance, when social workers work with problematic informal youth (groups), they try to reveal their potential to create, to unite efforts for the common goal, at the same time developing a sense of responsibility for one's actions. A social worker encourages young people to limit alcohol and

other addictions by showing that without them much more can be done for the goal.

From the beginning to the end the outreach method requires to balance between the need to attract a client, to „tame”, to make a contact with him/her on the one hand and the ability not to lose professionalism and rationality on the other hand. One must also be aware about the risk to have to trample some of one's personal beliefs, values, moral norms, principles of professional ethics.

II. Is the outreach approach an individual choice of the social worker or also an institutionalized approach of the agency? If so, is this described within the job description of the worker and are workers trained in outreach work?

„I choose a relationship – not a rule”

The institution in which a social worker works has impact on the outreach process and results. The theoretic presumption may be that institution which aims at decreasing social exclusion of a certain group must provide appropriate conditions for its „instrument” – a social worker. But respondents state that often instead of getting help, their efforts are not appreciated in their institution, they don't get reinforcement from a head of organization and colleagues and they are burdened with administrative work instead: *„we are bureaucrats ourselves and bureaucracy chokes us”*... Respondents agree that they often get *„permanent control”* and this along with lack of support makes negative impact on work conditions.

The institution mostly cares about its image, it is interested that it would not be discredited in the eyes of society, - meanwhile „outreach” clients are often those who can raise *„unnecessary reactions”*: clients often are

addicted to alcohol or drugs, are violent and manifest other antisocial behaviours, which can damage „*the name*” of the institution. In such case a social worker not only has to believe in client’s possibility to change, but must prove this to his authority, gain its trust.

In cases when outreach work is not understandable to an institution and contradicts its policy, rules, norms and social workers do not get desirable appreciation, and support from the institution, this raises a moral dilemma, a question – what’s the meaning to do this work, if you don’t get for it positive reinforcement, a sense of security, help? A social worker is forced to balance between an attempt to please the institution and to provide efficient support to a client, not to damage his/her wellbeing by obedience to bureaucratic apparatus. The situation aggravates when clients peach on a social worker. And this, according to respondents, is often a case because „*they complain just to complain*”. And again social workers have to ply between the requirements and clients to make them feel satisfied (and they are often „*difficult people*“).

Only one respondent stated that his institution encourage outreach method, teach their workers certain skills, even provide methodologies and certain guidelines. In such case an institution flexibly reacts to clients’ needs and provides a lot of freedom (as well as responsibility) to a social worker.

In general, it seems that outreach in Lithuania is somewhat a „*high pilotage*”, when legal basis and real needs of people are not tuned, therefore „*it is not convenient neither to live nor to work*” here. But there is a need to help those people anyway. Then a social worker seems to be between the two fires – she tries to be closer to the excluded person/groups, but when she tries to transfer to „*bureaucrats*“ her work she tries not to fall into the disgrace of authority and keep her workplace.

III. Can social workers give examples of moral dilemmas in outreach interventions and how do they describe the cause of these dilemmas?

Dilemma 1. Trespass of laws versus confidentiality for client's safety.

Dilemma 2. Professional ethic or client's trust?

„At that moment the aspect of relationship was more important to me”

A social worker who applies an outreach method finds himself in the situation, where she has to choose – to trespass the rules or to obey them. A social worker is exceptionally the client's representative, therefore her priority is client's wellbeing. However clients not always act according to the laws of the state or rules of the institutions (ex., stealing, drug use). In such situations a social worker is confronted with a moral dilemma – to inform certain institutions about the inappropriate behaviour of the client, or to take his/her part, becoming his „*accomplice*”. In such situations there is a risk that the relationship with the client which is one of the most important prerequisites of help efficiency will be damaged. The relationship has a healing effect and through it social workers empower clients to change. Therefore, in order to maintain the relationship and thus to continue help process, a social worker sometimes chooses the client's part and bypasses the rules of the institutions or doesn't inform relevant institutions about violated laws. „...*One may think about the legal aspect, but at that moment the aspect of relationship was more important to me*”... In such words a respondent justified his action, when he decided to consume alcohol together with his juvenile clients, because he wanted to keep relationship and to implement the project they had started together. He understood that

if he refused to take alcohol together, he could lose the work he has done before and to lose group's confidence and relationship which was already developed. The respondent explained that for these clients alcohol drinking was the act of giving meaning to important footsteps in the process. The respondent did not tolerate such means himself, but in a given situation he had to take the decision „*here and now*” in the group, where the use of alcohol was important for celebrating a certain success.

Dilemma 3. Fear to be hurt by a client versus positive attitude towards him/her.

„Until it doesn't touch me personally”

However, positive attitude towards clients may be challenged when inappropriate behaviour affects social workers personally. Examples – the probability to be beaten if one refuses to use alcohol together with clients; or a possibility to be rifled by a client.

In such cases a social worker can lose belief in clients, lose motivation to work with them. Such situations when a social worker not just knows about client's negative behaviour, but is at risk to experience it personally causes „*a certain inner contradiction*”, a moral dilemma which is however an excellent opportunity to examine one's values, assure if a social worker really is able to justify inappropriate behaviour of a client, accept them as they are and work with them further.

Some social workers who have been faced with this dilemma begin to judge their clients differently – a sense of distrust, caution and fear appears. Only those persons who have strong values can resolve dilemma of contradicting feeling and return to positive judgment of their clients.

Dilemma 4. Engagement into outreach work versus lack of appreciation for this work from the head of the organization.

„Just keep us out of complaints”

In cases when social workers do not get desirable appreciation, reinforcement and support from the institution, this raises a moral dilemma, a question – what’s the meaning to do this work, if you don’t get for it positive reinforcement, a sense of security, help?

IV. To what extent are these moral dilemmas connected with local and national policies of the participating countries?

Policy of Lithuanian institutions as well Lithuanian social policy is based on norms, regulations, but outreach work is basically *informal*, it often does not fit into the rules. Striving to the result often is long-term and often intangible, therefore it often does not meet the expectations set by a government and its institutions. A social worker is forced to balance among an effort to please the institution and to provide efficient support to a client, not to damage his/her wellbeing by obedience to the bureaucratic apparatus.

