The first settlements in the world were founded over a hundred years ago with the intention that they would provide social capital in an increasingly industrialised society; the new societal situation is again challenging the movement to the same task. Settlement ideology is still relevant today, but how will this hundred-year-old movement be able to make use of its ideological heritage, values and various work forms to create new communal support forms? I will in my article look at the role of settlement work as an implementor of socially committed work in Finland, particularly in the new societal situation in which official social work is increasingly looking for partners from the third sector.

*Settlement work – carrying out socially committed work*

*IRENE ROIVAINEN:*

When using the concept of *socially committed work* I am referring to the work primarily arranged by various organisations that is wide in scope and content and carried out by voluntary or professional workers. I will delimit the concept of *social work* to denote the more limited task field implemented primarily by the professionals of the public sector. As the number of partnerships with official social work grows and the services are increasingly being outsourced, there is a danger that settlement work will lose its special ideological features. I will therefore begin my summary of the origins of socially committed work undertaken by settlements with the American social settlements of the turn of the 20th century. I am aware that most research on the movement concentrates on describing the largest and most famous model settlements and is inclined to idealise and glorify the movement (Crocker 1992). I will not, however, start to explore the truth behind these stories but rather give the reader a short introduction to early settlement work which will serve as a background against which the Finnish settlement movement will be examined.

What is interesting is that the development of settlement work is – through Jane Addams – closely connected with professional social work. At first settlement work with its volunteers formed a contrast to the more academic and individual-oriented helping work offered by people with the right qualifications and regular paycheques. However, it did not take long before volunteers and local inhabitants were replaced by professionals even in settlements, and they started to feel that they were professional social workers rather than social reformists – many of the settlement workers were after all students of social work. (Davis 1984, 88-90).

*Settlement work and its ideological premises*

In a global perspective settlement work has long traditions in the history of socially committed work. The roots of the settlement movement go back to 19th century England, where it started as a reaction to the social problems of urbanised and industrialised society. In Toynbee Hall, founded in 1884 in the slums of Eastern London, academic volunteers responded to the cultural, pedagogic and social needs of the community. In the United States settlement work adopted a characteristically reformist orientation, due to the work of prominent women leaders such as Jane Addams, the pioneer of social work. (Davis 1984; Stivers 2000; Trolander 1991)

In the early 1900s the movement began to gain foothold in many Western European countries. The first Nordic settlements (known in Sweden as ‘hemgårder’) were founded in 1912 in Stockholm (Birkagården) and Copenhagen (Kristeligt Studenter-Settlement). The ideas of settlement work spread to Finland in the early 1900s due to the efforts of some Christian-socialists of the Lutheran church. Industrial localities became a special focus of attention; English ideas of settlement work were used in the evangelisation work that was started at these
localities. The Kalliola Settlement was founded in Helsinki in 1919. (Olson 1982, 120-122)

In the Nordic context, Swedish settlement work established very early on, i.e. in the beginning of the 1900s, close connections with social work through the national union of social work (Centrallösningen för Socialt Arbete, CSA) and this provided the settlements with a possibility to take part in the prevalent national socio-political discussion. Among other things, the union arranged lecture series about social issues and gave social and legal guidance. It also sought to have an influence through the journal Social Tidsskrift and took initiatives in favour of starting education in social work (Socialpolitiska institutet, now Socialhögskolan) and participated in the investigation and research work conducted with the purpose of developing legislation. (Olson 1982, 29-30)

The first Nordic conference on settlement work was held in 1931 at the initiative of Birkagården. Some of the themes tackled were the relationship between settlements and religion, on the one hand, and settlements and politics, on the other. On the whole, the 1930s was a period in which many new settlements were founded in the Nordic countries, resulting in a network of settlements. Four Nordic Settlement Meetings were arranged during the decade and contacts were also otherwise frequent. (Olson 1982, 122)

There is very little Nordic research literature available on settlement work (however, see e.g. the above Olson 1982 and Mattsson 1986). In the context of socially committed work the ideological examination of Haluk Soydan (1993) is of particular interest; the central features of settlement work can be categorised on the basis of his work as six theses – that carry on the heritage of the American ‘model settlement’ Hull House:

