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***From the “elite” rebellion to the “knowledge” rebellion.
What does introducing of family assistantship say
about routine in social work?
The Polish case***

Abstract

The topic of the article is family assistantship — a new form of family support, implemented in Poland as part of grassroots initiatives of non-governmental organizations and social assistance organizational units, in the period preceding the adoption of the Act on family support and foster care system (act)². The appointment of a new professional role, the family assistant, in the social assistance system, or more broadly — in the context of care and assistance — was a real challenge to the current practices supporting the family in Poland: tasks, well-established forms of support, as well as the expectations and interests of helpers’ professional environments, administration, local authority and other groups. The purpose of the sociological analysis of the processes of conceptualizing and implementing family assistantship in the social assistance system is to justify the thesis that family assistantship in the years 1990–2011 can be seen as a normative innovation

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² The analyzed period is the 1990s until the end of 2011.

(adaptive strategy) in social assistance and social work, which was a consequence of the revolt against the appearance of goals of social assistance and social work, and a response to the expectation of effective action, directed from various sides to social assistance, including from the professional environment of social workers, more and more active in the educational sphere. Also social policy, since the 1990s interested in the issue of the effectiveness of social assistance and social activity, has become an “external” source of inspiration for the institutional change introduced, which was the work of the (social) family assistant and its organizational model. In the presented text I am looking for answers to two questions: 1) what are the characteristic features of family assistantship as normative innovation? 2) what was the social order destabilisation in the years 1990–2011, incurred by including family assistantship in routine practices in social assistance centres? In preparing this study, I used my own research, observation and professional experience, as well as research carried out by other authors. In addition to the main goal, this article also pursues a minor goal. It is an attempt to synthesize dispersed empirical material on the subject of family assistantship, as well as the results of research relating to the processes of implementing institutional change, in an important context of care and assistance that is underrated in sociological reflection.

Key words: social work, social assistance, family assistantship, normative innovation, rebellion

Introduction

The presented analysis concerns the early period of development of social work with the family in the institutional and organizational framework of social assistance in Poland. During this period, major legal changes took place between the end of 1990 and mid-2011³, which resulted in the emergence of new professional functions and roles, and even role complexes⁴, directly or indirectly (through supervision, control, consulting, training, counselling) related to social work. One of these new roles was the role of family assistant. Establishing this professional role in a social welfare institution was a political decision,

³ In the article I refer to the following changes in the structure and functioning of social assistance — the first amendment introduced by the Act on social assistance of November 29, 1990 (uops); the second change took place in 1999: commune social assistance centers and voivodship social assistance teams set up by the Act on social assistance of 1990, were replaced by a decentralized social assistance system (in addition to commune social assistance centers, poviats family assistance centers and regional centers of social policy, and voivods mainly left supervisory and control functions); the third change consisted in excluding some of the actions directed at families with care and upbringing problems and helplessness in running a household and assigning tasks in this field to the cited Act on family support and foster care system (Uowr), the role of a family assistant (Raclaw & Trawkowska, 2015; for all signaled changes, see Rymza, 2013, pp. 221–258).

⁴ Such a role complex is a set of roles, seen from the perspective of an assistant or social worker. For the structure of the team of roles of a social worker, see D. Trawkowska, 2006, pp. 221–245.

the result of the adoption of the act on supporting the family and the foster care system (Act on family support, Journal of Laws of 2011, No. 149, item 887), which entered into force on 1 January, 2012, the new law regulated the scope and forms of care of the state for children and families who were experiencing difficulties in fulfilling their caring and educational functions. “The Act introduced systemic solutions which, through intensive prevention and work with the family, contribute to improving the quality of care and educational functions of these families and, consequently, prevent the placement of children in foster care”⁵. The role of a family assistant was one of many changes introduced to the social assistance system through the act⁶. Introducing it to the social assistance system, disregarding previous experience of social assistance centres as well as non-governmental and religious organizations, indicates the politicization of the family, social assistance and social work. This does not mean that the political decision of 2011, introducing the act, was substantively unjustified, taking into account both the axiological assumptions of the reform of the child and family assistance system, assumptions as to how to organize and coordinate activities in the system (Rymsza, 2011a, pp. 123–144) and the scale of care and upbringing problems, and in running a household in families. The scale and intensity of various manifestations of the dysfunctionality of families raising children present in the social assistance system before its reform (in 1990–1999, before the inclusion of foster care in social assistance in 2000) and after its reform (after excluding foster care from the social assistance system), as of January 1, 2012, was partially disclosed in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy statistics and in research conducted for the use of local strategies for solving social problems, as well as in scientific research on the social assistance system and the foster care subsystem operating after 2000 within its boundaries (Raclaw, 2017). But the neglected, very often superficial, prepared without a concept, social diagnosis of families with problems with caring, education and running a household, made it impossible to determine the actual scale, intensity and specificity of the phenomena accompanying the consequences of social problems in families and in local communities⁷. The act on family support gave hope to social actors involved in the planned changes of the system to improve this situation, because it valued the forgotten link and the basic mechanism of coordination of the social assistance system — social work with family. Unfortunately, Poland did not create its own concept of social work with the family, but only its substitutes. These were “good practices” in supporting

⁵ Information of the Council of Ministers on the implementation in 2012 of the Act of 9th of June 2011 on family support and foster care system (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 135, as amended), p. 4.

⁶ The Act regulated the following issues: 1) environmental prevention for families experiencing difficulties in fulfilling their caring and educational functions; 2) family foster care; 3) institutional foster care; 4) empowerment of adult foster care children; 5) adoption procedures; 6) tasks of public administration in supporting the family and the foster care system; 7) the financing rules of the introduced system.

⁷ See Trawkowska, 2011a, pp. 35–45 and more on the disadvantages of local strategies for solving social problems, see Krzyszkowski, 2005, pp. 333–348; Trawkowska [2009], pp. 297–311; Hryniewicka & Lipke [2009], pp. 270–296.

families with various functioning problems, system projects prepared by public and non-governmental social assistance under the Human Capital Operational Program (Niesporek & Szarfenberg 2011, p. 213).

Since 2012, the family assistant has become not so much an entity as an object of intense interest of local and regional authorities, basic institutions protecting and supporting families, practitioners employed in social assistance, families benefiting from their assistance, and representatives of the scientific community: educators, psychologists, and sociologists, social politicians and representatives of other disciplines.

Grassroots creation of projects to assist families

The experience of specific organizations in working with social projects were, although to a different extent, premises for changing standards and methods (forms) of implementing specific policies⁸. The scientific literature draws attention to the importance of *frontline practices*⁹ for changes in social policy, because scientific research shows that these practices, being shaped by a set of social context/s in which they were rooted (e.g. care and assistance context, work context), include, among others features of formal policies related to this context(s). Frontline practices research reveal the real impact of social policy and specific policies on people's lives, at the same time providing information on the attitude of employees to clients, the treatment of clients and services rendered to them, in terms of the results set and in terms of results actually implemented (van Berkel, 2017, pp. 12–35). In addition, thanks to the study of practices “at street level”, we are able to approach the indication of accurate indicators omitted in the analyses of the quality of services of their social dimension¹⁰. These reasons are sufficient to look closely at family assistantship practices before the entry into force of the Act.