In the beginning of starting outreach strategies in Lithuania the government encouraged this work with certain groups (for instance, risk families), in municipalities. However it turned to become a work with piles of papers instead of a direct contact with a group. Social workers find themselves in a situation when in order to help people who really need help they have to bypass some rules and even „to strain the truth a bit” in the reports in order not to exclude some clients from an opportunity to get

support. In other words, government wants to support „*difficult*” groups, but restricts social workers with lots of rules and bureaucracy.

Conclusions

1. Outreach method is described as „open work” in Lithuania and on the government level is encouraged mostly in ideological way, however few social workers get real support in a form of methodologies and guidelines. The research revealed that state social policy and policy of the institutions influences application of outreach method in social work field. Social policy in Lithuania is bureaucratized and encompasses a lot of formal requirements, which have to be obeyed when working with clients who are difficult to approach. This impedes application of outreach method, because this method, on the contrary, requires flexibility and is more informal. In such cases when institutions set a lot of formal rules and requirements, it is more difficult to use this method, and it raises more moral dilemmas. The more responsibility and freedom to act is given to social workers, the more efficient support they can provide to clients.

2. Social workers who do apply outreach method in their work describe it as very individual and different every time – it requires again and again searching for new ways to make contact with new potential clients. Based on the analysis of interviews, a few stages of this outreach work may be distinguished: client’s attraction, making a contact, maintenance and development of the relationship, client’s empowerment to take a responsibility for a change.

According to respondents, this method is efficient, if goals are realistic and every slightest change is valued.

3. The outreach approach presupposes a few moral dilemmas, in which a social worker finds himself „between the two fires”: 1) to lose client’s trust or to break professional ethics; 2) to tolerate threat to a personal safety or to lose positive attitude towards a client; 3) to inform about the trespass of laws or to keep confidentiality for client’s safety; 4) to continue outreach work without the appreciation from the head of the organization or to engage into a „standard” work.

Social workers are clients’ representatives, therefore when such dilemmas arise they tend to choose clients’ side.

3.3 Outreach approaches in Estonia

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Introduction

The Estonian social policy, developed during the 1990s, has been described as a combination of a liberal and a social-democratic approach (Lauristin 1997, 1999 in Gronningsaeter, Kiik 2009: 28). The division of responsibilities between the state and municipalities is structured in a way that municipalities are responsible for the welfare of their inhabitants and for providing essential social services for them. Although, being responsible for providing services, municipalities rather tend to delegate the service providing to non-governmental organisations (NGO) than provide it themselves.

Outreach approach in social work is performed by different social work organisations at different level, but mainly on local municipality and on NGO's level. The differences between them are coming from the legislation: responsibilities are much bigger for municipalities, but NGO's are only responsible for their target group.

Research questions

At the beginning it was difficult for ourselves to find social workers in Estonia who have outreach experience, because we could not identify social workers whose main duty is to work outside the offices. Instead we aimed to research how social workers are making contact with

people/clients. We hoped by the means of describing everyday practice to reach describing outreach approaches in social work. Also, we hoped that by doing this, social workers themselves would describe ethical difficulties they are feeling in their work and moral dilemmas they experience.

Method and Analysis

We composed a sample from four respondents, choosing them from different organisations and different levels – we planned to interview two social workers working in municipalities and two social workers working in NGOs who provide social services.

From NGOs we chose two: a Women's Shelter, located in Central Estonia, who offer support and help for women who have experienced domestic violence; and Rehabilitation Center for prostitutes and human trafficking victims. From municipalities we tried to contact with a local government worker dealing with disabled people and the one whose main field is to work in the country. Unfortunately we couldn't fulfil that goal since we couldn't get contact with all of them. So in brief, we interviewed two social workers: a social worker from a country-side municipality and a social worker who is working in a Women's Shelter.

We constructed a semi-structural interview with respondents. We worked out five questions (or themes) based on the research questions and asked more questions during the interview, in order to help the interviewee focus on the right matter and for the interviewer to get the needed information. The interviews were recorded and transcribed later. The length of one interview was approximately 1 hour.

We used a thematic analysis. We looked for the similarities and differences in the answers of our respondents. In subsequent analysis we

name our respondents according to their position LGSW – the social worker of the local government and WSM –manager worker of the women’s shelter for the sake of confidentiality.

Results

Question 1: How do social workers describe their practice? How do they approach the person in need from the outreach perspective?

The social worker in the local government while describing her outreach work remained quite scanty with words and used phrases like “*people hint*”, “*I call beforehand*”, “*I pay a home-visit*”. It begins from the hints given by GP’s, teachers, neighbours, hospital. Usually a visit to home follows the first information gotten from someone. It seemed that it isn’t a big part of her everyday work or is just so mixed in that even she couldn’t make a difference. Most of her clients are the ones who need social benefits or are in the hospice. In her own words she described her work more as putting out the fire. Besides that LGSW is a key person of a small organization dealing with disabled people and organized some leisure time activities to everybody which could also be categorized under outreach work. She also said that she does much more than requested, because her inner feelings can’t let her leave anyone without help. LGSW seemed a bit tight-tongued in her interview, which could be understandable as she has connections with the community – the people she is working with are familiar and she was brought up there and communicated with most of them daily. Therefore the people she visits are like her friends and acquaintances, which give a different touch to the relationship.

The work at woman's shelter (WS) is much more concrete and limited, described by WSM as very practical, taking care of everyday matters. The main tasks are to answer the phone 24/7, approach the women if they know how to get to them and keep an eye on the families, women at the shelter (see if they have food, if they get enough help, if their children go to school etc). They do counselling and advise the women to see other professional workers depending on their need.

Concerning the work at women's shelter, women have to make the first approach themselves so that the connection could be made. That is describes as the foundation of the work at WS which means sometimes putting too much emphasis on individualism in this work. There are only some who make the calls themselves. However, there are other ways the information of an abused family or a woman at risk has reached the shelter. Either it is the worker who hears something of a woman under abuse and gets in touch with her by calling her or even goes to her (if the information is known) or often the woman's family member or close person calls the shelter letting them know about the situation and gives coordinations to reach the woman, after which the worker goes to her. The WSSW even describes a situation where her own teenage children were at a party and heard something about a home violence after which they called their mother and gave directions to reach the person in need.

The WSSW adds that even though they might know where to reach the person in need, the real art is to get them to open up. *„We can't just go and ask them to talk. It has to be made fair and softly – discreetly. Sometimes I visit the woman many times before she starts talking. Some never talk.“* The WSSW describes a situation where a mother of a victim got in touch with the shelter, described her daughter's situation and gave directions to her

work place and the worker went to that gas station. She went there many times before the woman even started talking.