1. Neighbours, not benefactors
The idea of *neighbourliness* rather than that of charity work characterises settlement work. Beginning with the very first settlement, Toynbee Hall, settlement workers have sought to reduce class distinction, mitigate mutual suspicion and diminish the social distance between the polarised social groups (Davis 1984). Detachment from the paternalist charity work tradition connects settlement work with the empowerment tradition of social work, which seeks to respond to the needs of communities, as well as encouraging individuals to act in peer networks. An empowerment interpretation draws one’s attention to the client’s resources: even the most marginalised person is not only a tangle of problems but has various resources for improving his or her situation. Such metaphors as ‘initiator of change’, ‘healer’ and ‘survivor’ are used of the ‘clients’, instead of classifying them according to the various problem categories. (Simon 1994; see also Satka 1993)

2. Personal relationship with the neighbours
The principle of neighbourliness contains the idea of learning to know the people and their living conditions through a *personal connection* with them and by familiarising oneself with their living conditions. Behind the principle is the idea that people who know one another also trust one another. Even though most of the day-to-day work of the early settlement days was educating and enlightening the poor, settlement workers believed that the reciprocal relationship was beneficial to both parties. The people of the neighbourhood benefited from interaction with the more educated and culturally sophisticated settlement workers, and the neighbourhood in turn offered an action field and an opportunity for personal growth to settlement workers. The task of the educated settlement workers was to provide a link between the poor neighbourhoods and the wider society. (Davis 1984; Stivers 2000, 57; Trolander 1991)

3. Socially committed work cherishes also aesthetic values
The third feature of settlement work has to do with its holistic approach: *aesthetics* and *socio-cultural activities* are considered to be part of social work. Besides providing common kitchens and enlightenment, settlement houses used to function as the cultural centres of the neighbourhoods. They served as forums for displaying the special cultural and ethnic features of the local inhabitants in the form of music, dance, painting, poetry, literature and handicraft. (Davis 1984, 88-90; see Soydan 1993)

4. Reforms instead of moralising!
In the ideological history of social work, settlement work represents the roots of social justice, as opposed to the charity work tradition that emphasises the moral responsibility of an individual (Haynes & White 1999; Soydan 1993). In the examinations on the traditions of Finnish voluntary work, the work carried out by settlements has been placed near civil soci-
ety and NGO’s in order to make a distinction between settlement work and Christian charity work. Unlike caritative work, settlement work has emphasised mutual support and reciprocity, as well as the necessity of social change work. Individual-based helping is not considered sufficient, public and communal responsibility is instead emphasised. The work done in settlements has, however, not been regarded as the kind of organisational work that is based on pure mutualism in the way self-help groups function. Instead, it has been placed in the category of ‘we-for-you’/’I-for-you’, like the work done by other philanthropic organisations and organisations based on a ‘civil society’ ideology. The different traditions of helping base their work on different kind of knowledge. In the ‘we-for-you’/’I-for-you’ organisations and self-help groups, experience-based subjective knowledge is underlined, in voluntary work layman knowledge and common sense, and in professional work expert knowledge. Experience-based knowledge and layman knowledge are closer to households and the unofficial sector, and professional knowledge in turn closer to the public sector and market economy. While the work of self-help groups is based on horizontal, grass-roots level peer support, voluntary and official help is founded on vertical, from top down helping work. (Nylund 2000 a and b)

5. The reasons for social problems to be found in society, not in the moral weakness of the individual

The pioneers of the settlement movement believed that the reasons for social problems could be found in the structures of society and in people’s living conditions. In the ideological history of social work (Soydan 1993), settlement work has been placed under the heading ‘structural social work’. If we want to change the existing evils, we have to look for the causes in the social circumstances, not in the moral weakness of individuals and groups of people in need of help.