Undoubtedly, family assistantship projects emerging in Poland were of a grassroots nature. Such projects emerged spontaneously and, as practice-based models of coping with helping families, as evidenced by analysing the literature and other existing materials, **they emerged independently of each other** in the activities of non-governmental organizations, institutional foster care (Owczaruk, 2008) and in municipal social assistance centres (Raclaw & Trawkowska, 2018). Similarly to implementing other models of social work with the family in social assistance (Trawkowska, 2013/2014), family assistance projects were also insular. Their creation was fostered by: charismatic leaders being present in organisations operating in the social assistance system (in the public and non-governmental social assistance sector), the assistance organisations' potential and human and social

⁸ In my opinion, in the light of my own, research and expert experience, the impact of the experience of the third sector organizations in Poland on the processes of standardizing social work, creating a model of the Polish model of social economy and crisis intervention model was clearly visible.

⁹ Also translated as “direct work experience with the client”, “first line practice”, “street level” practice, from information obtained from prof. A. Karwacki.

¹⁰ On the social dimension of the quality of services in care see Raclaw, 2015, pp. 312–328.

capital launched as part of informal and formal cooperation in local environments based on implementing the joint projects.

It should be emphasized at this point that assistantship as a form of assistance was addressed to various categories social assistance beneficiaries of, and families became one of the many beneficiaries of this form of support, along with people with disabilities, the elderly, the homeless, and representatives of other sociological categories.

Referring to specific undertakings, illustrating the “grassroots agency”, it is necessary to mention here a few different initiatives to appoint a family assistant, starting from the 90s of the 20th century. Federation for Social Reintegration, Powiślańska Social Foundation, Powiślański Social Society, Psycho-Preventive Society branch in Warsaw, implemented the project “Partnership for development”: Second Chance in the years 2005–2008, whose main result was developing and implementing a family assistant operation model¹¹. Works on this model were preceded by experiences gained by Marek Liciński in assisting families in the 90s. The experience collected by the Federation was then used in developing a social work with family standard model (Krasiejko, 2016).

The first concept of family assistance developed and implemented after 1990 by the social assistance centre took place in Ruda Śląska. Its authors were directors, managers and employees of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre (Polish: MOPS) in Ruda Śląska. The project of socialization of multi-problem families began in July 2005. The project proposed by MOPS in Ruda was based on the cooperation of MOPS, other municipal social support institutions and trainers from the Association of Saint Philip Nereus, which was established at the Halembian parish dedicated to Christmas. This project, in its conceptual layer, referred to the model of social and educational work with the family, which included training: hygienic, nutritional, budget (conducted at home, family, trainers from the Association), social work with an individual case based on a social contract, the use of teamwork (interdisciplinary teams) at the stage of family diagnosis and assistance planning and other forms of work (legal, psychological and pedagogical counselling), mediation, training in improving communication in families) this range of various activities was supervised by MOPS employees. By resolution No. 786/XLI/2005 of the City Council in Ruda Śląska of 19 May 2005, the project was approved for implementation (Trawkowska, 2010a). The effects of work were subject to ongoing evaluation (Dziedzic & Polczyk, 2010, pp. 217–223).

Among the many different projects implemented until mid-2011, in which the concept of family assistants appeared, the most famous is the project “Family closer to each other”, implemented by MOPS in Gdynia. Numerous publications and conferences systematically organized by this centre, bringing together practitioners, theoreticians and local authorities representatives of, have contributed to the publicity and dissemination of interesting and positive results of the Gdynia family assistantship project and other assistantship models (assistant for the disabled, the homeless).

¹¹ M. Liciński, *Family assistance*. The project implemented from June 2005 to March 2008 as part of PIW EQUAL CIP, after Krasiejko, 2016, p. 5.

The assistantship model prepared and tested in Gdynia (Rudnik, 2013; Szpunar, 2010; Szpunar, 2011) is an attractive model for the more prosperous communities such as town cities. This model assumes a tripartite division of social work (Józefczyk, 2011, pp. 3–18), under which its authors understand the impact through social work, conducted by family assistants as well as social workers and social work specialists, in three fields. The field of social prevention, characterized as a set of activities undertaken in order to create conditions for proper functioning (optimal for a given person/environment), enabling access to environmental resources, strengthening the person/environment's independence and activity of the. According to the creators of the concept, a set of activities of social prevention is a necessary element of the concept of social work related to each social level.

The second field, social intervention, means a set of rescue actions taken and implemented in the face of a direct threat to the social and individual crisis, including health and even life. These activities are characterized by the intensity of support in various forms, it is assumed that various forms of social coercion may be applied to the beneficiaries of support. They have the character of deep interference in the family environment.

The third field includes a set of interactions, defined as social reintegration, supporting family members in rebuilding or maintaining the ability to participate in the life of the local community and perform social roles (family, professional, other roles in the community). The specialists undertaking the activities include assessment of the intensity of interactions in this phase, assessment of the variety of support offer required in this phase and assessment of the comprehensiveness of this offer.

Three fields of activity correspond to three levels of social work. Regular social work is carried out in the field of prevention and in the field of social reintegration, in the final phase of reintegration. As the authors of the concept note, this type of impact applies to most environments covered by social assistance in Gdynia, it can and should be taken by social workers specializing in the prevention and consolidation of reintegration effects, as well as by people less experienced in social work, for whom regular social work is a field of training and improvement in methodical operation. In-depth social work is the type of impact that aims to prevent a crisis or support the family's recovery from the crisis and to take the first stage of family integration into the living environment. In practice, out of about 60 families who were assisted by social workers, 6–7 families were covered by this type of interaction, which meant: in-depth diagnosis, contracting, offering a wider range of forms of support to these families, and an extensive system for monitoring and assessing progress in working with family. Social workers conducting in-depth social work are supported with trainings and have additional bonuses for achieving the goals in the social contract.

Intensive social work requires the highest competence. In the Gdynia model, it was called assistantship¹². The assistant provided support to 6-8 families, also being

¹² After the project "Family closer to each other" in 2013, on the basis of the Project Team, the Intensive Social Work with the Family Team was established, which employs social work specialists (in 2020 — 18 people). They carry out activities with families motivated to change, as part of Intensive Social Work (IPS), see Łangowska, 2013, pp. 235–247. In addition, MOPS employs assistants based on the applicable legal regulations (Act on family support, Act "For life"). 10 family

a supporter himself. Assistants were supported through training, supervision, preparation of appropriate diagnostic tools, and unconventional forms of support¹³ and teamwork. A characteristic feature of the Gdynia model, which in the organizational space links the work of social workers with the work of family assistants, is:

- combining various areas of different impacts: prevention, rescue and reintegration into a coherent concept of support for a multi-problem family,
- embedding this concept in organizational reality (scopes of tasks, activities, job description, diversity of groups in the organization, MOPS procedures),
- using a variety of tools, based on objective criteria, that make it possible — to address assistance, e.g. the use of the Kurcman Matrix (Józefczyk, 2011, p. 6) to segment service recipients, which allows increasing the relevance of the support offer,
- developing own necessary tools for diagnosing the state of the family environment and the resources of the living environment (Miller & Łangowska, 2013),
- using various types of evaluation, including: *ex-ante*, *on-going*, *ex-post*, to evaluate actions taken, conducting systematic evaluation, thanks to which the forms of support present in three areas of social work were improved,
- using teamwork and group work in various forms, including environmental work models to help multi-problem families. These models perform the intended functions of rooting the results and effects of social work with families,
- systematic launching of reflection on the conditions, course and results of implemented projects.