Question 2: Is this type of social work social worker's own choice or the main activity for the workplace? What kind of training have the social workers got for this job?

For LGSW, in the manual there is not a special clause for outreach but still she takes that as an activity for the workplace. Describing her work LGSW says that she has to do everything, „*from birth to death*“. Although she doesn't take that as a separate working obligation, she feels the need of doing everything that is possible to help someone. She said that it was impossible for her to leave anyone without help, „*there is no one needing me here, sitting behind the desk with golden buttons*“. She has a BA in Social work, but hasn't got any special training for outreach work. Also, the institution doesn't provide her with any supervision or support of whatsoever.

Outreach is a big part of WSM's work – „*You have to want this, to do this – to go and to do and to investigate or put your nose where you shouldn't put it,*“ says WSM. Outreach seems to be more likely WS workers work duty. If they hear about a situation, they can't choose not to go. Otherwise they won't do their work. WSM expresses that she herself feels that she's wired that way to help no matter what the situation is.

WS workers get special training for their work. It's a basic training that mostly concentrates on the psychological aspect of the whole issue of home violence – why men act violently, how women see violence, how can women recognize violence etc. Also, how does a women's shelter work, how should workers act and how can they protect themselves.

Question 3: What are the moral dilemmas that social workers have experiences by doing their job? What are their explanations according to the cause of their dilemmas?

One of the biggest dilemmas LGSW has to face in her work is related to taking children away from their families with all of its complexity. There is always a question what is best for the child, to live in a different environment or be a part of the biological family. She talked about a boy whom she had taken away and who has grown up now. He is doing fine, but LGSW still thinks whether it was the right thing to do since he has lost all the roots. Another thorn of a dilemma is informing people before visit. On the one hand, it could violate clients' rights, on the other hand the real situation might not be seen. There also seems to be a conflict with conscience, that she is doing more without the opportunity to do less. She has to do everything because people address her with their problems even if they are not related with her work, for example if the roads aren't passable. The keeping of ID and bank cards also seems to cause a problem to her and she qualms because it is a bit contradiction with the law, at the same time it helps people on track. *"I wonder whether anyone else does the same work?"* she asks. It is a good example to show how she had to solve the dilemma about helping a client confronting with law. It also shows how alone she is in her actions, how there isn't a network of social workers, they don't communicate to each other. So it means that they have to solve moral dilemmas all by themselves.

The biggest dilemma for the WSM is to believe what her clients say. *„I have to believe her even though sometimes it's very hard to believe she's telling the truth and even if I don't believe it in my soul, I kind of still have to*

believe her.“ Not all of them tell the truth and that’s a different matter but they generally have to trust their client and believe they are telling the truth. The workers have to let the women make their own decision even though they may not be the wisest ones (going back to the violent husband, not leaving home etc) in their eyes.

The WSM has taken some women (sometimes with children) who came to the shelter to her own home. According to her it is not a dilemma for her (whether to take them or not) but rather an opportunity. *„I see they need peace and quiet, they need to get away. I have a big property, a lot of space and I know they will find the peace they are looking for.“*

It is possible that working in the third sector and with its constant financial needs, has made her lose the line between work and personal life (bringing clients to her home). It shows that there is more sense of mission and understanding and that work is her whole life.

Question 4: How have Estonian social policy and local beliefs, customs influence these dilemmas?

LGSW didn’t apprehend much influence on her work from the national policy or religion. Maybe in a way that formal instruction and the actual help that is needed to improve someone’s life - differ. Also, the financial means provided by government are not sufficient, *“the exiguous given by government doesn’t feed anyone“*. LGSW is so tightly connected with the community she is working in that it might be hard for her to distinguish the influences of local habits and customs to her work.

WSM thinks about Estonian social policy it is not working. *„Sometimes I think why Estonia doesn’t think about the poor people in the country and how hard life is for them and what conditions they live in. I’m talking about*

the people who live in the country side“. It shows that when looking at the general picture, the current political regulations and legislations hold back WS's workers from doing their job. It is complicated for women to leave their abusive husbands because of the lack of resources. When they come to the WS they don't have any money for food or other necessities. Unfortunately WS does not have any finances to help them, as the financing comes from different projects. The money given is minimal which means that most of the work done in the WS is voluntary. Since most of the women who come to the shelter have nothing, the manager buys the food with her own money – *„I can't leave them without food,*“ she explains. She provides them with transportation and other things necessary, with her own money. Not always are the projects accepted and money given to the shelter which means the manager herself doesn't always get paid for her work.

Conclusions

The gathered results varied greatly in a way and probably the difference was caused due to the specifics of the field. LGSW was very brief in her answers about the outreach work, while WSM gave quite a precise overview. In WS's work the basics for the outreach approach is a specific characteristics of the target group. Also, they have a mission to raise people's awareness about specific phenomenon and that's why they are much more active in seeking contacts with women who need their help.

In the local government the target group in social work isn't that well defined and is mainly focused on dealing with the people coming to get help. This particular area faces a serious problem of alcohol and unemployment – typical characteristics of a small, even remote community. Therefore the majority of LGSW's clients are well-known grantees to her. In addition she also contributes a lot of her time to those in the hospice, does family work and everything else that is necessary. She lives and works in a relatively small community and is closely connected with it, that's why she might feel that about approaching clients there is not much to speak as it is part of a normal everyday life.

Both respondents are people with a great feeling of mission, in their words they are doing more than requested. Although outreach work is a work obligation to none of them, they describe that as a part of their assignment. However, the people with their mission cannot neglect any attempt for help and although outreach could leave space for the prevention work, they still feel more like dealing with the consequences. NGO's have better networks and they do a lot of cooperation, while the social workers in

the public sector are left quite alone. LGSW doesn't have any support from the institution and had not even heard of supervision.

It may be said that the border between the personal and professional life is blurry for both of them. They can't avoid not to help, and are willing to do more, by putting themselves in front. In this specific case it went so far that the shelter's manager occasionally took women to her own home which is probably the cause of a hazy or no line between work and personal life which is caused by the political system in Estonia concerning women's shelters by not publicly funding the third sector.