The work approach of settlements has risen
from a personal familiarity with the day-to-day life of communities, not from any theoretical principles. Problems are identified and defined at the grass-roots level, together with the people involved. (Soydan 1993)

The interest in the day-to-day life of local communities led to political activity at the local level, as well as the national and international levels. Because of their structural visions, settlements did not want to think that the role of the government was a threat to individual freedom, nor was it to provide last-resort services, but rather its central role was to safeguard citizens’ social rights. (Stivers 2000, 60)

6. Research is needed!

Right from the beginning, settlement work has had close connections with universities, especially with social scientists. This is very understandable, as many of the first settlements were university settlements. The Hull House Settlement, for example, conducted research into the local neighbourhood and the whole city in order to promote reforms: compilation of statistics, charting and participatory observation were a necessary prerequisite for the activities and for reforms at a time when there was very little reliable information available on the nature and extent of existing social problems. The research approach was pragmatic: research reports were used to chart problems and to convince authorities. Articles and books written by settlement workers were the only source of information to representatives of urban life outside of the settlement movement. Increasing experience made the research reports more detailed and sophisticated, but the tables and graphic manner of presentation did not necessarily make them objective. In spite of the fact that the surveys carried out by settlements have afterwards been criticised as being distorted by stereotypes and sentimentality, they are still valuable because of their emphatic attitude towards the described groups of people as fellow-men. Even though settlement workers, like other urban researchers, venturing on foreign ground, they did have a clear home ground advantage in relation to the other researchers, and it was their permanent address in the neighbourhood: the settlement. (Davis 1984, 170-174)

Historical connection in Finland

There is a very close historical connection between settlement work and social work in Finland, and the recent societal discussion has further strengthened this connection. Historically, i.e. until the development of welfare state social work policies, settlement work has been part of socially committed work, organised by various citizen groups, as well as the state and municipalities.

Starting in the period between the world wars, the division of labour has in Finland been between remedy work and preventive work, so that public organisations have been responsible for the remedy work and private ones for the preventive work. The work forms of settlements, such as the Kalliola Settlement, were evangelisation, deacon work and social work, versatile educational work and youth work. Settlements were characteristically flexible and adapted to the local circumstances. Some settlements ran kindergartens or child health clinics, some opened work centres in the 1920s. This work received considerable government subsidies. (Satka 1994, 273-275)

As a consequence of the wartime, the number of professionals involved in socially committed work increased, and the relation between official and voluntary work changed. The work of voluntary organisations was seen as exceptional measures which supplemented the primary municipal services, and the aim was to intensify this work and increase collaboration with the public sector. (Satka 1994, 286, 300, 302)

From the 1970s on the concept of social work has been used as the only concept denoting all the welfare work and socially committed work carried out by the public sector. Because of the new development within the movement to provide adult education and guided recreational activities, the settlement movement lost some of its relevance when faced with the challenges of the 1960s and ‘70s. (Satka 1994, 305, 327)

Since the late 1980s, a great change has taken place in the social work provided by the Finnish welfare state. Although the strengthening of communal strategies has been the general tendency in all of Europe, in Finland it has meant a step back to the early 1900s, when voluntary and private social work used to be an intrinsic part of socially committed work, like it is again today. (Ibid., 334) The Finnish Federation of Settlements responded to the new challenges by launching four projects, which sought to develop voluntary work, socially committed work, new employment opportunities and communal work. The projects responded to the big issues of post-modern society: the re-interpretation of the profession, of citizenship and of politics. These same issues were topical already in the early
days of industrialisation, at the time settlement work too sought to answer the challenges they presented by helping build social capital (see e.g. Putnam 2000) in urban societies. As development work progressed, more and more attention was given to supporting people’s resources by communal means. (Roivainen 2001, 94-95)

The project ‘New Community Work’ – and its conclusions

‘New Community Work’ was a three-year project carried out to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Finnish Federation of Settlements. Three settlements were chosen for the project: the Kisko Clinics of the Kalliola Settlement in Southern Finland, which concentrated on community care for drug abusers; the Rovala Settlement in Rovaniemi in Northern Finland, which focused on developing collaboration between the settlement and the city in the provision of services for special groups; and the Naapuri (Finnish for ‘neighbour’) Settlement in Tampere, which was based on socio-pedagogical ideas. Three Departments of Social Policy of three Universities – of Helsinki, Lapland and Tampere – carried out the project in collaboration.