The concept of family support or, in other words, the model of family support adopted in Gdynia, is, in my opinion, the ideal Weberian type useful in practice and identified as a reference type¹⁴. It contains assumptions and remarks on what in the created activity (social work with families) “should be, what is important for it as permanently valuable” (Weber, 1985, p. 87). If we treat the Gdynia model of family assistantship as a reference model in the Weberian sense, the authors of this model strongly emphasize the organizational context of the solutions implemented in MOPS in Gdynia. The organizational aspect is a thread hidden in research on family assistantship. A much more explicit research thread is the substantive thread, related to the objectives of the assistant’s work, ways of achieving them and the accompanying difficulties (cf. among others Kornaszewska-Polak, 2016; Krasiejko, 2010, 2013, 2016; Rudnik, 2013; Szpunar, 2010, 2011; Zaborowska, 2016; Żukiewicz, 2011).

assistants work for non-motivated families in 4 District Social Welfare Centers in Gdynia. Actions towards families are undertaken as part of cooperating departments with separate scope of tasks

¹³ A more detailed discussion of unconventional forms of support for social workers and family assistants at MOPS in Gdynia exceeds the scope of this study.

¹⁴ On the application of reference types in social assistance and the differences between Weber’s ideal and reference types in relation to good practices, see comments of Rymsza, 2014, p. 11.

Research prepared and conducted by Monika Rudnik as part of work on the Gdynia concept of family assistance¹⁵ made it possible to formulate preliminary conclusions about the process of creating the role of a family assistant in social support institutions, in the social assistance system.

- The first experiences with introducing this form of family support took place before launching funding from POKL¹⁶ (Rudnik, 2010, p. 33). Social welfare centers in Ruda Śląska and Częstochowa financed it from city budgets, PCPR in Koszalin and centers from Olsztyn¹⁷ obtained money from MPiPS departmental programs. From 2006 in Sopot and Elbląg, the assistantship was introduced with a pilot program to these social assistance centers.
- The opening of funding from POKL in 2007–2013 has spread the presence of family assistantship as a new form of family support.
- In 2010, 25 locations were found in Poland, where family assistantship was run, usually as part of system projects. The scope of assistants' activities, their location in the organizational structure, work load (number of families), preparation of assistants for work in families and ways of supporting them in professional activities were tested.¹⁸
- The next step in "solidifying" the assistantship was placing this form of support in the local child and family support system, created by social assistance organizations (OPS, PCPR), which meant the division of tasks in the field of family support, between representatives of various groups (social workers, assistants, social work specialists), support directing and management. The experience of MOPS in Gdynia resulted in the need to have significant competence in project management by center managers and project managers, as well as to improve these competences so that the tasks related to the implementation of assistance can be completed (Józefczyk, 2013, pp. 17–44).
- At the stage of projects on implementation and dissemination of family assistantship, it was necessary to develop the 'own' concept of supporting families using the help of assistants and social workers, as well as representatives of other assistance professions. As the examples of Gdynia and Ruda Śląska show, the concepts were directly related to change implementation projects (family assistantship). The concepts of family support, qualified as the best practices, had two dimensions: substantive and organizational (Trawkowska, 2012a). Both dimensions contain important assumptions made in the construction of *reference model*. In the first (substantive) dimension, the essence of social work was defined, its axiological and methodological foundations,

¹⁵ Before the *Assistantship — impulse for self-change* conference organised by MOPS in Gdynia on 30.11–01.12. In Gdynia, in 2009, M. Rudnik prepared his own research, which allowed to illustrate the state of family assistantship in Poland and the difficulties it encounters in its development. See Rudnik, 2010.

¹⁶ Operational Program Human Capital in the area of social integration — see Mizejewski's remarks (2011) on its effectiveness.

¹⁷ In total, PCPR, MOPS and GOPS in Olsztyn employed 39 assistants for 93 families — after Rudnik, 2010, p. 34.

¹⁸ Ibidem, pp. 34–46.

creating social work with the family as an “own” socio-cultural project (Każmierczak, 2006, p. 104), reflecting a change in the approach to family and foster care; this change found its full expression in the 2011 Uowr entries (Andrzejewski, 2011, pp. 165–192). The project’s creators and contractors sought to: set goals, principles and ways to interfere in the lives of families requiring support¹⁹, developing rules for combining help, care, rescue and compensation. On the other hand, the forms of support — eclectic models of practice (social work), have been adapted to real local conditions resulting from diagnostic tests (diagnoses in families and diagnosing problems and resources in the living environment). The second dimension of the developed concept of family support was the organizational dimension. This dimension was operationalised, giving it the form of guidelines and a set of procedures that were to lead to rooting substantive change in the organizational system. The unquestioned leader in developing this task was the MOPS in Gdynia, whose employees created at the very beginning of the project “Family closer to each other”, a local concept of family support²⁰, they defined the scope and forms of family support at individual stages of social work, as well as procedures for cooperation of working groups in the organization. Family assistants, described in this model as ‘intensive social work’, found their place in connection with other models and methods of social work addressed to families benefiting from social assistance, and specialists conducting intensive social work took a clearly defined position in the organisational structure, obtaining a high status in a professional environment. I also know projects financed from city budgets: a project prepared by the MOPR in Ruda Śląska (Dziedzic & Polczyk, 2010; Trawkowska, 2009a, 2010a) and the MOPS project in Częstochowa (Krasiejko, 2010²¹), based on their own concepts of family support with care and upbringing problems and in running a household, including new practice in MOPS routine activities.

- In practice, from the very beginning, two basic models of social work in family assistantship were tested: a model of methodical activity in social work enriched with new forms of work and tools (Krasiejko & Ciczowska-Giedziun, 2016) — this model is based on the recognized in Polish social and educational work model and a model of solution-focused social work (PSSR) with which the Motivating Dialogue (DM) technique was associated. These models and technique (DM) are present in family support concepts prepared by the MOPR in Ruda and MOPS in Gdynia and in other cities.
- In social work with family, other models and methods of social work are also used: the psycho-socio-cultural crisis intervention model, the Family Group Conference (KGR),

¹⁹ The threats of combining interference in a family with help (and care) were described, among others, by: Kaczmarek, 2012; Krasiejko & Świtek, 2015.

²⁰ The concept of family support is based on the division of social work — three levels of social work: regular social work, in-depth social work and intensive social work (family assistantship) have been treated as the basis for the introduced organizational change. See Józefczyk, 2011, pp. 3–18.

²¹ The concept of socio-educational-therapeutic work of an assistant with a family with many problems for MOPS in Częstochowa has been developed by I. Krasiejko (2010).

the group method in its many variations, and the environmental method, especially in the model of organizing the local community (OSL). However, there is a visible problem with combining social work methods and models into a coherent family support project. Other difficulties in the development of social work with family were also pointed out (Trawkowska, 2010).

- Social work with the family was accompanied by: psychotherapy, sociotherapy and family therapy (especially based on systemic family therapy); the latter was conducted most often in poviats cities.
- Counselling and mediation in the family were also developing²², however, the scope of these services (and forms of support) targeted at families is not recognized. In the “Family closer to each other” project, these services and forms were used.