Although the LGSW doesn't put her personal life or money into the work, she still mixes that with her job by doing much more than asked. Since the family is the only support she has, *"If I hadn't my family, I couldn't do that kind of work"*, she takes work home with her. Although she knows that she is not allowed to speak about her job to her family, she still does that since there is nowhere else to go to.

The amount and nature of the dilemmas the respondent talked about is totally different. WSM presented her dilemmas as already solved she did not argue about them, we could only imagine that there has been an argumentation before. But the interview with LGSW revealed her large scale of unsolved dilemmas. She is mostly alone in her work - without any supervision and support. This is the reason why for her the interview seemed to be a perfect opportunity, to have a slight insight into her own self. It seemed that this was the first time she could reveal her soul and share the burden by discussing the workload, tension and pressure she has all the time.

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3.4 Outreach Approaches in the Netherlands

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Introduction

The first contact always takes place at the clients home address. The client will receive a letter in advance to inform him/her that a social worker will visit anytime soon. It doesn't specify the exact date and time though. For security reasons I never go there alone this first time. Only in one case I was confronted with a risky situation and the threat of violence though. When the client is not at home I leave a letter. When a client repeats the refusal of contact, I will not insist but when the contact is accepted I first help most of the clients to organize their finances or other aspects of their lives, step by step. Of each visit I make a report. I decide which information is included and when I decide to supply information about the client to others, I always discuss this with the client. My view is never to give information to institutions which harms the interest of the client. An exception is the abuse of children, this I will always report.

interview Eric

The Netherlands has seen a trend in recent years in which social professionals increasingly leave their desks and knock on citizens' doors – unsolicited if need be – to offer assistance or services. Rather than wait for a request, professionals are going afield and look for people out in the private domain. This entails a shift from a 'wait and see' attitude to one of taking initiative, from reactive to active, and is described in such terms as

outreach-based, outreaching, assertive outreach and, specifically in the Netherlands, 'behind the front door'. The methods used prompt associations with street workers who approach marginal youth 'on the spot'. Or even with community nurses of a bygone times which were still a familiar sight in the Netherlands until the seventies, resolutely directing their bicycles to troubled homes and talking their way in. Discouraged neither by locked doors nor refusals to listen, they insisted, persisted and, wielding the full measure of their persuasive powers, put disjointed lives back on the right track. This approach – the outreach approach – is now experiencing rapid development. And yet its position is also precarious, beset as it is by ethical questions.

Outreach approaches in social work are meant for people at risk who are not in contact with social services and receive no help. Outreach approaches always take place in the direct living environment of people, both in the private and in the public domain. Social workers contact their clients on the spot: in the streets or at client's homes. Aims are to support people by seeking solutions to their problems, to help people find access to appropriate social services and to reduce harm of individuals and inconvenience in the environment. In outreach approaches empowerment and social adjustment go hand in hand.

Because outreach social work always takes place in a person's living environment, social workers have to deal with different value perspectives. This may lead to the existence of stressful moments and a high density of conflicting values.

In this paper we report on the outcomes of three interviews with social workers who have experience with the outreach approach. In the Netherlands a distinction can be made in outreach approaches within the public domain (in the street) and within the private domain (behind the front

door) and in outreach approaches on a voluntary and on an involuntary base. The social workers interviewed, work with clients in the private domain on a voluntary base. The aim of this research is to describe the characteristics of their outreach approach practice and in particular the moral dilemmas social workers have to deal with.

Research questions

This research is part of an international research project on outreach approaches in social work in several European countries. Within this project the following research questions are formulated:

- How do social workers with experience in outreach approaches characterize their outreach work?
- Is the outreach approach an individual choice of the social worker or also an institutionalized approach of the agency? If so, is this described within the job description of the worker and are workers trained in outreach work?
- Can social workers give examples of moral dilemmas in outreach interventions and how do they describe the cause of these dilemmas?
- To what extent are these moral dilemmas connected with local and national policies of the participating countries?

Method

The approach of the research is interpretative or qualitative, which means that we are particularly interested in the social workers' interpretation of their outreach practice and the occurring moral questions and dilemmas. To collect data, we interviewed three social workers who have recent experience with outreach approaches in social work. The social workers were selected within the private domain of the outreach approach. To approach the social workers we used the network of the Centre of Social Innovation of the Hogeschool Utrecht. Two interviewers: a student and a lecturer did the interviews. To execute the interviews, the interviewers visited the three social workers at their social work agency.

The interviews were semi-structured. Based on the research questions, a list of topics was constructed and applied in the interviews. Each interview was recorded using a voice recorder and then transcribed. To analyze the interviews, each fragment of the text was equipped with a label. Next the labels were classified in categories. Hereafter the categories of the three interviews were attuned. To formulate the conclusions, the categories were compared and interpreted in terms of the research questions. The analyses and results were translated to English. Translation inevitably leads to the loss of some nuances and a risk of changing the meaning of concepts.

Results

A first analyses of the three interviews resulted in seven overarching categories. In this section we present the outcomes of the interviews per category.

Profile of the social worker interviewed¹

Marga is a fifty-one year old Dutch female social worker, who works at a school for children with learning disabilities. She has been working there as school social worker for ten years now. It is her job to visit the families of all the children in the school.

Eric is a senior male social worker. He has been working in different domains such as youth care and refugee aid since 1978. He is now working at a social work agency in Amsterdam. The agency exists of four divisions and Eric works within the division 'debt assistance'.

Rachid is a young Moroccan-Dutch male social worker. The organization he works at supports families at risk, who do not ask for help. Most families are multi-problem families "surviving under critical circumstances".

General description of outreach approaches in social work

Marga: "To provide conditions in which clients will accept regular social care". To do so in an effective way, Marga finds it highly important to visit clients at home instead of inviting them to her office.

Eric: The outreach approach means standing beside the client in his or her own living situation. The social worker tries to make contact and builds up a relation with the client by listening and responding to his needs. At the same time he observes the living situation and signalizes if problems occur, "a client can dress himself properly when he visits an agency, but when you

¹ The names of the social workers are fictitious

visit him at home you may be confronted with a mess". When and if necessary, the social worker tries to create access to social facilities.

Rachid: Goal is to make people accept professional care, to get in touch and stay in touch and literally "to get inside the house". The worker is the visitor and enters someone's privacy. Lots of information is gained by observing a person in his/her environment. The working method is described as "one hand holds tight and the other hand tickles".