The conclusions of the New Community Work development project state, for example, that the Rovala settlement had established a firm position in the city of Rovaniemi as a provider of services that were being outsourced. Organisations were considered to have an important role, as they supplemented the existing services and developed innovative work forms. In this division of labour, the task of the municipality was to co-ordinate all the activities and to control the quality of outsourced services. The strength of settlement work – and of organisational work in general – was considered to be its small scale, its citizen-centred activities and its innovative reform capacity, when compared with official work. (Kemppainen 2001, 22-38)

The Naapuri Settlement in Tampere was started in the societal situation of the early 1990s, at a time when the role of the third sector as the partner of the public sector was strengthening. Besides voluntary work, the young settlement chose to focus on therapy work, support measures for out-patient care of young people and families with children, social economy and supported housing. The field workers of the Naapuri Settlement constituted a network of ‘buffer professionals’ between the clients of social services and the authorities, and this arrangement created new practices in the field of social work. To guarantee a more permanent funding than what the project provided, the settlement sought to form partnerships with both the city of Tampere and the local congregations by arranging outsourcing of services for them. (Roivainen 2001, 39-64)

An ethnography of the Kisko Clinics (Kylmälä 2001) suggested that when the members of a community have feelings of belonging in micro-level interaction and activities, this supports their experience of life management and vitality. The daily routines of the care community and the treating methods were such that there was room for both collaboration and subjective reflection. (Ibid., 65-86).

The conclusions of the project include a suggestion that settlements should bind themselves more closely to the ideological premises of settlement work. The essential in settlement work is to retain the viewpoint of a fellow-citizen and neighbour, not that of a ruler and bureaucrat. This should also be evident in the future in the methods of carrying out the work. In a situation in which official social work has very little resources for doing field work, settlement workers can function as field and neighbourhood workers, who are easily available ‘here and now’ without an appointment or queuing. They function – as the workers of the Naapuri Settlement put it – ‘as professionals, but not as authorities’. Since they function as ‘feelers’ or ‘buffer professionals’, it is perhaps easier for people to approach them than it is to go to see a social worker who works in the official social bureaucracy. Today’s settlements can function as low-threshold service points, as street-level bureaucracies and mediators between clients and social workers. Settlement workers’ relationship with both their clients and with social workers is characteristically unofficial, while the relationship between a social worker and a client tends to remain official in the present production-centred situation. (Roivainen 2001, 53-55 ; see also Karisto & Karjalainen 2000, 184: Karjalainen 2000)

Another dimension of settlement work has to do with empowerment: the aim is to find hope and enliven the spirit in a community where the views of the future are predominantly pessimistic and labelled by despair and submission to fate. When we think about today’s settlement work, we have to understand good neighbourly relations in their time-bound context. In this post-modern society of quick connections and community forms that go beyond the traditional neighbourly relations, it is essential to understand the core of the idea and metaphor
of neighbourliness. Having neighbours means above all having peers and horizontal interactional relations. Neighbourly relations are also communal and reciprocal. Neighbours are not reduced to helpees only, but can also be helpers in their turn. In spite of the increasing professionalism and the collaborative relationship with authorities, settlement work should retain its ‘neighbourly’ attitude and viewpoint to matters. The encountered persons are above all ‘fellow-men’, whose issues and views settlement workers represent and promote. It is especially important to retain this view as the premise of settlement work in a societal situation in which individual responsibility is underlined also when social benefits are being redefined. There is a danger that settlements – as representatives of the third sector – have to yield to ‘economic rationales’ and bend their ideological ‘ethical rationales’ when seeking to comply with the demands for results placed to them. (Roivainen 2001, 54-55)

Research is still needed in settlement work. Authorities accumulate official knowledge, ‘first knowledge’, for their own needs, but beside that settlements need ‘second knowledge’, which is generated from the viewpoint of citizens (see Karjalainen & Saranpää 2002).