Structural conditions for the career of “early” family assistantship in Poland

Undoubtedly, family assistance projects emerging in Poland were of a grassroots nature. Such projects emerged spontaneously and — as practical examples of coping with helping families, according to literature analysis — **emerged independently of each other** in non-governmental organizations, institutional foster care and social welfare centres. Similarly to the implementation of other models of social work with the family in social assistance (Miś, 2012; Trawkowska, 2013/2014, pp. 11–23), family assistance projects also had an **insular nature**. Their creation was fostered by: the presence of charismatic leaders in organizations operating in the social assistance system (in the public and non-governmental social assistance sector), the potential of assistance organizations and human and social capital launched as part of informal and formal cooperation in local environments based on the implementation of joint projects.

The initiators of the change, however, were and still are people present in the social assistance system, in social support institutions, in education for social work. In the case of the analysed change, consisting in the creation of a coherent system of professional activities towards families with care and upbringing problems from below, the concept is prepared and the process of change is carried out by people involved in collective activities: leaders of local communities, activists of social movements, “people of institutions”, representatives of charity institutions, representatives of power. They were accompanied by experts: people representing various fields of specialist knowledge.

Between 1990 and 2011, there were three significant changes that had a direct impact on the development of social work with the family in the social assistance system:

²² Research has shown that the knowledge of mediation among social workers was low, and the attitude to mediation as a form of support in social work was ambivalent, probably due to a lack of knowledge — Grudziewska & Lewicka-Zelent, 2015, pp. 124–128.

- social assistance decentralization in 1999 by the local government act as part of the “second wave of Polish reforms” (see Hryniewicz, 2001, 2001a, 2001b; Raclaw-Markowska, 2005; Rymsza, 2013, pp. 237–238 and Rymsza 2002; Trawkowska, 2005);
- “entry” of the foster care system into the social assistance system and then its “exit”, which took place after the adoption of *the Act on family support and foster care system* (UOWR) (see Raclaw, 2011, 2017; Raclaw & Trawkowska, 2015; Rymsza, 2011);
- institutionalization of domestic violence prevention policy initiated by the adoption of the *Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence* in 2005 (Rymsza, 2011a).

The consequences of these changes for the development of social work have not yet been summarized. Below I present selected conclusions on their impact on the social work development in the years 1990–2011.

- The second stage of transformation of social assistance was initiated by the reform of the social and administrative system of the Polish state, commenced on 1st of January 1999. Its basic principles related to decentralising the state tasks, of the developing self-government, empowering local communities and indicating the family as the main social policy subject. The family’s needs were to determine the program and forms of local social policy (Hryniewicz, 2001a, p. 6). In larger social assistance centers known to me due to expert and research involvement, in cities with poviats rights²³, conceptually and practically developed patterns of actions (support for individuals and families) in the 1990s were the nucleus around which new goals and patterns of family support were built, as if forced by introducing the obligation to prepare local strategies for solving social problems after 2000 and the necessity preparing a diagnosis of social problems in communes and poviats. This process stimulated interest in resources and reflection on their character, allocation, and transgression. New family support practices present in larger social welfare centres (Szarfenberg, 2011) were undoubtedly the result of greater wealth of some local institutions and local communities in various forms of capital. Thus, the “insular” appearance of family support practices, including family assistantship, and the diverse forms of these practices can be explained by the diversity of community resources and the capital of social assistance organizational units. Another important premise for the diversity of locally created practices of supporting people and families, including family assistantship was, as indicated by Józefina Hryniewicz, the difference between the residual model of social assistance assigned to municipalities and the institutional model assigned to poviats in the assumptions of administrative reform (Hryniewicz, 2001b, p. 179)²⁴. I believe that the consequences

²³ I conducted diagnostic tests and provided expert services, among others. for: MOPS in Katowice, MOPS in Ruda Śląska, MOPS in Lublin, MOPS in Gdynia, MOPR in Poznań, MOPR in Bytom. In addition, in the years 1983–1996 I worked professionally at OPS in Bytom.

²⁴ “Municipal social assistance centers implement (and will implement) the residual model based on the assessment of the income level of the mentee, assuming short-term support (rescue) at critical moments in the life of a family or individual, when other distribution mechanisms and social policy institutions fail. Poviats family support centers that have taken over many institutional tasks, e.g. running social assistance homes, childcare centers, adoption centers, specialist counsel-

of this difference in assessing the development of social work practice with individuals and families in Poland have been ignored so far in the social assistance analyses. J. Hrynkiewicz's conclusions of point to the structural sources of difference in locally created concepts of family support, and thus also in the modes of action: preferred goals, methods, models, tools for supporting the family in communes and poviats.

As a result of the local government reform in 1999, apart from the municipal self-government, the powiat self-government and the voivodship self-government were all obliged to carry out social assistance tasks. Established powiat family support centres and regional social policy centres faced the problems of both vertical and horizontal integration of the family support systems (Rymsza, 2013, pp. 237–238 and Rymsza, 2002). The emerging local (commune and powiat) strategies for solving social problems constituted a diagnostic basis for creating a family support systems at these levels (Hrynkiewicz, 2001; Krzyszkowski, 2005, pp. 333–347). Social workers were preparing for the role of researchers and diagnosticians of local social problems as part of the second degree specialization in the profession of a social worker²⁵. The goal of creating an effective family support system — became present in public discourse, primarily in political and scientific discourse²⁶, as well as in local discourses (conducted in social environments, e.g. local government officials, social workers, third sector activists) and in internal discourse (in social support institutions)²⁷.

- The introduction of foster care to the social assistance system on January 1, 1999 resulted in a series of unobvious consequences for the practice of social work with family. The shift of foster care from the education system to the social assistance system has strengthened the previously observed tendencies to see the child as a subject of social work practice (Trawkowska, 2005, 2012b) and “dynamized the perspective of children’s rights as the helpers’ directional orientation” (Raclaw, 2017, p. 229). Another change, not obvious, which was thoroughly analysed by M. Raclaw (2016), was the clear tendency to “objectify the perception of endangered childhood and threatening parenthood”, as well as to reduce the relationship in child and family care. These disturbing phenomena, accompanying the social assistance services involved in their work, have structural conditions, “lead to distorted social relations and make

ing, should use a different model of social assistance, which includes prevention rather than rescue. The institutional model corresponding to the above concept assumes that the main criterion for granting aid is the need, and not the amount of income generated. [...] help should be based on services supporting families in all their functions and in the process of regaining or maintaining their independence or self-help” (Hrynkiewicz, 2001b, p. 179).

²⁵ The 2nd degree specialization program in the profession of a social worker was regulated by the Regulation of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy of October 4, 2001.

²⁶ The topic of the effectiveness of social assistance and social work became more and more common in discussions on education for social work and in education itself (see Czechowska-Bieluga, 2017; Kanios, 2016; Matyjas & Porąbaniec, 2008; Niesporek & Wódcz, 1999; Warzywoda-Kruszyńska & Krzyszkowski, 1999).