Target groups of outreach approach in social work

Marga: Main focus is the families of the children who attend the school she is working at. All children involved have learning disabilities. Their families often have complex backgrounds and social problems.

Eric: Within the section debt assistance, outreach approaches are indicated for people with debt problems who are not capable to seek help or who avoid help. Sometimes the debt problems have cumulated and there is a threat of eviction. Most of the time, more complex problems appear to be the reason for the debt problems. An increasing amount of clients have psychiatric diagnoses. Eric is convinced that the outreach approach is not appropriate for people who are drugs or alcohol addicted. He also thinks that people with a long 'social care history' are not helped by an outreach approach.

Rachid: Multi-problem families, so parents and their children. People who do not ask for help, who avoid help, who cannot ask for help or simply don't see any problems. Many examples come from ethnic minority families in the context of complex neighborhoods. These families can be characterized as having lost confidence in professional workers or do not feel (themselves) to be in need, although they have debts, problems with their children etc. "I

know that something is wrong when I observe important mail, like bills, not being opened for weeks or even months; then I know that the person is not in control”.

Identification of target groups for outreach social work

Marga: When new children join the school, Marga visits their family as a standard. It may also happen that one of the children shows exceptional behavior during school time. This is then communicated to her by the teacher and will also be a reason to speak to the parents and possibly to other social care institutions (like the regional child care services). The children themselves and their parents also regularly visit Marga in her office at school when they have questions. “My door is always open”, she says.

Eric: In case of debt problems clients are often identified by housing corporations and sometimes by social security organizations. When the rent has not been paid for two months, Eric can be called in. The interest of housing corporations is to reduce the client’s back rent. Social security organizations are especially interested in social benefit fraud. Eric is convinced that the social worker is not an agent of a building corporation or the agent of the legislator. His first interest has to be the needs of the client.

Rachid: Police officers, GP’s, schools and sometimes neighbors bring the outreach workers into the families. “Once we are in, we can make sure that we can get in again next time”

A characterization of the own outreach practice

Marga: She describes a couple of advantages of visiting clients at home in contrast to seeing them at her office: x first of all, she says, it’s very

important as a social worker, to be able to see the client's personal living conditions and social life: "that you for example see how often the telephone rings and what kind of conversation is held, or the neighbor who walks in for a chat". Marga says it's important to take the clients "by the hand" from time to time to ensure success. Furthermore, she finds it's an absolute must to adapt to the situation you are in and really become part of the family for the time being. Another remarkable skill she describes is the ability to adapt the language used to the target group. She states it is important for a professional to do so when he/she wants to connect with and gain trust from the client.

Eric: The core issue in the relation between the client and the social worker in the outreach approach is to gain trust. People often think that the social worker comes to get them under the control of the institutions and that negative consequences such as the withdrawal of benefits will be the result. Therefore Eric's first attempt is to invest in a friendly and personal contact. This does not mean that he is not clear about the limits of acceptance.

Rachid: "Stay in touch, try not to lose them and stay side by side although they might do 'terrible' things. The chance to succeed is so much bigger when you visit people in their own environment". The need to work in outreaching approaches is increasing because of the increasing complexity of poor, multi ethnic neighborhoods in big cities where people miss social networks.

The policy of the agency with regard to outreach social work

Marga: The agency does not have a very clear policy concerning the outreach approach. It is Marga's job to visit every family once and to write a

report about it. Experience has taught Marga, that one house visit is not enough in most of the cases, though. She furthermore mentions the coming adjustments in her organization is making, to start working with a so called 'expertise-centre'. "This means that all social care will go to the expertise-centre and that all demands for help will come from several locations and I have to start working organization wide [...] this means that every demand for help will have to be judged by my team leader first before it comes to me [...] I reckon that's going to cause a lot of change".

Eric: Since 1978 Eric worked in different domains of social work practice. During his career he was confronted with successive periods of changing paradigms. After a period of rationalization of social work practice, he now recognizes a revitalization of a client-centered approach. In the former period, a client had to present himself at a social work agency to receive professional care. Nowadays social workers are aware of people with complex social problems who need help but who are not capable to appeal to social work agencies.

Eric also observes an increasing interest in outreach approaches in his organization. In his practice, more institutions can be involved with a client or his social network. In some cases it happens that the institutions do not know of each other's involvement. In these cases the social worker usually gets his information from the client. This causes the risk of institutions who sometimes work alongside with contradictory aims.

Rachid: The outreach approach in these multi-problem families is connected to the organization's policy to offer active 'case management', an unconditional intensive support. Case managers work on a relationship with the families, based on trust. They also target to activate people by offering them psychosocial and practical help. Case managers can stay in touch for two years. The first 6 to 9 months, support is usually quite intensive. The

case manager spends an average of 200 hours with a family. The last one and a half year the process is characterized by the coordination of professionals involved with the family.

Dilemmas with regard to outreach social work

Marga: She speaks about the dilemma of finding her own borders several times (both intentional as unintentional, but never personally referred to as a dilemma!). How far should and can she go? She gives the example of organizing a job for a young boy and accompanying him to his first interview. Question is, if this should be part of her job or not. Time-management plays a big role in this dilemma. Marga also speaks about visiting families and noticing illegal activities like dealing stolen laptops or having a cannabis plantation at home. She never reports this to the authorities though. An exception forms the abuse of children, this will always be reported.

Eric: Regular illegal activities of clients such as illegal cultivation of cannabis and social security fraud are observed. In these cases, Eric confronts the clients with the illegality of their activities, but he doesn't report this. Sometimes though, he finds it hard, to decide whether or not to discuss this kind of observations with his colleagues (who work with the same client). Within his agency there is no protocol of reporting illegal activities.

Rachid: "The social worker sees, observes more than he can handle. Because the worker really needs to work on trust to be able to stay in touch, the risk is that he does not dare to discuss sensitive issues. Thus the worker can be kept 'hostage'". When children are neglected or abused this is not a dilemma, and then one has to interfere. But what if people are not

honest about their financial situation? Or when conflicting values between the social worker and the client are involved, such as in ethnic minority families? “What if a man sends his wife away every time you visit him”? Another issue is that the outreach work is not very efficient; it is not the shortest way you can follow and you need a certain freedom from your employer.

Conclusions

How do social workers with experience in outreach approaches characterize their outreach work?

