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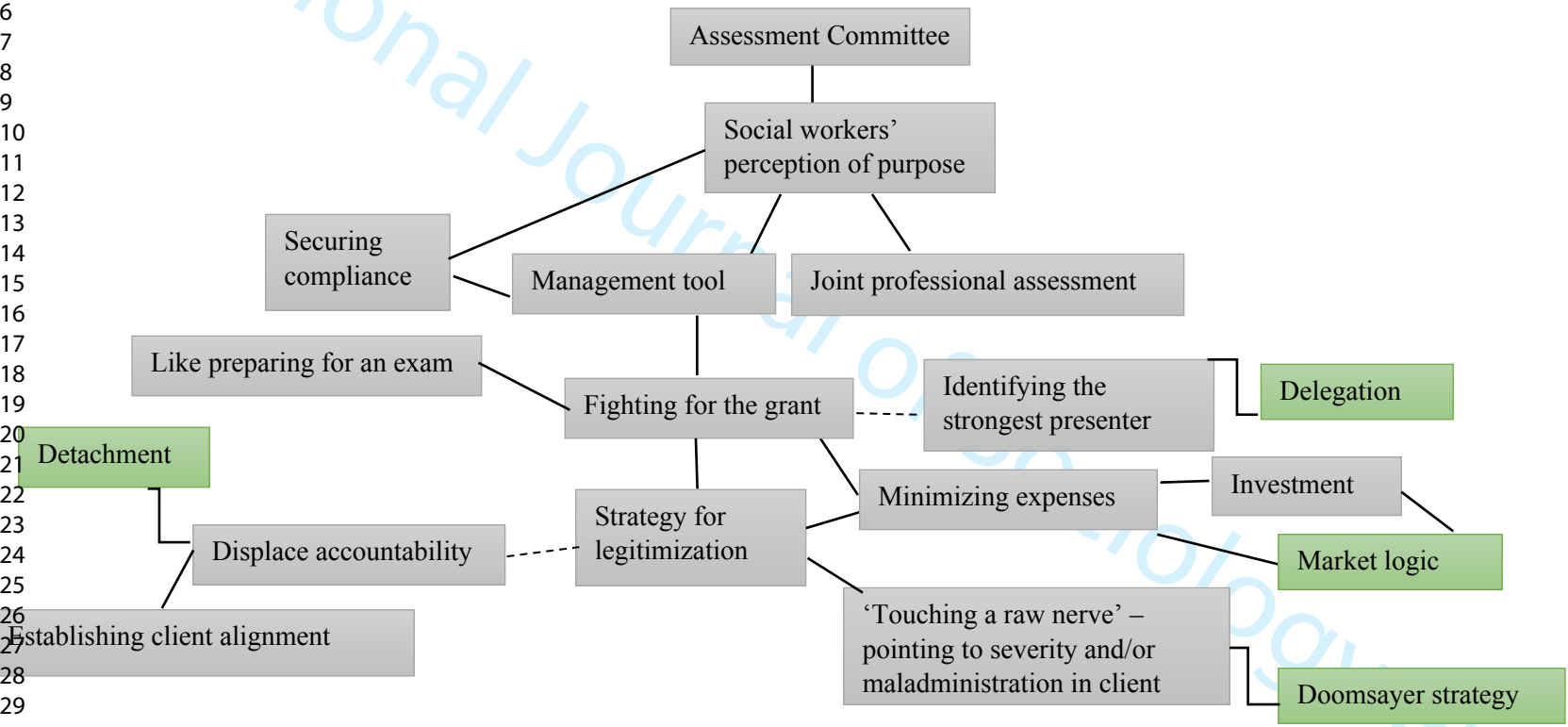


Changes in the Social Work Profession as Responses to Institutional Multiplicity

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Changes in the Social Work Profession as Responses to Institutional Multiplicity