²⁷ M. Granosik pointed out the importance of multi-level discourses for shaping social work practices (2011, 2013, 2016).

public social assistance a kind of machine grinding a child with problems” (Raclaw, 2016, p. 105). Therefore, one can put forward the thesis that as a result of the reform of the foster care system in Poland, the social work with the family implementers faced a dilemma regarding its concept: “How much care, how much help, to whom?” and before its reification (bringing social work down to a standardised service) and objectification (reification of its basic social relations: care and assistance). Once again in its Polish history, social work (with family) has faced — a threat to its identity. Unfortunately, this multidimensional threat is hidden, both in terms of causes, course and consequences, which makes them even more difficult to recognize²⁸.

- The change introduced to the social assistance system by the amendment to the Act on counteracting domestic violence, adopted in 2010, which caused the formation of two, essentially different models of social services intervention in the sphere of family life (Rymsza, 2011a), was and remains a serious challenge for developing a concept of social work (with family) and for maintaining identity through social work. Until 2010, as Rymsza (2011a) justified, the key value so far — the family bond (and family treated as the optimal educational ecosystem) — was protected by social service interventions. Protection of bonds was the assumed goal of intervention in social work (which does not mean that it was implemented) and it was around this goal that local child and family support systems were built. The amendment to the Act on counteracting domestic violence pointed to the presence of another key value — the protection of the subject — around which the anti-violence intervention model and the support system for the “violent” family were organized. As Rymsza notes, “the differences between the two models of state intervention in the sphere of family life concern many dimensions of functioning of intervention systems in social life, including both their axiological aspect and the sphere of practical solutions” (Rymsza, 2011a, p. 139). This means that in the practice of social work with a family with a problem of violence, social work models and related patterns of intervention in family life, as well as the structural and functional aspects of the support system for these families, may be: a) significantly different from established social support practices and features of support systems addressed to families struggling with other problems, b) family support practices have features of both patterns of intervention in family life. Uncertainty resulting from a lack of knowledge about the features of reference models²⁹, it increases the risks associated with defining family support goals, and thus hinders the real assessment of the effectiveness of social work, the activities of professionals, the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of support institutions, and the functioning of the child and family support system. The introduction of anti-violence policy to social assistance probably strengthened/strengthens the fragmentation of action in

²⁸ J. Szmagalski spoke more widely about the risks in the development of social work (2012, 2016).

²⁹ Referring to the distinction of the reference model by M. Weber, I mean features of practices and support systems for families with care and upbringing problems, helplessness in running a household, domestic violence.

social work (focusing on the implementation of selected stages of methodical action, bypassing other, also necessary), which is a serious obstacle to achieving the objectives of social assistance and social work and hinders the work on the concept/concepts of social work in professional and local environments.

The current state of analysis does not make it possible to confirm or falsify these hypotheses. What has been noticed by researchers (and which can be a valuable contribution to the assessment of changes in social work, following the entry of foster care into social assistance) is the perception of the usefulness of social work with small groups in helping children and families, both so-called biological and foster care, and in assisting foster children from foster families and socialization institutions³⁰. Another phenomenon, also observed, was the dissemination of teamwork in family assistance, which is still treated as a “standard” strategy for supporting families marked by violence, but its use is much greater. Social work with a small group, in its team variant (team work) is commonly used in other social work models and methods³¹.

Changes in the use of specific instruments in social work (methods, models and techniques of social work) are obviously desirable because they increase the effectiveness of employees, institutions and family support systems. However, the changes in the instruments used by the support institutions (social benefits and services) directly concern the funds, not the objectives of the activity.

The question of the content of guiding ideas that shape the goals of the action and, by reference to values, constitute the basis for the functioning of the institution, the system and shape the practices of “institution people” remains essential.”³². In helping the family, we are dealing with a conglomerate of guiding ideas (Raław, 2017, pp. 219–229). In the social assistance system aimed at supporting the child and the family, the co-existing ideas “competed” and still “compete” among themselves for influence, these are: the idea of protection, care, help, normalization, (re) integration, activation, intervention, social rehabilitation³³. The conglomerate of ideas accompanies programs, projects and activities launched at various levels, dedicated to different types of families. I agree with M. Raław’s view about the “secret” character of the ideal structure of the social assistance system in subsystems oriented at supporting the family with various problems³⁴. This property of the structure of ideal social assistance favours the presence of a “conglomerate

³⁰ This confirms the use of the group method of social work by authors of good practices in family assistance and the use of this method by authors of social projects under the second degree specialization in the profession of a social worker and graduates of social work at the masters and bachelor studies with whom I cooperated in 2000–2017.

³¹ On the advantages and methods of using the group method of social work and its special variation — team work, see (Pawlas-Czyż, 2019; Trawkowska, 2006; Trawkowska, 2011c).

³² Comments on the importance of guiding ideas in social policy, social assistance and social work see Supińska, 1999; Raław, 2017, pp. 219–229; Trawkowska, 2013.

³³ M. Raław pointed to the permanence of the idea of protection, intervention, activation and normalization. See Raław, 2017, pp. 223–226.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 227–228.

of seemingly explicit goals” present in social assistance and social work (with family)³⁵. The objectives proposed by social policy are abstract for performers, which means that the content related to the objectives of social assistance and social work is classified, opaque, inaccurate or superficially operationalized for the purposes of the planned and undertaken activities (Biernat & Karwacki, 2011). The explanations introduced, referring to the concepts: “the eclectic universe of ideas” and “a conglomerate of apparently explicit goals”, allow us to better understand the sustainability of the shaped “the institution’s thinking style” (Douglas, 2011) in social assistance and social work, in which a reform of some practices may be carried out, and only partially. For example, we observe the intensive use of group work in helping families with oncological patients (Pawlas-Czyż, 2019), and to some extent, using the social contract the way it was meant to be used (Każmierczak, 2016). But in principle, the values/goals on which these practices are founded are not reviewed. If social assistance employees reflect on the values on the basis of which practices are created, and thus reflect on the objectives of social assistance and social work, in the specific context of the existing, complex conditions for achieving the goals, they have a chance for real and deep changes, the functioning of social assistance and social work institutions, which was confirmed by experience with the introduction of family assistantship models in cities such as Ruda Śląska and Gdynia.

I believe that both the introduction of poviats as a new local level, together with the entire baggage of desirable and undesirable consequences, intended and unintended, as well as the “entry” of foster care into social assistance and confronting the principles of intervention in family life, after the amendment of the Act on counteracting domestic violence in 2010, were important impulses, a kind of “revolution” in the development of social work with the family. They exposed the social assistance system principles of its functioning “welcomed” by officers,, founded on the “conglomerate of hidden goals”. Nevertheless, it seems that these “revolutions” led to a deeper reflection of practitioners who were already inclined towards it (Matthew effect).

As I mentioned, in the years 1990–2011, the transformation of social assistance and social work was accompanied by the demand to create an effective, local support system for a multi-problem family. The interest in social policy and social politicians in the effectiveness of social assistance as an evaluation category³⁶ in the assessments of institutions, programmes and activities, it can be treated as a logical consequence of revolutionary changes in social assistance, caused by changes in the applicable law.

³⁵ The hypothesis of the presence of a “conglomerate of apparently explicit goals” requires a deeper theoretical justification. Analyses carried out by M. Granosik (2013, 2016) indicate the possibility of confirming it.