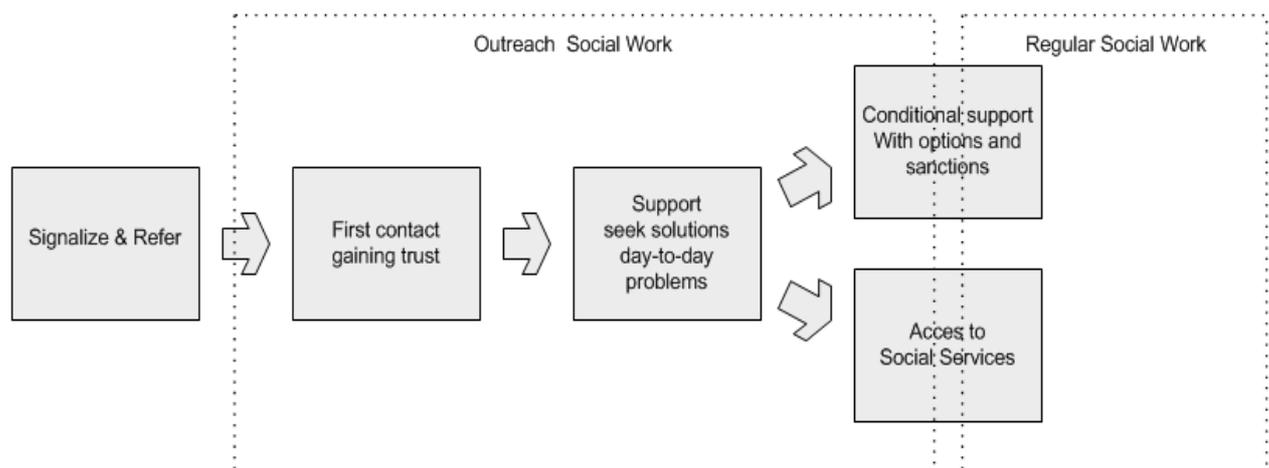
The Social Workers who were interviewed *mention that the* entrance of the private domain of the client is the most important characteristic of the outreach approach. Usually the first contact takes place at their initiative and they are under the impression that the clients tend to neglect professional help and can be suspicious about the aims of the professional. Therefore the social workers emphasize the importance of gaining the client’s confidence first and to motivate them to accept help.

The aims of outreach social work depend on the target group and on the phase of the contact. In general the social workers start by standing beside the client and delivering support in finding solutions for problems. In the following period the social worker continues the contact and focuses if necessary on bringing the client into contact with appropriate social services. Only in the case of dept assistance a certain amount of pressure exists, caused by an increasing debt and sometimes the threat of eviction. The outreach approach is characterized by the social workers as a forefront phase of regular social work. When the contact has started and the social

worker succeeded to stay in touch with the client and access has been delivered to appropriate social services, the outreach approach converts into regular social work (see figure 1).

Because the outreach social workers are involved in the private domain of the client they first chose to adapt to the culture of the client. The social workers receive a lot of asked and unasked information about the living circumstances and the habits and conventions of the client. This information has to be treated carefully. Sometimes the social worker is confronted with illegal activities of the client. Where possible the social worker confronts the client with his unacceptable behavior.

Figure 1 Phases in outreach approaches in Social Work



In this research to become a target group of the outreach approach depends on the aim of the organization, the *nature of the* problems, the capability to seek help and the signals coming in. The target group of the school-social worker is families with children with learning disabilities. Only when there are signals about problems that occur within the family, the social worker decides to use an outreach approach. The social worker involved with families with complex problems receives signals from citizens

or professionals in the local environment of the family. Mostly the families are at risk and an outreach intervention is inevitable. The social worker who searches contact with clients with debt problems can be announced by housing corporations or a social services agency. It can be questioned when the client can be identified as 'a client' (where in the phases as described in figure 1)?

Of each visit a written report is made. The social workers themselves decide what information will be included. Information about illegal activities is most of the time is kept out the report. The abuse of women and children is an exception.

Is the outreach approach an individual choice of the social worker or also an institutionalized approach of the agency? If so, is this described within the job description of the worker and are workers trained in outreach work?

All the social workers describe the outreach approach as being an explicit part of their job. None of them seem to have this very clearly included in their job description though. Very little of the outreach approach seems to be clearly registered by the agencies. All the interviewed social workers tend to have a very personal enthusiasm to work according to this approach. This personal enthusiasm is (therefore) described as being utmost necessary to be a professional outreach worker. It can cause freedom as well as dilemmas (see below, the question concerning the dilemmas). It may be difficult sometimes, to know how to deal with special cases like e.g. observing illegal activities. The social workers all speak about this kind of situations, but none of the agencies seem to provide clear guidelines as how to deal with this. Therefore they can and must make a lot of important decisions themselves.

The interviewed social workers meanwhile observe an increasing interest in using outreach approaches within the social work practice. As most of the agencies seem to provide a few policy measures concerning the usage of the outreach approach for their own staff, there are also few agreements concerning cooperation with other agencies. This means that multiple institutions can be involved with the same client or his/her social network. In some cases it may happen that the institutions do not know of each other's involvement. In these cases the social worker usually gets his information from the client only. This causes the risk of institutions that work alongside with contradictory aims.

As to the training the social workers receive: only Eric speaks about being professionally trained to use the outreach approach. The other two interviewees say that this approach is best learned by experiencing it.

Can social workers give examples of moral dilemmas in outreach interventions and how do they describe the cause of these dilemmas?

It's the worker who wants to get involved in the individual's private domain. This is described as 'to get inside the house and make people accept help', because the worker is convinced that it is necessary. This is quite a challenge because most people do not want or avoid help or have lost confidence in professionals.

The worker gains lots of information just by being in the individual's environment. 'The worker sees, observes more than he can handle'. This means that observations can become a burden. There is a change of roles; the worker is the guest and not the host (as in an office) but the worker cannot behave as a guest only.

The first two dilemmas can get intertwined. When the worker is inside the house it is necessary to work on trust, to be able to stay as long as needed. The importance of trust however is also described by the interviewees as a trap, it can make them feel 'kept hostage'. The information gained can be so serious (child neglect, abuse; oppression of *woman*) that other interventions are more urgent. However there is a grey area in between; of suspicions, doubts.