Introduction

Social work is conducted in institutional fields characterized by logics that may be contradictory (Blomgren and Waks, 2015). With the diffusion of management tools into practice, reflecting values, beliefs and rationalities at field level, social workers and managers navigate settings of institutional complexity (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011, p. 317). As discretion, autonomy and exclusive jurisdiction are generally associated with the ideal type of professionalism (Freidson, 1994), increased monitoring and control of assessment, audit and supervision may challenge practice and professional identity. Moreover, social work in child protection is challenged due to lack of documented effects of services, continues budget overruns and high-profile cases of maladministration and failure to meet legal requirements (Lyneborg and Damgaard, 2018).

Interventions to counteract these challenges involve measures that may weaken professional autonomy and authority in decision making. This article applies a conceptualization of such management tools as forms of “technologies of government”, drawing on Nikolas Rose (1999).

While acknowledging the challenges that social workers face in coping with possible contradiction fostered by technologies of government, it is nevertheless important to highlight the “resilience of these professions and their ability to resist professional decline” (Randall and Kindiak, 2008, p. 345). In Danish child protection, social workers remain a commodity in demand (The Social Worker, 2017). Thus, social workers have arguably maintained some level of professional status and dominance over their field. As welfare services are produced, strategies handling the interplay between contradictions in professional practice are implemented daily. This may be a representation of the fact that while institutional logics may be theoretically likely to compete, they can also coexist (Reay and Hinings, 2009).

Scholars have called for research on how actors are managing multiple logics in their every-day practices (Ibid.), and contradictory elements in decision-making (Arman *et al.*, 2014, p. 283).

However, the emphasis on constraining effects of technologies of government has resulted in a blind spot in addressing the agency and adaptive behavior of professionals. This article contributes to address this gap by suggesting a shift of focus to how social workers respond to – and strategize

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4 to cope with – changes. The following research question is explored: *‘How are examples of*
5 *technologies of government received by social workers and what characterizes the responses*
6 *developed to cope with changes fostered by this technology of government’?*
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10 By analyzing the effects of a specific technology of government and how professionals are
11 responding, this article makes an empirical contribution to the sociology of the professions and
12 research on social work. By studying how professionals handle the interplay of multiple
13 institutional logics in micro-level practice, this article traces the effects of changes in technologies
14 of government and embedded logics onto social workers’ self-perception of professionalism.
15 Moreover, it seeks to shed light on the professions’ strategies to maintain legitimacy and prior claim
16 to case work.
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22 The article centers on the use of Assessment Committees [ACs], involving the insertion of an extra
23 layer of managerial decision, and a reduction or removal of social workers’ authority to grant
24 services. The introduction of ACs is widely implemented in Danish Child Protection and have
25 greatly changed the jurisdiction of social workers. In many cases, social workers are no longer
26 capable of granting services to citizens without managerial approval in the shape of ACs (SFI,
27 2001). Now, the practice of granting services goes through the process of formal meetings at
28 weekly intervals, arguably resulting in a reduction of professional autonomy. The AC meetings are
29 generally structured as follows: the case and requested service is presented by a social worker,
30 discussed, and finally managers decide whether to grant, deny or change the requested service
31 considering bureaucratic and economic aspects in addition to case presentation. Generally, the
32 number and hierarchical status of managers present at the meetings are proportional to the cost and
33 level of intervention of the desired service, involving a larger number and higher level of managers
34 concerning intervening and costly services (such as child placement) (Ebsen, 2018). Thus, the
35 introduction of the AC as a case is theoretically and empirically likely to emphasize both the
36 contradiction and reconciliation of institutional logics in social work practice and how professionals
37 are responding as a result.
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50 This article proceeds as follows. First, neo-institutionalism and the concept of “institutional work”
51 and their contributions to studies of social work are presented. The article proceeds to link this
52 framework with the sociology of professions, hereby providing terminology to identify and discuss
53 social work responses. Subsequently, the field of Danish child protection is introduced, followed by
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4 a description of the methodology. Finally, the empirical findings are presented and discussed
5 drawing on the theoretical framework.
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8 **Theorizing Technologies of Government and Agentic Social Work** 9