³⁶ The increase in interest in the effectiveness of social assistance activities is confirmed by assessments of social assistance activities made by S. Golinowska and I. Topińska (2002, p. 29), as well as proposals for tools for measuring the effectiveness of social work with an individual case and with a family by B. Szatur-Jaworska (Szatur-Jaworska & Godlewska, 2010), which were prepared by B. Szatur-Jaworska for the needs of social assistance in the mid-1990s, which were not widely used in that period.

In my opinion, these legal changes were conducive to strengthening the “toolbox” orientation in social assistance. In particular, the consequence of legal changes was:

- the focus of local decision makers and grassroots implementers on innovation in the sphere of resources³⁷,
- strengthening various environments operating locally in orienting towards those practices that were primarily aimed at operationalization of the goal of effective family support (how to act effectively?)³⁸, to a lesser extent, however, to discuss the essence of support effectiveness (what is effectiveness?).

As a result, asking the question about the effectiveness of action in social policy, caused the question of how to “do it effectively” in social assistance to obscure the question of what the effectiveness of support for the family and its members is. One can cautiously put forward the thesis that we are dealing with the presence of a reversal effect in the meaning of R. Boudon (2008): raising the issue of the effectiveness of social assistance (and social work) at the level of social policy resulted in the adoption of a “partial” definition of the effectiveness of its activities in social assistance. The answer to the question why the effectiveness of social assistance and social work (family support system, social assistance organizational unit, social worker, family assistant, social work methods and models, etc.) was less often considered, is complex. In part, the reasons why this happened resulted from the specificity of the substantive and organizational context of the evaluation, which was justified by M. Szałaj (2007). The author also drew attention to other premises that may help in enumerating the reasons to reorient the f social assistance towards seeking answers on how to act effectively at the expense of reflection on the question of what is its effectiveness. These conditions include:

- involvement of social assistance in the implementation of projects financed with the EU funds, which launched an undesirable process of marginalising the practical reasons as the most important premise determining the purposefulness of conducting evaluation studies and their nature (Szałaj, 2007), with a clear preference for the expectations of the grantor, which increased the risk of “apparent” evaluation (Szatur-Jaworska & Godlewska, 2010, p. 186; Trawkowska, 2007a; Trawkowska, 2009b);
- as a result of an “organic” ex-post evaluation fusion³⁹ with an action strictly defined by the regulations (Szałaj, 2007, p. 69), in the field of social assistance and social work, reflection on the directive and procedural action has been strengthened, bypassing the accumulated, practical knowledge about real entities (clients, mentees and employees and volunteers of the social support institution) and relationships between real entities and real practices;

³⁷ The concept of innovation in the sphere of measures adopted after Nowak, 2009, p. 236.

³⁸ An example of how to organize a local activity is the handbook of P. Domaradzki and J. Krzyszkowski on child support in family and foster care (Domaradzki & Krzyszkowski, 2016), as well as analysis of family assistantship in Gdynia (Szpunar, 2011; Rudnik, 2013) and methodological suggestions on assistantship (e.g. Krasiejko, 2016).

³⁹ This is the dominant evaluation model in social projects — D.G.

The question of what is the effectiveness of social assistance opens up a dangerous space for reflection on the reorientation of social assistance activities. Undertaking this reflection inevitably leads to the realization of the necessity of incurring many new and expensive outlays. **“If social assistance is to effectively support clients in regaining the ability to cope with life difficulties on their own, they must create conditions so that they can learn it, that their attitude towards the surrounding reality and towards themselves can change.”** (Faliszek, 2010, p. 150, underlined by the author).

Summing up the development of family assistantship in Poland in the years 1990–1999, it should be emphasized that in social assistance the need for new models of support for people in families and whole families was recognised relatively early, the need for social work (with family) was recognized, the forms of family support have been worked on since the mid-1990s, both in non-governmental organizations and in public social assistance. However, it seems that these patterns were more often implemented than described. Sometimes, attempts were made to describe them (Trawkowska, 2007b), to implement them more often, which was reflected in the therapists’ activities and the practice of employing consultants in municipal social assistance canterers and commissioning them with specialist family support tasks (Liciński, 2013; Trawkowska, 2011; Trawkowska, 2007b). During this period, the introduction of a new family support pattern was tested by the “elite” — the psychotherapist and consultant environment that was taking shape in Poland, present in social assistance since the 1970s⁴⁰.

In subsequent years, from the beginning of 2000 to the end of 2011, legal changes stimulated the search for solutions primarily in the sphere of instruments of social work and social assistance. Reflection on the values and related goals of social work and social assistance took place primarily at the level of local discourses (Granosik, 2016). At the second stage of the social assistance transformation, in the years 2000–2011, individual and collective actors questioned not so much the objectives related to family support included in the Act on social assistance⁴¹, but mostly **the methods of achieving them**, used by social support institutions.

⁴⁰ Social workers were represented in these environments, which I observed until 2000, conducting my own research. On the subject of consultants’ environment and its changes, see Trawkowska, 2011b.

⁴¹ In the discussed period, two acts on social assistance were in force, from 1990 and from 2004. The objectives of social assistance did not change significantly, until including social assistance in activities activating persons threatened with social exclusion, under the Human Capital Operational Program in the area of social integration, which has taken place since 2007 (See Mizejewski, 2011). Social reintegration, as a “practice oriented to limit the problem of social exclusion [...] instead of repressive enforcing active attitudes resulting in integration, promotes the strengthening of individuals using reintegration services. Formulation of expectations towards clients as to their economic activity is preceded by work on rebuilding their relationships with the social environment as the basis for the life process of becoming independent. The result of the services provided should be to strengthen individuals as participants in social life, but also to rebuild employment capacity. What is particularly important, we are talking about related but not identical processes, and in the offer of institutions offering reintegration services the above two areas of strengthening are treated as equally important.” (Karwacki, 2014, p. 231).

However, collective investment in changing ways of achieving goals resulted, in my opinion, in the opposite effect (Boudon's reverse effect), becoming a leaven of reflection on the essence of goals (family support), and also stimulated the clarification of these goals in locally proposed concepts of family support. Undoubtedly, however, the deepening of reflection on ways to achieve goals related to family support and — to some extent — also the development of reflection on what is (effective) family support was influenced by the activity of the part of the professional environment that took advantage of the educational opportunities that opened up to employees social in the years 1990–2011⁴².

From the “elite” rebellion to the “knowledge rebellion”

Family assistantship (in the therapeutic model) is a normative innovation⁴³ of an endogenous nature (Sztompka, 2005, pp. 234–241). In sociology, the concept of normative innovation has a specific meaning (Merton, 2002⁴⁴; Nowak, 2009; Sztompka, 2002, 2005). Piotr Sztompka (2002, p. 432) believes that a normative innovation can be “initiating a new way of life, style of action, daily practice, form of expression, etc., which can transform into new rules, patterns, norms or values.” This process begins with rebellion, Sztompka emphasized (2005, p. 238). In Merton's terminology, rebellion is an active type of deviant adjustment questioning both goals and ways of achieving them in a given social system. The goals and the means leading to them are treated by the rebels as unlawful. The rebellion, as Merton pointed out, “concerns an authentic transformation of values, when a direct or substitute experience of frustration leads to a total rejection of previously valued values” (Merton, 2002, p. 221).

