

Specialist Session: Beggars in modern cities. Inclusion and exclusion of begging paupers during the formation period of urban welfare politics, 1830s-1930s.

,Women at risk' and ,migrating' men. Welfare at the train station in Berlin around 1900.

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In 1897, the 'Society for the welfare of migrating male youth' was founded in Berlin. This society then established the Protestant Travellers' Service (*Bahnhofsdienst*). The Travellers' Service based its administration and direction on the Berlin Travellers' Aid (*Bahnhofsmision*), which had been founded previously in 1894. The Travellers' Aid and Travellers' Service attempted to stem and channel the inflow of young people into the big cities. Firstly they warned men and women in their rural hometowns of the dangers of the big city, and secondly they offered 'start-assistance' and support after their arrival there. What distinguished the Protestant Travellers' Service from the Travellers' Aid was that it remained restricted to Berlin for about thirty years. Only in the Weimar Republic did it spread to the rest of Germany. The Travellers' Service concentrated on male work migrants and homeless men whereas the Berlin Travellers' Aid focused on young female migrants, the so-called 'women at risk'. Often enough, these women also faced the risk of unemployment and homelessness. Therefore, the Travellers' Aid's own goal was to provide safety to young women from trafficking and exploitation.

The Travellers' Aid and Travellers' Service concentrated their efforts not on 'women at risk' and 'migrants' in general, but specifically the youth among them. Here the social workers¹ focused on the age group 14 to 21. The information leaflets from both organisations report that approximately 30,000 young men and 40,000 young women migrated to Berlin each year.² These numbers were used to justify the special attention given to this group.³ According to the historian Klaus Tenfelde, the group under the age of 20 was, at least until 1914, smaller than the group aged 20 to 40. These numbers suggest that the Travellers' Aid and Travellers' Service should have focused on people aged 20 and older.⁴ This was not the case, presumably because they assumed that their

missionary intentions would be more successful with younger people. This, however, did not necessarily prove true.

The insight into the two organisations unites the two aspects of the question in this section. On the one hand, the Protestant church reacted to the social phenomenon by founding two organisations in Berlin. These were located at the train stations since this was the place where men and women first set foot in the big city. On the other hand, the division into a Travellers' Service for men and a Travellers' Aid for women highlights the gender differences in the social values.

For this reason, the thesis that I will develop in this presentation concentrates on how the concept of honour differed for men and women in the Wilhelmine Empire. I assume that exactly this concept of honour in practice necessitated a dichotomy in migrant and pauper social work.

The Travellers' Service and the Travellers' Aid were each incorporated in a separate welfare system. Firstly, the Travellers' Service for men was part of the confessional Migrant Welfare (*Wandererfürsorge*) for male migrants and secondly, the Travellers' Aid for women was part of the confessional Women's Welfare (*Gefährdetenfürsorge*) for 'women at risk'.

The philosophical conception of the confessional Migrant Welfare and Women's Welfare

Both the official employment offices and the confessional institutions defined a migrant as follows: "A migrant is a man without means, who is capable of working and who looks for work outside his place of residence. That is, primarily an unemployed man, who, due to the depressed economic conditions, is forced to travel from place to place in search of new employment."⁵ Two things become clear here. Firstly the term 'migrant' refers to a male person; women are not included in the definition. Secondly, men migrate for economic reasons. Another significant point here is that not all migrants received welfare. Pastor Bodelschwingh⁶ once described the ideal migrant for the confessional

Migrant Welfare. Bodelschwingh tells of a homeless and disabled man he had once met. This man had continuously experienced social rejection due to his disability. This however could not discourage him from his dream. His dream was to "... purchase a block of land. On this land he wanted to build a small hut, not just for himself, but big enough so that he could accommodate two or three others who were even poorer than himself."⁷ He was an ideal migrant for the Migrant Welfare because – and this is an important point – he wanted to be reintegrated into society.

What does it mean that 'not all migrants received welfare'?

In the Migrant Welfare, migrants were sorted into two categories according to their willingness to work. The first category included migrants who were looking for work. They received food and stayed in the migrant work lodges that were set up in various German states. They also had to provide a service in return in the form of physical work – true to the motto 'work instead of charity'.⁸ Here the Migrant Welfare used preventative measures. These measures consisted of providing support to migrants who were in danger of becoming vagrants through begging.

The second category was for those classed as 'work-dodgers', who did not receive welfare. Among this group were the vagrants who were regarded as unwilling to work and unable to be reintegrated into society. Therefore they were excluded from charitable support.

