**NOL REVERDA,**

**JITSKE VAN DER**

**SANDEN**

# EDITORIAL

The current issue of the *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice* includes a wide range of interesting articles on social intervention research and theory.

Both nationally and internationally, the social-ecological crisis and environmental change are now important issues. Slowly, the belief is growing that ecological and environmental changes will impact on the everyday reality of social work practice. Ever more scholars are beginning to acknowledge the importance of environmental change for social work and that the two areas are inextricably linked because the ecological crisis requires us to think about a new perspective on *well-being* for *every* citizen. Sustainable social development was for instance the central theme of the 2011 ENSACT conference in Brussels (http://www.ensact.org/index/pages/id_page-1/lang-en/). ENSACT is an umbrella network of six European associations that brings together policy makers, researchers, practitioners and teachers in the social domain. One of the contributors to this conference, Jef Peeters, has prepared two articles on this important subject for our journal, the first of which can be found in this issue. In it, he outlines a framework that links sustainable development and social work, both as an ethical-political mission and as a paradigm for practice. In doing this, he compares *the Brundtland definition* of sustainable development (one of the most influential definitions of sustainable development in the world) with the international definition of social work, revealing the significant normative similarity between the two in terms of attention to well-being, equity, human rights and participation.

In the concluding sections of the article, Peeters formulates some guidelines on how social work can reinforce sustainable development:

– social work must include the physical environment in its contextual approach;
– social work can help to strengthen the social dimension of sustainable development;
– social work can broaden the focus of sustainable development on needs, bringing in other aspects of well-being.

In the second article (which will appear in our next issue), Peeters will present us with a *social-ecological practice model* for social work, bringing these guidelines into practice.

In the first issue of 2011 (http://www.journalsi.org/index.php/si/issue/view/28), we published a series of articles on supervision in social work practice and education. Within the continually changing environment of social work practice, reflection on professional practice is crucial and supervision can serve as an important tool. In her article "How should we deal with ethics in student supervision?", Ellen Hooyberghs continues the discussion on this subject in the present issue of the journal. In the field of social work, ethical issues and dilemmas arise continually. "Doing the *right* thing" and "helping the other in the *correct* way" are no straightforward tasks and are interpreted by different people in different ways. Supervision can help students to explore their views on these issues. But even though it is hard to "agree" on such things as values and norms, the author states that by exploring the work of (among others) the Dutch scholars Kunneman and Baart, we can find some basic common ground. On the basis of all this, she presents us with the "Ethical circles in Social Work" method by Janssens, as a form of guidance for students and supervisors alike when dealing with ethical questions. The method can help students and supervisors to ask *the right questions* when identifying different arguments in situations where ethical conflicts arise. It has three different starting points (the *iterative*, the *dialectic* and the *holistic*) and additional information on each of these, including some examples, are provided in the article. The author underlines that the position of the supervisor as a *role model* is a crucial element in the process of talking about ethical questions.

We continue the issue with a study by American colleagues Gupta, Pillai and Levy on informal care, and more specifically on the psycho-social factors that contribute to the burden on elderly caregivers in India. Informal care, especially in relation to the Dutch Social Support Act, is a subject that has been debated before in our journal (see for instance Linders 2/2007 and Metz 3/2008) and it is interesting to see how this works abroad. India has a high "older adult population

growth rate" and caring for the elderly rests almost entirely on family members. Care-giving is very demanding work and can easily – but not necessarily – lead to caregiver burden, which can pose a serious health risk. Making use of a quantitative research study, the authors therefore attempt to develop a model of caregiver burden, in which the quality of the relationship between caregiver and recipient is seen as a prime determinant. Other factors to be taken into account are gender, role conflict, role overload, the health problems of the care recipient and the support tasks provided by the care recipient. The quality of the relationship emerged as a central factor. Role overload and role conflict appeared to influence burden indirectly. The authors conclude that various psycho-educational interventions, for instance focusing on the improvement of social support systems and communication skills, could be deployed in order to enhance the relationship quality between caregiver and recipient.

In the fourth article of this issue, Jacquelien Rothfusz takes an empirical philosophical approach to the process of understanding *normalizing power* in professional relationships with a group of Dutch-Caribbean migrants who are the source of social problems in their neighbourhood, such as petty crime and drug abuse. Though a large group of social professionals are combining their efforts in reducing these problems, they remain largely ineffective. In her article, Rothfusz defends the thesis that the professional practices in this particular case can partly be conceived of as normalizing power, as described by Foucault: power strategies are used in order to change deviant individuals into "normal" subjects. On the basis of 14 semi-structured interviews with different kinds of professionals (e.g. policemen, street-corner workers, cultural and social workers) working with this "problem group", she tries to unravel the professional discourse underlying their actions. In analysing the qualitative data, Foucault's framework is complemented with that of Actor Network Theory and of Mol and her concept of *logics*. According to the author, four logics can be distinguished in the case:

– the individual care logic
– the community care logic
– the security logic
– the "change the mindset" logic

Each of these logics gives a different position to the Dutch-Caribbeans – from individuals who suffer from an accumulation of problems to a group who pose a threat to society. These logics are not mutually exclusive in nature and they can be used by one and the same professional within the same case. Rothfusz concludes that more insight into these different types of logics is necessary and that it opens up the discussion about social interventions.

Finally this issue includes the familiar book review and News from Higher Social Education sections. Willem Blok discusses two influential Australian works on international social work theory by Mel Gray and Stephen Webb: *Social Work Theories and Methods* and *International Social Work*. Ger Tillekens discusses *Opgroeien in Rotterdam. Tegendraads onderzoek in een grote stad* [Growing up in Rotterdam. Research that goes against the grain in a large city] and Herman Nijenhuis discusses *Hart van de verzorginsstad. Club- en buurthuiswerk in Rotterdam* [Heart of the caring city – community centre work in Rotterdam].

In the News from Higher Social Education column, Maarten van der Linde emphasizes the necessity of a *historical notion* ("knowing where you came from") for our (future) social work professionals, and calls for the incorporation of *historical competencies* in the various social work educational programmes. These are:

– Showing a historical notion
– Being able to analyse the coherence between cause and result
– Paying attention to chronology
– Being aware of the time and place bounded nature of norms, values and behaviour

Nol Reverda, Editor-in-chief
Jitske van der Sanden, Managing editor