10 Arguably, the AC can be interpreted as a form of technology of government. Returning to Rose
11 (1999) in his development on Foucault's concept of governmentality, such technologies are
12 'imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects
13 and averting certain undesired events' and as characterized by an "assemblage of forms of practical
14 knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority,
15 forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, (...) to achieve certain outcomes in
16 terms of the conduct of the governed" (Rose, 1999, p. 52). Thus, technologies of government can
17 underpin a specific conduct of conduct (e.g. through the hierarchization of knowledge types or
18 structuring the line of argumentation deployed by social workers via AC meetings). Such a
19 conceptual approach is fruitful, as it targets empirical inquiry towards studying attempts of control
20 and regulation and the different rationalities and technologies underpinning rationalized and
21 calculated interventions that govern the existence and experience of people (Rose, 2000, p. 322).
22 Technologies of government are hybrid by nature. This is expressed in how political deliberation is
23 enacted at a distance through the medium of other action (e.g. via technologies). A specific conduct
24 is "continuously monitored and reshaped by logics immanent within all networks of practice" (Ibid.,
25 p. 325), emphasizing the non-linear operation of technologies of government. Thus, ACs as
26 technologies of government are infused with a constellation of logics which is carried and
27 reproduced through the conduct of ACs far from the "political apparatus" (Ibid. p. 323). Merging
28 this conceptualization with neo-institutionalism, this practice is also shaped by its localized
29 implementation and the agency deployed by individuals, e.g. targeting focus on economizing with
30 services and compliance to legislation or policy. As a result, heterogenic practices are produced as
31 the state logics influx with other logics at the micro-level. This perception of technology is not
32 restricted to electronic devices such as the computer, but highlights that technologies require "the
33 assembling together of lines of connection amongst a diversity of types of knowledge, forces,
34 capacities, skills, dispositions and types of judgment" (Ibid., p. 56). Thus, also AC meetings as a
35 social practice can be understood through this conceptual lens.
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55 ACs have been shaped by wider changes in the institutional environment of social work. Specific
56 logics on how to govern the conduct of social work have been introduced or strengthened by means
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4 of decreasing autonomy, standardization of methods and documentation and by hierarchizing the
5 knowledge types deemed legitimate for assessment. Technologies of government, strengthened by
6 technological advancement, suggest divergent outcomes for the professions in modern society.
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10 Some have brought forward almost dystopian predictions of an end to the professions (as we know
11 them) (Richan and Mendelson, 1973; Susskind and Susskind, 2015). At the other end of the
12 continuum is research focusing on strategies that professionals can deploy to counteract potential
13 de-professionalization effects. This position arguably points to suggestions for agentic social work.
14 Furthermore, the sociology of professions has contributed with conceptualization of transformations
15 within the professions that may enable them to adapt to the challenges of working in large-scale
16 organizations (Evetts, 2011). This article positions itself in the latter end of the continuum, focusing
17 on professional responses to multiple institutional logics. Here, the neo-institutional perspective is a
18 fruitful avenue for such an approach. This is due to its inclusion of societal context, organizational
19 and micro-level practices, providing an understanding of how norms, values and rationales present
20 at field level are reflected in individual behavior (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Drawing on
21 Scott's definition (2014) institutions consist of: "(...) regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive
22 elements, that together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to
23 social life" (pp. 56-57). Both behavior and material resources are central, pointing to including
24 analysis of how institutions are produced, reproduced, sustained and changed by specific activities
25 and resources (Ibid.), reflected in both materiality (e.g. documents) as well as collective and
26 individual behavior (e.g. during assessment and granting of services).
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40 Neo-institutionalism traditionally studies the belief systems that characterize a specific institutional
41 field (Reay and Jones, 2016). Within these fields shared rules and norms are developed, and
42 organizations and actors within the field are gradually infused by them (Greenwood and Suddaby,
43 2006). Thus, it is possible to analyze Danish child protection as a field distinguished from other
44 service areas (e.g. the educational sector) in which shared norms, strategies and rules about how to
45 provide service to citizens (children, youth and families) are gradually diffused in organizations and
46 individuals (e.g. managers and social workers). The focus on institutional multiplicity (Greenwood
47 *et al.*, 2010), contributes by targeting attention to identifying the divergent ways that contradictions
48 are reflected in professionals' responses. In scholarly debate, neo-institutionalism has been
49 criticized for lacking focus on the existence of multiple logics in organizations (Greenwood *et al.*
50 2010), and for mostly focusing on analysis at the macro-level (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). Other
51 scholars have criticized how neo-institutionalism tends to overlook individual behavior as object for
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4 analysis and thus the agents inhabiting organizations (Battilana and D’unno, 2009; Bévort and
5 Suddaby, 2016; Hallett and Ventresca, 2006). This article addresses this criticism, as it focuses on
6 identifying empirical depth-level descriptions of how social workers contest, negotiate and couple
7 multiple institutional logics.
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11 ***The Contributions from Institutional Work in Studying Social Work Practice***