I will return to the example of Pastor Bodelschwingh later and now turn to the so-called 'women at risk'. These women were attended to by the confessional Women's Welfare and by the subsidiary organisation, the Travellers' Aid. They were very often women who, due to their economic situation, moved to the big cities where they faced the risk of unemployment and homelessness.

The Women's Welfare defined their target group as follows: "Those we call 'women at risk' are partly girls and women who have degenerated into paid fornication and have given in to prostitution, and partly those who, due to their weak character or their surroundings, are subjected to notable moral danger."⁹ The definition makes it clear that the economic dimension played only a secondary role in the 'risk' to women. At the

forefront was moral honour, which had to be restored. Above all the domestic servants, who were the preferred subjects of the Travellers' Aid's care, were seen as predestined to fall into prostitution. A quotation by the Berlin criminal police describes the possible path of a domestic servant into prostitution as follows: "The poorly paid domestic worker, away from her family, feels lonely with her foreign 'masters'. She seeks distraction in a café, cinema or at the fun fair where she often meets her seducer. Happy in the thought of having found the person that 'loves' her, she meets him again and again. One day he abandons her. And she – seeks the next one. This is often the first step in the decline into prostitution."¹⁰ The domestic servant is described as a seducible woman with little money. On the one hand she is granted the status of a victim because her lover leaves her. On the other hand she is also an offender because she actively seeks the relationship to him. In this example, the love affair with yet another man construes promiscuity and is interpreted as an entry into prostitution.

I will now compare the example of this fictitious domestic servant with the story of the disabled homeless man I mentioned previously. These accounts differ in central points. The domestic servant is weak, whereas the disabled man is ultimately strong. The domestic servant allows herself to drift and be seduced. The disabled man is active and wants to change his life. The domestic servant runs the risk of being excluded from society. The disabled man has not yet reached his goal, but despite his fate remains untainted and wants to be integrated into society by settling. It becomes clear that stereotypical gender images are used in both cases. These images help to explain why gender-specific migrant support services formed.

Now allow me to compare the concepts of honour of the Women's Welfare and the Migrant Welfare. It becomes clear that the concept of honour for the two welfare branches was a central point, but it had different connotations. Both concepts of honour are based on the middle-class code: The Women's Welfare adhered to the middle-class concept of honour for middle-class women. This concept underwent an intensification to the 'moment of absolute sexual integrity'¹¹ in the Wilhelmine Empire. The modern middle-class moral code regarded a woman as 'irreproachable' when she made herself available to her husband and his apparent libido purely out of love. On the other hand,

women who had extramarital sexual contact for money or lust gave up their honour.¹² In contrast to the Women's Welfare, the Migrant Welfare adopted the middle-class concept of honour for middle-class men as their model. This was closely related to the reputation of a man and depended on various factors – predominantly his profession and social position. Pastor Bodelschwingh transferred these middle-class values onto the Migrant Welfare as he formulated the challenge: “Strength and goal [is] that we not only support and feed the people [...]. The most important thing is that we restore their honour”.¹³ In other words, male migrants [of the first category] should regain social honour by finding a ‘decent job’. The social commandment of ‘difference in honour’¹⁴ was an important factor in the categorisation of men and women in the train station welfare services.

The practical work of the Berlin Travellers' Service and Travellers' Aid

Both the Travellers' Aid and the Travellers' Service based their work on a three-step strategy, namely ‘preceding, accompanying and following’ care.

Firstly, ‘preceding care’ involved the social workers warning young men and women against moving to Berlin. Using speeches and newspaper advertisements, they appealed to them in their rural hometowns.

Secondly, ‘accompanying care’ involved supporting the migrants on their arrival. Specifically, this meant the work at and around the train station itself. In Berlin there were nine main-line train stations with most of the long-distance traffic going through the station Anhalter Bahnhof.¹⁵ Originally the Berlin Travellers' Aid provided support for women at these train stations¹⁶ only at specific times. Each year in January, July and October on five to six days each month – always during the main times when domestic servants changed jobs. In addition, female social workers collected young women from the train station several times a week who had announced their arrival.¹⁷ The Berlin Travellers' Service for men on the other hand began by using the strategy of visiting the newcomer in their homes. It only started its activities at three Berlin train stations in 1903, six years after its foundation. Initially the Travellers' Service performed its services

rather sporadically, usually on days of high traffic. It was only around 1910 that a regular service was established at the train station. In the following quotation, the Travellers' Service for men states an important motivation for taking up work directly on the train platforms: "With the invitations, we continually experienced that we visited the new arrivals too late and the migrants had already joined all kinds of political, trade union-based or social associations, which adopted an unfriendly attitude towards ecclesiastical circles. Therefore we tried to get to the migrants as quickly as possible and went to the train stations."¹⁸

In addition to the 'charitable' efforts of the Travellers' Service, this quotation specifically refers to their political intentions. Did the Travellers' Aid for women also have political motivations for working on the train platform? The Travellers' Aid made no statements to this regard about the women they cared for. This is surprising, especially considering that, from 1908 onwards, women in Prussia could join political associations and social clubs and were otherwise affiliated with professional institutions, such as the one for domestic servants. Altogether it becomes clear that women were not perceived as political subjects or as being politically active. Instead they were, and remained to be 'women at risk'.