Citizen-centred work forms and local democracy are challenging settlement work to do the kind of work that is based on its own ideological premises. Work in communities, in a housing estate under reconstruction for example, is a concrete challenge to the socially committed work of settlements. But work in smaller communities and groups is also part of settlement work: various peer groups from therapeutic support groups to the action arenas of voluntary workers could more consciously seek a settlement identity for themselves. Settlement work is also done with individuals, but the individual should then always be understood as part of his or her community. In their projects against marginalisation, for example, settlements could consciously develop communal ways of preventive and other work. (Roivainen 2001, 93-94)

In its collaboration with official social work, settlement work could find its place and profile in preventive work and in the co-ordination of voluntary work. The cultural and pedagogic elements that have traditionally been part of settlement work could be consciously developed as part of a holistic approach. Whereas official social work focuses on issues of social well-being, on remedying various social problems and on ‘heavy weight’ professional social work, settlements should in turn direct their work universally to the whole population, not only to the disadvantaged. The adult education and guided recreational activities that settlements have been providing could, for example, have an important role as a ‘third area’ with the function of preventing social problems in advance (see Karisto 1994) and strengthening people’s human and social capital. In their search for new approaches, settlements could try to find points which officials and professionals do not reach yet. One example of this are the ‘buffer professionals’ who are placed in the intermediate zone between the authorities and the citizens. Settlement work could also seek to find alternative interpretations and re-definitions for marginalisation. Substance abuse treatment, for example, could allow for some room between the two extremes of well and ill for suffering from an addiction all through one’s life, or housing service for a life without much accomplishment. (Roivainen 2001, 93)

There is, however, in a welfare state an increasing market for action policies focusing on the life of the marginalised, as the public sector is shifting the ‘care’ of the mariginalised on to the third sector by using EU funding. From the point of view of settlement work, the problem with this ‘residual model’ is that the ‘from top down’ model of authorities and clients follows along. Helping the marginalised is such heavy weight social work that it inevitably calls for professional knowledge, unless the work is consciously constructed from bottom up. (Roivainen 2001, 55; see Roivainen 2002b)

**Glorious past, promising future?**

Settlements around the world still offer community-based work forms and social activities to the poor in neighbourhoods. However, the 1990s brought a new development in which public funding to settlements was reduced and the condition for getting it was that the settlement provided services to specific problem groups, such as the unemployed, the illiterate, the families with domestic violence. This condition for funding has, however, been said to be in sharp conflict with the co-ordinated community-based helping work with a wide coverage that settlements have traditionally been implementing. There is a danger that settlements will begin to more and more resemble their financiers because of their specialised personnel and categorical programmes. They are in this way primarily responding to the demands and control of the financing party, rather than responding – according to the original idea of set-
Settlement work – carrying out socially committed work

tlement work – to the changing circumstances in the neighbourhood. A teenage mother with a drug addiction might need guidance in child care, help in finishing comprehensive school or in training herself for working life, but none of the individual projects targeted at ‘problem groups’ addresses her needs holistically. Local settlements have consciously started to reverse the development described above. In the early 1990s the settlements of New York City launched a collaborative project which sought to integrate the services provided by the settlements, to intensify collaboration between the different settlement houses and to copy the programmes created in them. (Marks, 1993, 24-26)

One of the projects of this initiative was a day care programme in which local settlement houses joined their resources in the provision of day care services. The settlements had a joint annual calendar, which facilitated rationalisation of service provision, on the one hand, and resulted in cost savings, on the other, because of joint staff and premises. Service users benefited from the arrangement, which not only made extended and flexible service hours possible but also facilitated family work, which combined various services: social, health and educational services. Together the settlements co-ordinated and conducted preventive work, provided care and support services and cultural and other recreational activities for different age groups. The real resource of settlements proved to be that they were genuinely present in the community through their workers and activities: expertise on communities makes settlements valuable partners for the public sector. In their collaboration with the official sector, settlements have taken on the responsibility for preventive work and community-based activities, as well as intensive work with individual families. (Kraus & Chaudry 1995)

The premise of their work makes settlements fit well to the current development trends of the welfare state. In the present situation, settlements’ greatest resource seems to be that they can often combine private funding with public, as well as the use of professional work force with voluntary. The neighbourhood-centredness of settlement work has proved to be an asset when social services are being decentralised. It is believed that they can – as private and non-profit making associations – reduce the distance between the rich and the poor in a neighbourhood with their activities. Settlements are hence a resource to present social policies. Unlike the categorical programmes of social well-being – employment services, mental health guidance, treatment of substance abuse, etc. – settlements are not there to help only specific problem groups and give services only to clients identified as deviant and problematic. On the contrary: settlements seek to be recreational, educational and cultural institutions in their communities. Settlement ideology contains the idea of serving as the living room of the community where everyone can come with their needs. Instead of giving direct guidance, people are being helped by encouraging them to take part in the life of the neighbourhood. This is the means to retain a citizen point of view and to avoid hierarchical helper-helpee arrangements. (Husock 1993)