The family's assistantship in its earliest development period, in the 1990s, was a manifestation of the “elite” rebellion (among others, therapists, social workers and consultants in social assistance). The “elite” rebellion had one more important aspect — it referred to the defence of family values and the protection of family ties, as a goal of supporting families displaying care and educational dysfunctions, present in the discourse, but often overlooked in practice. As a result it led/could lead⁴⁵ to change in the ways of achieving goals in social assistance, including goals related to improving the functioning

⁴² Not all social workers used the knowledge and skills acquired during undergraduate studies and vocational training. K. Wódz (2007) critically assessed the preparation of social workers in terms of their knowledge and professional skills. Also M. Łuczyńska (2013) cautiously commented on the positive changes observed between 1988 and 2010 in the field of professional knowledge and skills of social workers. Also D. Trawkowska (2012b) critically assessed the condition of the professional environment of social workers.

⁴³ I use the definition of innovation contained in the extended typology of anomic adaptation by Stefan Nowak (2009).

⁴⁴ In the analysis I am not using the definition of R. K. Merton's innovation due to its too narrow scope.

⁴⁵ The consultants could potentially lead to a change in the ways in which the social welfare units they were employed in achieved goals, which sometimes happened — in my opinion, this happened in the MOPS in Katowice.

of families. However, the marginal position of the rebellious elites (psychotherapists and consultants, including social workers) in the social assistance system meant that they did not pose a threat to standard practices of supporting individuals and families present in this system, until 1999, for “poviatization”⁴⁶. Protection of the family and protection of family ties as goals/values did not commonly set directions for the development of social work in social assistance, and thus did not shape social work practices, especially in the first period of the development of family assistantship, until the end of 1999.

In the following years, the family assistantship became an expression of grassroots “rebellion of knowledge”⁴⁷ (Foucault, 1998, p. 21). The thesis put forward, of course, requires a broader justification, which is not the case here. In my opinion, the environment of social assistance workers and other environments that were formed at that time, e.g. supervisors, street workers, thus protested against the failure to recognize in the social assistance system the real problems of families related to care and assistance (overloading the care for children and adults with disabilities, carers of seriously and chronically ill people, foster parents, including relatives, care and educational failure of families), keeping apparent activities within the limits of the social assistance system and their moral costs⁴⁸. The sources of this rebellion come from education for social work and its practice, which is reflected primarily in the local space (Granosik, 2016)⁴⁹.

Thus, the rebellion appeared twice within the public social assistance system. Its earliest manifestations took place thanks to the experimenting “elites” (1990–1999), which aroused the professional imagination. I believe that interest in the issue of the effectiveness of social assistance and social work in social policy has initiated a second wave of rebellion. The “knowledge” rebellion meant a disagreement with some social assistance services on the sham action and social costs of such practices. Rebellion as a full deviation “means the rejection of existing procedures, with a whole load of norms

⁴⁶ The practice of supporting families was criticized in the “Social Policy Issues. Studies and Discussions” — see papers in PPS 2010, 13/14 (Forum); PPS 2012, 19 (Forum — continuation) and “Social Policy Issues” 2016, 35(4).

⁴⁷ I use this concept in the sense given to him by M. Foucault: “It is about the rebellion of knowledge. Not so much against the content, methods or concepts of some science, but first of all against the effects of centralistic power related to the institution and functioning of organized scientific discourse in a society such as ours [...]” Foucault (1998, p. 21). For more on Foucault’s understanding of knowledge, see Czyżewski, 2013.

⁴⁸ A number of phenomena characterizing the context of care and assistance do not cause public debate. These include feminization of assistance professions, structural aspects of professional environments, creation of the concept of social work in residential environments.

⁴⁹ In this paragraph, I omit the reasons why there was no public discourse on the difficulties in the development of social work (with family), and especially why public social assistance defended itself against being recognized. I believe that among the experts — theoreticians and practitioners — these reasons were discussed sufficiently widely and very often. These issues were discussed in, for example, “Social Policy Issues” in the publications of the publishing series “Social Work Problems” of the Educational Publisher Akapit in Toruń, in numerous publications issued by the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw in 2001–2018, in post-conference publications documenting debates of the annual conventions of the Polish Association of Social Work Schools and in other publications.

and values, but at the same time proposing alternative procedures: new ways of life implementing new norms and new values” (Sztompka, 2002, p. 282). The analysed cases of the “knowledge” rebellion, illustrated in this text by the projects of the family assistants from Ruda and Gdynia can be considered:

- “full” rebellion (a “quiet” but inconspicuous change in the objectives of the activity, but above all a change in the means leading to their implementation),
- rebellion of representatives of the stigmatised institution (social assistance) directed against its stigma (ineffectiveness).

Representatives of “rebellious knowledge” were accompanied by a vision of transformation of values, patterns and ways of acting, which in relation to care and educational problems and helplessness in running a household, led to the specifics of the form of action, in this case, the family assistance and treating it as an important element of the concept of support a family that was deliberated as part of an internal discourse (Józefczyk, 2013; Łangowska, 2013). It is worth emphasizing that the concept of family support, which was developed in social assistance centres, was as a result of the rooting of new patterns of family support in the organizational system of the centre. In this way, it became a derivative of reflection on the functional integration of models of family support practices in a local support institution, and sometimes also of a broader reflection as part of work on a strategy for solving social problems, by collective actors active in the local (commune, powiat) support space families.

Family assistantship was an endogenous innovation, the response “to tensions, pressures and dissonances that appear inside the social system in which innovation is born” (Sztompka, 2002, p. 432). We note that since the response to these pressures was not common, the rebellion of “knowledge” must have been “insular”, as confirmed by research conducted by M. Rudnik (2010), as well as the way the new form (family assistantship) was presented in publications, aftermath of “good practices”. The proposed solutions — local patterns of family assistantship — had both group signatures (logos of specific social assistance centres) and original initials (these people were recognizable not only in their environments (among practitioners and in the scientific community), giving the assistantship its “own identity”).

When proposing a proprietary typology of anomic adaptation methods, Stefan Nowak, emphasized: “From the perspective of the individual, who feels the inadequacy of the recognized goals and means in an important sphere of life, there is a feeling of strong tension, creating a problem for him to be solved, or — as Merton says — a situation appears that must be adapted to somehow” (Nowak, 2009, p. 235). Adaptation can be analysed from the perspective of operating individuals (I omit this thread in my considerations) and from the perspective of the social system (organizational system). The subject of further analysis is rooted assistantship in the organizational system⁵⁰. Adaptation to the new situation had, on the example of these centres, two dimensions. This first dimension

⁵⁰ Namely in organizational units of social assistance and in local child and family support systems, which piloted their own assistant projects, i.e. by MOPS in Ruda Śląska and MOPS in Gdynia

related to environmental mentality. **Beliefs of social assistance employees regarding social assistance clients have been violated, ideas of what social work is, the concept of self-interest has been redefined, important partners have been noticed (families acting as formulas [reference systems for families in social work processes, other specialists, e.g. mediators, advisors, local community organizers).** The second dimension related to the organizational structure. It has been changed so that **new patterns of activity become routine practices in a social welfare centre**⁵¹.