Thirdly, 'following care' involved helping men and women to find work, accommodating them in lodges and organising their free time.

A certain ambivalence in the support services that the train station welfare provided becomes obvious. How do we interpret this ambivalence? The ambivalence was in the combination of helping and controlling, protecting and disciplining in the activities of the Travellers' Aid and Travellers' Service. On the one hand, such services could provide valuable support for the newcomer. The institutions represented a first place of assistance. This helped migrating women and men to get their bearings more easily in an environment new to them. On the other hand, it resulted in continuous discipline and control of the people who received welfare. Christian charity and Christian missionary intentions were closely connected. The Travellers' Service for men categorised people in search of help either as those able to be integrated and willing to work, or those unable to

be integrated and unwilling to work. In doing so, they excluded vagrants from assistance. The activities of the social workers at the Travellers' Aid for women in turn were ambivalent because the workers perceived women solely and exclusively through their sexuality. In this way, they took on the role principally of guardians of morality.

Altogether we can say that the Berlin Protestant Travellers' Aid and the Berlin Protestant Travellers' Service interpreted their activities as a Christian mission applied to the big city. Primarily young women were at the centre of their missionary activities. This explains why the Travellers' Aid for women rapidly built up a network throughout Germany starting in the 1890s. The Travellers' Service, which was intended to help men, did not extend beyond Berlin until the 1920s. There was a decisive motive for helping women who were migrating and looking for work. This was, in contrast to the support services for men, principally to eliminate the potential moral threat these women posed to, and as a result of, the public sphere. The call for papers for this section rightly states that, according to German sources, men appear to dominate the phenomenon of begging and vagrancy. Women were accused of vagrancy only in very rare cases.¹⁹ By comparison, sources more often mention that men also faced moral danger.²⁰ According to the general opinion however, women, and in particular prostitutes, represented the actual danger because they seduced and 'corrupted' men.²¹ The 'male domination' in the sources, at least according to church records, appears to change again around the end of the 1920s. In these sources, women were still classified as 'at risk', however they were then also more often referred to as 'homeless' or even assigned to the Migrant Welfare for men.²²

Thus, women were threatened by homelessness and vagrancy, just as men were. However, they were seldom mentioned as vagrants because the society drew a line separating men and women according to the different ways of interpreting integrity and honour for women and men. I have attempted to explain this using the example of the Berlin Travellers' Service and Berlin Travellers' Aid in the Wilhelmine era.

¹ In my presentation, I use the term 'social worker' for all those who worked at the Travellers' Aid and Travellers' Service even though there were many voluntary helpers who had not received training in social work.

² For the numbers of male migrants, see *Heimatsfremd. Mitteilungen des evangelischen Bahnhofsdienstes*, 68. (February 1937), p. 2. The information refers to the time before the First World War and indicates the number of people written to by the Travellers' Service each year. The actual number of migrants was probably higher. For the female migrants, see *Verein zur Fürsorge für die weibliche Jugend* (publisher), *Die Bahnhofsmision*, Berlin 1901, pp. 1-11, *Archiv des Diakonischen Werkes (ADW): CA, Gf/St 93*, here p. 11.

³ Regarding welfare for the male youth in the big cities, see the monthly publication for the Innere Mission, 22. (1902), S. 272, *ADW: Z m 92*.

⁴ Klaus Tenfelde, *Großstadtjugend in Deutschland vor 1914*, in: quarterly publication for *Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Jahrgang 69. (1982), H. 2, pp. 182-218, here p. 193.

⁵ Account of proceedings from the *Verband badischer Arbeitsnachweise* at the 19th general meeting on 21st/22nd April 1922, pp. 4-11, *Bundesarchiv (BA): R 39.01, Film 33164, Akte 81*, here p. 4. Migrants were also defined as such by the confessional institutions.

⁶ For 36 years, the son Friedrich von Bodelschwingh (1877-1946) headed the Bodelschwinghschen Anstalten in Bielefeld, Germany, founded by his father of the same name.