It's not always clear when dilemmas become moral dilemmas. A moral dilemma can be that workers by being in the private domain, gain information which leads to (un)conscious moral judging. If people tell you that there is no money to dress their children but the worker observes a new flat screen TV in the house. Or when the worker observes ways of punishing children within the family, close to what is not accepted by law. Two examples with two questions: is this acceptable and what to do? In the first example the danger of judging is 'to be thrown out'. In the second matter should he stay, with the risk of becoming 'accessory' to the abuse or should he go?

The worker has a high interest to stay in the family. Thus professional values can conflict.

All social workers give examples of observing illegal activities; like stolen laptops in the house, cannabis plants, social security fraud and though they try to confront the persons, the worker never officially reports what is going on. There are no protocols for reports. All are convinced that it is important to keep this information to themselves. Although this seems to be according to the code of ethics, the code itself was never mentioned.

Outreach approaches are not structured and set in protocols, which means that the interviewees do have dilemmas with time management, the efficiency of their work, about 'finding borders'. It seems to attract workers

with a certain personality, who like to work unstructured, who are 'outgoing'. There is a lack of clarity about objectives.

To what extent are these moral dilemmas connected with local and national policies of the participating countries?

In the Netherlands social professionals work under limited control of the national authorities. Social workers see themselves as advocate or as looking after the clients' interests and specifically not as agents of local or national authorities. There is a change going on within the field of outreach approaches *were* social workers cooperate with housing corporations and municipalities. Control and the interests of society have become more accepted as part of the profession, whilst this was absolutely taboo in the 70 and 80's. Not reporting illegal activities is a result of a way of thinking about the social work profession, as part of the professions' core values. "we are no police officers", one of the workers said.

4. Conference

A conference of the Norm network was held in Lausanne, March 2010. One of the workshops was addressed to outreach approaches in social work. The aim of the workshop was to exchange and discuss the results of the research pilot of the participating countries (see chapter 3) and to give students the opportunity to present the results in an international forum. The aim was also to discuss the opportunities of a follow up research.

Discussion

After each presentation questions were discussed to gain a clear impression of the outreach approach practice of the country concerned and to make a comparison between the countries. During the discussions some overall themes illuminated. Regarding the presented concepts and contexts of outreach approaches in Social Work we give a list of the most important themes and common questions.

Description of outreach approaches

Do social workers and educators in the participating countries describe outreach approaches in the same way? During the presentations and discussions it became clear that the term 'outreach approach' had different interpretations in each country. Although the interviewed social workers in some of the countries had experience with outreach approaches, the term itself does not exist. More familiar are 'home visits' or 'street corner work'. Discussed was the fundamental feature of the outreach approach. Is it the 'scene' that has moved from the workers office to the people's home, and

that citizens become a client in their own private domain? Is the outreach approach meant for people who need help but are hard to reach?

Another discussion concerned the boundaries of outreach approaches and the difference with other social work interventions. Where and when does it start and does it end? Does it start when the decision is taken by the worker to contact the client and does it stop when the client has been referred to regular help?

Perceived needs of the target groups of outreach social work

Outreach social work is meant for people who do not seek for help. The initiative for contact is taken by the social worker. But how do social workers identify target groups for outreach approaches? Can they be identified as the ones 'who do not ask help themselves', the hard to reach? Who defines however who is in need and how do we legitimize a 'beyond the front door' approach? Are outreach approaches really about the clients' needs or about the workers needs? What are indicators of perceived needs? This also raises questions about when do we see people as clients and can someone be considered a client without wanting or even knowing?

Outreach approaches embedded in regular tasks of social work

The research showed that sometimes the outreach approaches are an embedded part of the social work professional. In other cases it's a personal mission of the worker. Questions were raised about the extent in which the outreach approach is a fundamental competence of each social worker and belong to the regular tasks and job description? Can all social workers do this or is it just for a specific group of professionals equipped with specific competences?

Support of social work agency?

Some examples are given of social workers who being constantly in the firing line, which means that they are positioned between the client and the sending organization. The relation between the professional and the agency can be problematic. Outreach approaches with hard to find clients in complex situations can harm the image of the organization. Social workers who work outreach are often confronted with the boundaries of what is admissible. To what extent are the professionals covered by their organization? The client is at risk but the professional too. Outreach work needs reflection and intervision/supervision. Social workers are sometimes very alone in dealing with dilemmas. Sometimes the own organization is a burden instead of a support.

Historical context

The discussion illuminated that the social historical context of the different countries is of great importance. Entering the private domain of citizens without an announcement is also a political issue. Who gives social workers the alignment to work outreach? Do they want to help, to control, to discipline or to punish people? History demonstrated the risk of outreach approaches based on 'wrong values'.

Outreach methodology

Several questions about the outreach methodology were discussed. An overview:

- How to make contact with hard to reach clients?
- How long to insist when people refuse to accept help?
- What are differences between voluntary and involuntary outreach approaches?
- How to create and keep the client's trust and intervene at the same time?
- How to deal with illegal issues?
- How to limit the interventions and to manage time available?
- How can be given evidence of what is effective?
- How can clients be involved in the evaluating of this effectiveness?

Moral dilemmas in outreach approaches

Outreach social work is less regulated. Compared with regular social work, the professional has more 'discretionary space' but is also more responsible to give account of decisions. Examples of moral dilemmas are moral judging facing cultural different values of clients, private information that will be reported and the observation of illegal activities.

Follow up research

To develop further international research the outreach approach needs to be conceptualized. The choice is to focus on a specific aspect of the outreach approach which is defined by four core features:

- Outreach approaches are conducted in different domains of social work and are meant for people who need help but are hard to reach.
- The scene is the private domain of people (homevisits/behind the front door)
- Outreach approaches take place in the front phase of the social work process: starting with getting in touch with people and ending when people are referred to regular social work.

Questions for further international research are:

- Do the needs 'perceived' by the social worker correspond with the 'real' needs of persons who are targeted for outreach approaches?
- What are consequences of involuntary versus voluntary outreach social work?
- How to relate outreach approaches to participative citizenship?
- How to identify moral dilemmas of outreach approaches?
- How do social workers find solutions to deal with these dilemmas?