Private, non-profit making service providers

The truth is, however, that settlements have been forced to resort to subsidies and they have functioned as private, non-profit making service providers for specific groups. By doing this, they have anyway been able to safeguard those activities to which they cannot receive direct public funding. Even though history underlines the role of the settlement movement as a spearhead for progressive societal policies and reforms, it is still somewhat problematic to interpret its role so that it is reduced to that of an enlightened advocator of the welfare state. If such were the case, its only option would be to wither away or to confine its efforts to lobbying new public anti-poverty initiatives. It is true that settlement houses can one-sidedly be seen as multi-purpose service centres, but this interpretation dismisses many of the most essential features of the settlement movement, such as building a connection between the different social groups, or the genuine commitment to the day-to-day life of the community. (Husock 1993)

The basic ideas of the settlement movement are still to be found in the Nordic descriptions of the present settlements. Their homepages give the impression that they appreciate these basic ideas as part of their service concept and brand name. The activities of Birkagården still underline the idea of the settlement as a resource of the local community: they seek to respond to social issues at the local level, using the skills of common people and self-help. The thought of bridging the gap between different social, religious and age groups at the local as well as global level is becoming more and more topical. Another keyword beside solidarity is integration – a counter force to the segregation programmes described above. The Danish set-
In conclusion

Even though today’s settlement work differs in many ways from the tradition of settlement work with its service provision obligations and its emergency work that is more and more resembling charity work, the classic features of the settlement movement can still be revived. The ideological background of settlements is based on a humanistic view of man, in which individuals are seen as active and creative actors in their local communities. The task of settlements is to make socially committed work easier in local communities and to offer social, cultural and educational opportunities. Settlements develop new strategies and methods in the field of social work, with the purpose of furthering the integration of individuals and communities to the society at large by means of collaboration between citizens, both voluntary and professional. Settlements still appeal to wide groups of people at certain localities, not only to those with special problems. While the public sector seeks to allocate its socio-political funding to programmes that are built around specific social problems, settlements continue the kind of work in neighbourhoods that helps maintain well-being. Therefore, they do not offer, say, ‘drug-free programmes’ but rather ‘cooking clubs’ that are open for everyone. The aim is to offer not ‘vocational guidance’ but pastimes that promote ‘friendship’. Traditionally settlements have raised new generations to a community in which everyone is responsible for his or her acts. An additional asset that settlements have are the premises that can be used for different purposes and events. (Husock 1993)

Translation into English: Pirjo Kuuselo

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Translation into English: Pirjo Kuuselo
Settlement work – carrying out socially committed work

Settlements have long traditions of carrying out socially committed work even in the Nordic countries. With the concept of socially committed work I refer to the work primarily arranged by various organisations that is wide in scope and content and carried out by voluntary or professional workers. The article begins with an examination of the ideological background of settlement work, against which the author mirrors the findings of the New Community Work development project of the Finnish Federation of Settlements. Their premises make settlements fit well with the current development trends of the welfare state, thus constituting a resource for the present social policy. However, categorical programmes of social well-being are problematic, as they are in conflict with the ideological heritage of settlement work, which emphasizes increasing integration between different groups both locally and globally, as well as companionship with civil society.

Félagslegt starf á vettvangi

Félagslegt starf sem innt er af hendi úti medal fólks á sér langa hefði, einnig á Norðurlöndum. Með þessu er átt við starf á vegum ymiss konar samtaka sem nær því breytir sig og er unnið af sjálfboðið eða launuðu fugfókli. Í greininni er fyrst kennarleg hognýdargrundið. Félagslegt starf á vettvangi þar sem þau stríða gegn hugmyndafélagið, stúrlegleg vettvangsstarfsstofnun og í ljós þess eru áttaugur náður að við starf sem þá stríða gegn hognýdargrundvöllur. Hins vegar skapað er félagslegur mikill bæði staðbundna og á heimsvísu, og að vera í námu sambandi við almenning í starfi sínu.

Setlementitýó sosiaalisen työn toteuttajana