⁷ Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, *Kraft und Ziel christlicher Wandererfürsorge*, in: *Heimatsfremd. Mitteilungen des evangelischen Bahnhofsdienstes*, 68. (February 1937), pp. 2-15, *ADW: CI 122*, here p. 7f. The meeting described took place years before the report was written.

⁸ This form of pauper support dates back to the program developed by Pastor Friedrich von Bodelschwingh (1831-1910). In this program, migrants were supposed to 'earn' their food and accommodation in the lodges where they wanted to stay.

⁹ P[...] D. Ulrich, *Bilder aus der Gefährdetenfürsorge. Die Gefährdetenfürsorge in Berlin*, in: Ellen Scheuner (publisher), *Evangelische Gefährdetenfürsorge. Organisation und Gegenwartsaufgaben*, Berlin 1928, pp. 93-101, here p. 93. The article gives an overview of the *Berliner Gefährdetenfürsorge* (Berlin Women's Welfare) from 1826 onwards. The definition of '*Gefährdete*' (women at risk) remained unchanged from the beginning of the work of the *Gefährdetenfürsorge* into the Wilhelmine Empire and beyond.

¹⁰ Memoir of the *Kriminal-Inspektion der weiblichen Polizei in Berlin* for its 10th anniversary on 26th April 1937, pp. 3-43, *Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB): A Rep. 001-02, Nr. 2349/1*, here p. 35. This deals with a long-standing stereotype, which could just as well have originated from the Wilhelmine era. Differing assessments of the risk of prostitution for domestic servants can be found in the research. Research works that assume that the risk of prostitution was rather low refer to the images the society had about women not bound to a family. As introduction: Karin Walser, *Prostitutionsverdacht und Geschlechterforschung. Das Beispiel der Dienstmädchen um 1900*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 11. (1985), H. 1, pp. 99-111.

¹¹ Frevert, *Ehre – männlich/weiblich*, p. 54.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹³ Bodelschwingh, *Kraft und Ziel*, p. 13f.

¹⁴ Ute Frevert uses this term in: *dies., Ehre – männlich/weiblich*, p. 66.

¹⁵ Peter Kliem/Klaus Noack, *Berlin Anhalter Bahnhof, Frankfurt a.M./Berlin/Wien 1984*, p. 14.

¹⁶ *Die Mitarbeit der gebildeten Frauenwelt in der Fürsorge für die weibliche Jugend*, in: *Der Vorstände Verband*, 12 (1897), pp. 189-209, here: p. 197. The article states that approx. 80 female social workers were active in the Travellers' Aid at nine train stations in Berlin.

¹⁷ *Verein zur Fürsorge für die weibliche Jugend* (publisher), *Die Bahnhofsmision*, p. 8. Both the Travellers' Aid and the Travellers' Service were stationed permanently at the Berlin train stations at the latest by 1910 to provide support to those arriving. Nikles, *Soziale Hilfe*, p. 61.

¹⁸ *Heimatsfremd. Mitteilungen des evangelischen Bahnhofsdienstes*, 68. (February 1937), p. 2.

¹⁹ Sybille Krafft, *Zucht und Unzucht. Prostitution und Sittenpolizei im München der Jahrhundertwende*, München 1996, p. 118. Krafft mentions the case of Kunigunde D., who had worked as a prostitute and was then charged with vagrancy and expelled from Munich.

²⁰ D[...] Steinweg, *Der Begriff der Gefährdetenfürsorge und die Aufgaben der Inneren Mission in der Gefährdetenfürsorge*, in: Ellen Scheuner (publisher), *Evangelische Gefährdetenfürsorge. Organisation und Gegenwartsaufgaben*, Berlin 1928, p.8. Steinweg mentions for example that various confessional institutions, including the Travellers' Service, were "in a battle against the sexual-moral danger to men, particularly young men."

²¹ Isabell Lisberg-Haag, *'Im Ringen um Reinheit und Reife'. Die evangelische Sittlichkeitsbewegung und die Innere Mission im Kampf gegen die Unsittlichkeit (1880-1918)*, in: Jochen-Christoph Kaiser/Martin Greschat (publisher), *Sozialer Protestantismus und Sozialstaat: Diakonie und Wohlfahrtspflege in Deutschland 1890 bis 1938*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln 1996, pp. 191- 198, here p. 196f.

²² See for example the annual report of the *Reichsverband der Evangelischen Deutschen Bahnhofsmision e.V.* 1932, p. 3. Women were mentioned under the keyword '*Wandererfürsorge*': "In relation to the Migrant Welfare, the observation was made that the number of migrating girls and women over the age of 21 decreased substantially."