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13 Traditionally, neo-institutionalism has provided explanations to homogeneity among organizations
14 as attempts at (re)gaining legitimacy crucial for organizational survival (Dimaggio and Powell,
15 1983). Moving past focusing on homogeneity and stability, scholars have driven further theorization
16 to processes of change and transformation (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Rooted in this is an
17 emphasis on agency and micro-level practice. Institutional work is defined as “the purposive action
18 of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions”
19 (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 215) which provides terminology and conceptualization for
20 analyzing how actions bring about institutional change (Lawrence *et al.*, 2009).
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28 Institutional work not only focuses on the intentional and easily observed, but also on more subtle
29 ways that actors adapt to, compromise on, or adjust to institutional elements (Ibid.), which points to
30 studying deployment and response at close range. As the actors of interest in this article are the
31 professionals, clarification is needed. Following the focus on social *processes* as social workers’
32 strategies and responses, this article refrains from contributing to discussions on how to define a
33 profession (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1994). This involves moving from analyzing a ‘profession’ to
34 studying the process of ‘professionalization’ (Hughes, 1958; 1994; Evetts, 2003). An advantage to
35 this perspective is its ability to draw attention to the maintenance of professional identities as non-
36 fixed entities which are socially and dynamically constructed (Martimianakis *et al.*, 2009). This
37 builds on the advantages of coupling institutional work with the sociology of professions suggested
38 by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006).
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47 Drawing on research on dialectics by Werner and Baxter (1994), Hargrave and Van de Ven (2009)
48 present four ways of responding to, and managing, contradiction: 1) the either/or approach, 2)
49 moderation, 3) the both/and approach and 4) reframing them as complementary (Ibid., p. 125). Here
50 the ‘both/and’ and ‘moderation’ strategies address both contradicting poles, while the ‘either/or’
51 approach focuses on one pole only (Ibid.). While the ‘either/or’ approach can result in complete
52 denial of the pole contradicting the institutional logic, the ‘moderation’ approach evenly distributes
53 resources between the two poles (Ibid., p.127). Here the actor perceives the poles as mutually
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4 divergent with no possibility of synergy. When applying the ‘both/and’ approach the actor
5 recognizes both contradicting poles and projects them as mutually complementary (Ibid.).
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8 Drawing on the sociology of professions, another strategy for coping is to engage collectively and
9 individually in re-professionalization. As described by Kindiak and Randall (2008) this can be
10 performed as an expansion of practice (Ibid.), pointing to the success of nurses in assimilating work
11 elements in anesthesia resulting in the “nurse anesthetist”. Drawing on Evetts (2005), another
12 coping mechanism is an incremental change from professionalism as an occupational value
13 acquired through specialization, education and training towards “organizational professionalism”.
14 Evetts describes how organizations now define professionalism, hereby including the logics of
15 organization and market. Thus, professionalism as a third logic separated from market and state
16 (Freidson, 1994) is instead gradually linked to them. As managers engage in discursive processes
17 (Evetts, 2005), the objectives of the organization become standards for the professional-citizen
18 interaction and define evaluative criteria and what counts as good performance. These discursive
19 practices are gradually integrated into the professional self-understanding, simultaneously limiting
20 discretion. Consequently, social workers’ adaptation to the challenges of logics may involve an
21 incremental change in their perception of professionalism.
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33 ***The Field of Danish Child Protection***