Expanding and detailing the known proposal of the types of anomic adaptation of R. K. Merton⁵², Nowak's proposal allows for a precise location of family assistantships, which arose after the “poviatisation” (1999), yet before the entry into force of the UoWR(2011), implemented by social assistance centres as a specific type of innovation. It is a “**measure innovation**” that “involves the use of a new or previously unapproved measure to achieve the former goal [in this case the unsuccessful goal — DG]. It often conflicts with important cultural norms and weakens the existing institutional and normative structure” (Nowak, 2009, p. 236). This type of innovation violates the institutional and organizational structure also in the sphere of values/goals, but the processes leading to normative disintegration of this structure take place more slowly and in secret. Family assistance projects, which were piloted by social assistance centres in Ruda Śląska and Gdynia until the end of 2011, contained precisely and realistically defined goals of family support, which — in my opinion — enabled combining the two “competitive” values: protecting family ties with protection of entities (victims of violence, dependents in the family). Thus, the goal has become fully innovative. However, social welfare entrepreneurship expressed itself in a “struggle” to use its instruments (means of achieving goals) to achieve this new, in practice non-articulated goal. We note that interest in implementing the role of an assistant to help family took place when: there were difficulties with defining and operationalizing the objectives of social assistance and social work (“a conglomerate of apparently explicit goals”) and apparent actions in social work and social assistance were accepted (Trawkowska, 2007a), which was clear from the diagnoses conducted by researchers and experts of the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw and other studies (Hryniewicz, 2006; Kwak, 2006; Raclaw-Markowska, 2005; Trawkowska, 2008b). In the light of the results of the aforementioned research, the objectives declared, but not achieved by most social support institutions, concerned: improving the functioning of families with educational and care problems and running a household, self-empowerment of families benefiting from social assistance, self-empowerment of children from children's homes/socialization facilities and foster families, supporting foster families, socializing

⁵¹ The organizational dimension of this change is poorly recognized in scientific work on assistantship.

⁵² The four types of deviation described by R. K. Merton were supplemented by S. Nowak (2009, p. 236), who assumed that the entity may take a threefold attitude towards both goals and means: + a continuing recognition of value or norm and its further implementation in behavior, – giving up a given value or norm without accepting anything in its place; +/- replacement of a given value or standard with a different one.

the foster care system. To achieve these goals, which have the status of strategic goals in local strategies for solving social problems, social assistance “focused” on the use of funds, leaving controversy over these goals outside public discourse.

Looking for a justification for the theses and hypotheses presented in this text, I drew attention to the results of empirical research on discourses in social assistance and social work carried out by M. Granosik (Granosik, 2012, 2013, 2016). Referring to their results, I can suppose that at this early stage of the development of the assistantship, both goals and means became the subject of mainly internal discourse, which “is increasingly dominated by technical issues that have no dilemma structure but only procedural one” (Granosik, 2016, p. 50; Granosik, 2012), hence the internal discourse was/is? of more bureaucratic than professional character⁵³. The participation of social workers in public discourse was very limited due to the lack of representation of this professional environment. External discourse, which could bring to the public discourse the problematic nature of goals and means, was only being created in the discussed period. Dominating public discourse with the issue of effectiveness of social assistance and social work, favored the display of instruments. Especially the lack of discussions (external discourses) on the new main goal and its possible transformations (the new goal, let us recall, was the development of effective models of family support, combining the perspective of entity protection with the protection of family ties), strengthened the influence of public discourse on the effectiveness of social assistance and work social, to other, lower levels of discourses and to other types of discourses, including expert discourse (Kamińska, 2013). The innovators’ attention focused on measures leading to the achievement of this new goal: the potential of the social contract, the potential of teamwork and the potential of synergy of methods and approaches were used (Kotlarska-Michalska, 2012), creating eclectic models of family assistantship and thus co-creating local concepts of social work with family (Krasiejko & Ciczowska-Giedziun, 2016; Miś, 2012), in some cities in Poland.

An important feature of assistantship as normative innovation in terms of resources was, as I emphasized when defining “good practices” in social assistance (Trawkowska, 2012a), its two-faceted innovation — substantive and organizational.

Conclusion

The source of innovation in the field of measures was the discord of the social welfare environment⁵⁴ for the helplessness of support beneficiaries and for the helplessness of support institutions masked in administering social problems as well as family control and management (Karwacki, 2008; Raclaw, 2012). The disagreement between the social welfare professional and the helplessness of individual and institutional support entities led to questioning the validity of the norms that governed the social context of

⁵³ The division of discourses is quoted after Granosik, 2013.

⁵⁴ I understand the social welfare environment as various professional and managerial environments (Trawkowska, 2012b), and even groups of decision makers located in communal, poviata and voivodship governments authorized to control the units of social assistance system.

family support (the context of care and assistance). Innovators questioned integrated complexes of cultural rules (procedures, institutions and roles), as well as some rules of basic axionormative systems (custom and morality)⁵⁵, excluding legal norms (act on social assistance, other acts and lower-level legal acts)⁵⁶. Professional norms were strengthened by creating their own ethical codes in social assistance centres⁵⁷, regulating social work, understood as professional, organized and purposeful pro-social activity, based on methods and principles specific to the profession (social worker) (Wódz, 1998, p. 13), the beneficiaries of which are people in the family and entire families. In fact, social work (with a person and with a family) is a combination of assistance, caring, therapeutic, cultural and educational and social activities (Szatur-Jaworska, 1995). This feature was tried to be used, out of concern for the effectiveness of actions and the variety of support patterns.

Social work is subject to strong regulation on the part of legal, organizational and professional standards (rules of conduct relevant to the method/model/approach and ethical principles). But its condition is also influenced by the standards passed on to the tradition of education and action (Łuczyńska, 2013), as well as environmental habits (Trawkowska, 2012b) and attitudes towards innovation⁵⁸. These standards apply in the uncertain social reality, full of various challenges for assistance professions (Wódz, 2007).

Endogenous assistantship was in opposition to the “thinking of the institution” (Douglas, 2011) — the rules for classifying clients required changes, it was necessary to work out diagnostic and evaluation tools, to rethink the “paths” of empowerment, etc. It was also in opposition to the “thinking of the people of institutions” (customary norms of the environment professional), which was clear from the research (Dudkiewicz, 2011; Dudkiewicz, 2013; Granosik, 2016; Rymśza, 2011; Rymśza, 2012,).

Early assistance in social welfare centres in the years 2000–2011 was a normative innovation directed at the use of possessed, and unnoticed or even collectively ignored possibilities of action, resources of the social potential of the local environment (Każmierczak, 2007) as well as human, social and organizational capital. But it seems that already at that time, its development was conducive to consolidating the Matthew effect in social assistance (Kowalczyk, 2012), revealing and maintaining the distance between rich and poor in human capital and social welfare centers and the environment of their operation.

⁵⁵ I believe that endogenous assistantship developing in public social assistance until 2012 violated these elements of the axio-normative system (after Sztompka, 2002, pp. 264–274).

⁵⁶ In my opinion, the family assistantship developing until the end of 2011 did not question, but used the right to achieve its goals, unnoticed/unwillingly seen in the social assistance system — this was pointed out by the directors of Silesian social assistance centers while preparing scientific publications from the series conferences organized in Upper Silesia, included in the volume Trawkowska, 2011.

⁵⁷ In Poland, the Code of Professional Ethics for a social worker is not binding, as it has project status. Its proposal was submitted by the Polish Society of Social Workers in 1998.

⁵⁸ See the article by J. Przeperski in this volume.

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