Universities interested in a follow up research are: Vilnius University, Tartu University, Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin, Sheffield Hallam University, Lund University and Hogeschool Utrecht

Appendix

The outreach approach in The Netherlands. Developments over time and changes in mentality regarding the outreach approach

**Prof. Dr. Lia van Doorn
Hogeschool Utrecht,
Netherlands**

In recent decades, social service professionals in the Netherlands have adopted an outreach approach to their work. This involves leaving their desks, going to meet members of the public, and offering them services or help – without being asked, if necessary. They do not wait for things to happen; they act and seek people out in their private domain. The attitude of professionals is shifting from waiting and seeing to initiating, and from reactive to active. As well as ‘outreach work’, this development is described in Dutch in terms that translate as ‘care intervention’, ‘go to it’ and ‘beyond the front door’.

This outreach approach conjures up associations with street-corner social workers who make on the spot contact with young people hanging around on the street, or with the old-fashioned district nurses in the Netherlands who, in the past, would get on their bikes and cycle resolutely to disruptive households and succeed in talking their way inside, undeterred by a closed door or a hostile reception, and who insisted, persisted and, with the necessary power of persuasion, helped people get back on their feet again.

In the next quarter of an hour, I will briefly set out a number of developments in the area of outreach work. First, I will describe how

outreach work has evolved over time and deal with the changes in mentality that has taken place in the process. Second I will examine a problem area that is beginning to emerge in the field of outreach approach. I will offer a brief overview of recent discussions in regard tot this approach.

How outreach work has evolved over time? What changes in mentality occurred in regard tot the approach? The opinions about outreach work – targeting and visiting people proactively in their private domain – have altered significantly in the last few decades. They have tended to fluctuate, and it is possible to pinpoint a number of changes over time. Until the 1970s, outreach work was very commonplace, but the approach fell out of favour starting in the 1960s, and into the 1970s and 1980s. However, since the 1990s, it has seen a revival. I will now deal with how these changes in attitude have developed.

Until the 1970s, it was still perfectly normal for social workers to make home visits. Social workers – using the social casework approach - visited ‘anti-social’ families, who were monitored in special districts, the idea being to re-educate them to be respectable citizens.

Starting in the 1970s, there was an increasing level of criticism of the paternalism of the special ‘re-education’ districts. Policy makers and social workers became uncomfortable with the attempts at ‘re-civilizing’ people, and started to distance themselves from the practice. It had become tainted with negative associations of paternalism and undue interference in the fight against anti-social behaviour. The active approach was abandoned in the Netherlands until the end of the century. This went on in the mid-1980s and 1990s: as far as social workers were concerned, citizens’ private domains – the area beyond their front door – had become a no-go area.

Not only for social workers, but for everybody else to knocking on peoples front door uninvited, became a taboo. Neighbours do not by walk in

and out the doors anymore. We do not even know our neighbours anymore. Teachers, who would previously call on their pupils at home, changed their approach and asked parents to come along to parents' evenings at the school. Priests and vicars no longer called uninvited on their parishioners. Nowadays, it seems the only people who call at front doors are those who belong to the inner circle of family and friends of those living there. Unannounced visitors are limited to the occasional Jehovah's Witnesses, or those collecting for a charity.

As a result of this movement away from the private domain of citizens, the problems they faced remained hidden from the outside world for a longer period of time. Problems occurred only when they had reached the point of a crisis. For example elderly people who were social isolated, where found dead in their houses after month's. Unnoticed by neighbours or social workers. Social workers where being criticised because they failed to reach the most needed clients and where unable to uncover hidden problems. The outreach approach made a revival.

Recently we are facing an increasing popularity of the outreach approach. The outreach approach becomes broadly accepted in the Netherlands. It is embraced by a wide range of care and welfare organisations and by many individual social workers. And it is also embraced by national and local policy makers. However, the reasons for its acceptance by politicians vary considerably. Among politicians from across the entire spectrum of political views, there is general agreement that looking beyond the front door is a good thing. However, opinions are divided when it comes to what happens next – when it comes to what should be done once you have made your way past that front door. Social democrats, for example, regard the policy as a means of helping the socially vulnerable, thereby combating poverty, social deprivation and

exclusion. Liberals welcome the policy possibly because it offers an opportunity to check whether or not people are remaining within the law and to act – with tough measures, if necessary – if they cause damage or are guilty of other forms of anti-social behaviour. Those from religious backgrounds (confessional parties) see the policy perhaps as a way of propagating the Christian ideal of the family as the cornerstone of society. In other words, the terms ‘outreach work’ and ‘beyond the front door’ were adopted widely. But these terms also turned into container concepts under which a wide range of political visions and policy objectives can be lumped without too much effort.

The outreach approach is evolving fast. However, the less well developed aspects and possible risks associated with the approach are also gradually coming into view. A significant difficulty with outreach work with which we in the Netherlands are currently grappling is the lack of clarity of the supposed aims of home visits and the question of the extent to which professionals can interfere in the lives of citizens. Who determines the limits of what is acceptable, and where do those limits lie? They are currently being explored and pushed further and further back. These questions have become more and more relevant in recent years. I will give an example from Rotterdam. A heated discussion flared up last year about the methods used by the intervention teams in Rotterdam who conducted house visits in the context of policies relating to anti-social behaviour. The teams, which consist of police officers, employees from a safety project agency, and employees from the municipal social affairs and employment department, and urban development and public housing departments, make unannounced visits to homes in certain districts from where anti-social behaviour has been reported. Once inside, they check everything: fire safety, the papers of the inhabitants to see if any illegal aliens are present,

whether any of those present is receiving social security to which they are not entitled, and any other problems or issues that the teams may come across. In other words, at the same time that rules are being enforced and checks made on municipal registration records, people are also referred to care and social welfare organizations. It is the combination of the social and care functions on the one hand, and the checks and enforcement activities on the other, that has led to the lack of clarity. The citizens involved made complaints to the Rotterdam Ombudsman, who launched an enquiry. In a critical report, it was concluded that the intervention team had exceeded the limits of what was acceptable, and that the powers of the intervention teams should be limited down.

In short the criticism on this kind of approach is that care for clients becomes interwoven with enforcement, with monitoring them and with compulsion measures. In spite of the criticism on this specific approach, intervention teams based on the Rotterdam approach have been set up in many other towns and cities in recent years. While the outreach approach becomes associated with enforcement and compulsion measures, the aims of the approach become unclear. The danger here is that citizens will lose their confidence in the impartiality and trustworthiness of social workers who will call on them, and will no longer open their doors to anyone else in the future. Visiting people in their own homes, in their private living space, is a far-reaching practice which should be applied to with great caution and care.