34 In Denmark, the municipalities are responsible for the child protection sector (Pösö, Skivenes and
35 Hestbæk, 2013). Most cases originate from a notification of concern sent to the municipality. If the
36 notification points towards concern of the child/youth, the municipality is obligated to enact an
37 investigation (The Danish Social Service Act). If this investigation recommends intervention, a plan
38 of action is produced in collaboration with the child/youth/parents, pointing towards the
39 recommended intervention(s) and deciding on the objectives and subsidiary goals. After
40 effectuation of the intervention, the municipality is obligated to evaluate its effectiveness (Ibid.).
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47 As other welfare states, Danish child protection is challenged. Cost overruns, lack of efficiency of
48 services and high-profile cases are among the drivers of technologies of government to improve
49 practice (Pedersen and Wilkinson, 2018). The aim of ACs was to strengthen control of expenses,
50 ensure compliance to legislation and standardization in accordance with the municipalities’ political
51 standards of service. Following cost overruns, legislation was changed in 2012, stating that
52 assessment should be based on both professional *and* economic considerations. Notably, economic
53 considerations have long been part of practice and the market logic is not contrary to social work
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(Schröder, 2014). However, the development was criticized by The Danish Association of Social Workers, questioning the use of ACs (Danish Association of Social Workers, 2014). The ACs advanced managerial options for audit into case work and reduced social workers' exclusive jurisdiction and autonomy to grant services. Secondly, an audit changes the service being audited (Munro, 2004) and its criteria may not reflect the values and priorities of the professionals. Finally, ACs structure and depict a 'hierarchization of knowledge' (Kamp and Hansen, 2019, p. 15) carried by management, as they have the last say in decisions. However, this hierarchization is not necessarily consistent with the stratified, non-aggregated nature of social work knowledge. This further begs the question of what effects ACs carry, and how they impact the status and self-perception of professionals.

Methodology and Data

Danish child protection and the AC have been selected as cases as they are both theoretically and empirically likely to highlight institutional multiplicity in social work, and thus to involve rich data on how this institutional multiplicity is handled in practice. Furthermore, AC meetings are prone to highlight the encounter of multiple logics in the every-day assessment process and in the interplay between management and social workers.

A qualitative approach was applied that draws on document analysis covering the field level, and fieldwork covering nine months in a child protection agency. Fieldwork included a document analysis of materials relating to the AC such as instructions, protocols, and 'code of conduct' policies related to its deployment. The article also draws on qualitative interviews with social workers, front-level managers and team leaders (n=30 interviews), additional informal interviews, as well as observation of practice as a way of documenting assessment as a social process (Angrosino, 2007, p. 24). The analysis of the AC involved observation (n=20 meetings) and audio recordings from interviews (lasting from 30 minutes to 1½ hours) were transcribed and coded using NVivo. Firstly, data was coded 'first-level' (Punch, 2014, p. 174), namely coding based on the text's own wording as presented in Figure 1. Then, second-level codes (Ibid.) were produced, focusing on creating patterns in and across the text (highlighted in green color), gradually reaching higher inference as interpretation.

[Insert figure 1 about here] Figure 1: Coding Structure

The close study of the social workers in their daily routine, combining interviewing and observation, enabled the inclusion of a variety of responses, covering their espoused theories on

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4 how they strategically coped with the AC, to less observable, taken for granted theories-in-use when
5 engaging with them. Moreover, it enabled identification of findings that reflected the variations,
6 ambiguities and nuances in the relationship between technology of government and professional –
7 including divergent examples of both resistance and acceptance.
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14 **Findings: Assessment Committees – Response and Strategy**

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16 The AC had been divided into three depending on the nature of the requested service;
17 ‘Replacement’, ‘Preventative services’ and ‘Other’.
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20 Management described the objective of the ACs as a measure to: *“manage expenses, ensure a more*
21 *uniform level of services, and to offer the individual social worker competent feedback on the case”*
22 (Manager, P). However, some social workers described how they viewed the AC meetings as
23 oriented towards ‘production’ as oppose to feedback on the subject matter of the case: *“When I’ve*
24 *tried to use it [the AC meetings] as a means for gaining feedback because I needed to hear what*
25 *management thought, I’ve felt like I was wasting my time (..) they [management] are in the domain*
26 *of production like: ‘we need to make a decision!’”* (Social worker, C).
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33 Management had implemented initiatives to regulate social workers’ presentations, e.g. a “speech
34 paper” organizing and structuring presentations. In accordance with the speech paper, the social
35 workers were instructed to make a short presentation of the case along with a description of what
36 services they were asking management to grant. Moreover, they were instructed to present
37 information on the family and network of the child and justify why the proposed service (e.g.
38 placement of the child) could not have been different, e.g. a less intervening and costly preventative
39 service. Finally, they were asked to estimate the time of the service and how the custody holder and
40 child over the age of 12 related to the proposed service and concern for the child.
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47 Yet, according to the social workers, the speech paper was either not used, or they were not aware
48 of its existence. What became apparent, however, was that social workers would reflect on and
49 develop strategies to increase chances of getting the grant which are described in the following.
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The Strategy of Salesmanship

Management described how the likelihood of getting the grant was dependent on the social worker's power of exposition : *"A social worker who wants to force something through (..) to bring matters to a head, that's just a question of how well you argue for it"* (Manager, N).

As one social worker described; *"The way a case [service proposal] is received and what you can push through is always dependent on how you present a case. Because, I can omit a lot of information to push a specific thing through (..) It's clear, that when you're in a situation where you're thinking; this is going to be difficult to push through, then you're emphasizing all the concern that you have, because that's what going to get you the grant"* (Social worker, S). Another social worker described how she prepared prior to entering the AC meeting: *"Then I prepare my argumentation for it [the proposed service] (..) you're going in there to sell it, so it's not unimportant! I think some people are better at selling it than others, and are able push more things through, so it has a lot to do with that"* (Social worker, I).

The Merchant Strategy

As described, the market logic is central to assessment. Accordingly, social workers demonstrated ways of integrating economic factors into the presentation to legitimize the proposed grant. They would present their case and suggested service (occasionally also proposing a service provider) and describe how they had already scouted the market for the cheapest possible service, reflecting a market logic. Other social workers emphasized investment as a legitimization strategy, pointing to how intensive (expensive) early intervention would likely lessen the social problem, thereby avoiding prolonging or worsening the case. The presence of the market logic in the line of thought amongst social workers was also reflected in them being puzzled by managers' occasional insistence on selecting service providers that were more expensive than those proposed in the presentation. This was a result of a municipal policy to use its own service providers, rather than obtain services on the market. As described by a team leader, professionals may have further adapted to the market logic with time: *"I've noticed during the last 10 years that the economic perspective has been strengthened to great extent (...) I don't think you experience those 'oldies' that formerly were like 'I'm not going to talk about economy (...) the social workers we have employed today, they are definitely aware of the fact that there is one bag of money, and it has to be distributed in the best possible way (...)"* (Team leader, B).

The Doomsayer Strategy

Another strategy of some social workers was to address issues (or risks) of maladministration in prior casework or point to severity in case content. One social worker stated: “*This is one of those cases where, if The National Social Appeals Board were to look at it, they would say this is not good enough*” (Field notes, AC), pointing to a lack of case progress and documented measures taken by the municipality. At the time of the meeting in question, the municipality was dealing with the aftermaths of a disclosure of maladministration. Thus, focus on compliance and documentation had expanded. The doomsayer strategy arguably reflected an awareness of the institutional setting, characterized by a focus on compliance and risk elimination which the social worker was able to harness as a means for gaining the grant.

To address the apparent maladministration in casework a jurisconsult was employed, who was present at the AC meetings henceforward. On describing when she was more prone to make a thorough preparation prior to an AC meeting one social worker described how the attendance of the jurisconsult seemed to influence the grant discussion; “*It’s the cases where I’m really concerned, where I know this is going to be an expensive service, because I know it [the AC meeting] has a strong focus on the economic perspective, more than we do as social workers. We are more oriented towards what works and what measures are needed(..) a case where I’m really concerned for an unborn child and I was proposing a placement and a parental competency evaluation (..) and that’s normally something that’s rarely granted. However, it’s my impression that some things have changed after we have hired a jurisconsult and she’s present at the AC meetings. I had prepared all these, in my opinion, good arguments, but I really didn’t need to present them to push the grant through. Because she [the jurisconsult] was very like, law-oriented; ‘is there sufficient foundation for this or is there not?’, and she thought there was, and it was granted, where I formerly had to argue much more why we couldn’t evaluate [parental competency] in some other way to gain that knowledge*” (Social worker, L). Such accounts can be interpreted as indications of a shift in the constellation of logics in the AC, where the employment of the jurisconsult resulted in a strengthened focus of compliance simultaneously limiting the focus on or possibility for economizing with (costly) services.

The Delegate Strategy

Another strategy was strategic case representation. As it was not required that presentations had to be done by the assigned social worker, some social workers would identify ‘strong’ presenters with a successful track record and make them perform the presentation, referring to a specific trait of craftsmanship for case presentation that was likely to gain legitimacy from managers, thus increasing the chances of achieving the grant.

Detachment from Decision-making as a Strategy for Client Alignment

While the findings express intentional strategies to increase chances of obtaining the grant, they also indicate ambiguity in social workers’ responses to the AC. A mid-level manager described how the introduction of the AC brought about a new distribution of accountability for case work between the social workers and management: *“To the individual social worker, it [the AC] carries with it the possibility [for the social worker] to disclaim his/her accountability. I can sit there as a social worker and be extremely concerned and go in and present my case based on what I have and get a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’. But, you see, the decision is not mine. It’s not me sitting there as an individual deciding on the fate of children and youth”* (Mid-level manager, B). Among the social workers, some reported that a way of coping with contradiction (e.g. when the service was denied), involved a detachment from accountability as a strategy for establishing or maintaining a well-functioning client-relation: *“I use it [the AC] as a way of protecting myself (...) it is not me making the decisions (...) I can say to the families that I need to go to my managers (...) It makes it relatively easy to subsequently bring them a rejection, but it’s at the same time a nice feeling to tell them that I got the grant. You can really make a strong alignment with the client (...)”* (Social worker, C). From this perspective, the AC enabled the social worker to maintain a client-relation as an alliance, which was beneficial for cooperation.

Institutional Contradictions and Social Work Awareness

When faced with contradiction concerning assessment in general, social workers varied in their response. Some expressed an effort to balance divergent policy requirements of both compliance and close, relational interaction with clients, highlighting their irreconcilable nature: *“On the one hand, we have to be persons of authority that just comply with legislation (...) you can do almost whatever you want as long as you’ve written that you’ve completed a §-48 conversation [Child interview]. On the other hand, you must be ‘close to the family’ (...) it doesn’t make any sense (...)”*

(Social worker, R). Others developed strategies merging contradiction, as described in the following.

Moving from the Vocation of 'the Savior' to 'Person of Authority'

During auditing, social workers received feedback concerning the level of compliance which was given by frontline managers as a percentage score. Management deployed a digital content management system (CMS) to supervise compliance and timely casework. Extracted data were converted into timetables, and cases were given a yellow or red color if they were close to, or had exceeded, deadlines. Social workers described how the nature of 'real-life case work' to great extent differed from their initial expectations prior to employment: "(...) *What I'm thinking is the extent to which you're not able to change the world at all (...) many newcomers go and say 'Oh I'm going to make a difference! (..) and then they're actually about to become persons of authority (...)*". (Social worker, R). Similarly, reflecting on her practice, another social worker explained: "(...) *I thought I was going to go out and save the world, now I see myself as primarily a person of authority (...)*" (Social worker, I).

Interestingly, social workers emphasized the importance of social work education when hiring new employees. They, however, did not ascribe this to the relational, human-centered aspect of social work, but rather to a capability of entering organizational settings as a person of authority. This capability was emphasized as central to the social work self-understanding, compared to similar educations, such as pedagogy, as one social worker explained: "*Because you have an education in pedagogy, it doesn't make you a good social worker (...) social workers are not sent out in the world for the sake of the people. We are sent out in the world for the sake of the system. As a social worker of authority, you are part of a political organization. Policy dictates what you are to think (...) a pedagogue is maybe more capable of saying: 'I like finger-painting and sense-gardening' (..) I can't go and say: we can just compromise here! (...)*" (Social worker, A).

Coping as an Expansion of Practice

Research on replacement of children and youth has pointed to the completion of school education as central for continuous welfare (Pertou *et al.*, 2008). Thus, Danish municipalities have implemented initiatives targeted at both primary school system and day-care. In the studied municipality one such initiative was school and day-care social workers representing an expansion of practice, simultaneously transcending organizational boundaries. The school social worker, who changed location between child agency and schools, described herself as a 'translator of contradiction' and a

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4 'mediator' between the two professions. She demonstrated an awareness of her own institutional
5 embeddedness and of the possible conflicts in the interplay between the two sectors. A central task
6 involved explaining the framework conditions of social work (legislation, workload and time
7 demands) to school employees. "(...) *I function as a bridge-builder between the two administrations*
8 *(...) because we simply do not understand each other, and co-operation has been strained (...) my*
9 *role is to try to open the world for the two positions (...)*" (School social worker)'. She ascribed
10 challenges of co-operation due to contradicting roles: '(...) *in the social sector you are a person of*
11 *authority, in the school you have another relationship with parents (...)*' (Ibid.). Furthermore, she
12 functioned as a gatekeeper, scrutinizing concerns and judging whether a notification was needed
13 and ensuring it contained the necessary information for assessment. She would supplement the
14 notification verbally to the assigned social worker, transferring contextual information and
15 narratives, e.g. chronology and co-operation with, and social characteristics of, parents.

25 Discussion

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27 Drawing on McClelland's (1990) distinction between professionalization *from within* (by the
28 occupational group) and *from above* (external forces), Evetts and Wilson (2006) describe
29 professionalization as a discourse of professional change, where a specific discourse from within an
30 occupation may prove valuable in the (re)reconstruction of professional identity and client image, in
31 favor of the occupation (Ibid., pp. 42-43). As this article suggests, managerial initiatives in Danish
32 child protection have strengthened focus on compliance and (economic) efficiency in assessment.
33 This is reflected in the logic and hierarchization of knowledge in the AC, as well as through
34 expansions of practice, reflecting professionalization attempts *from above*. The speech paper can be
35 interpreted as an example of technologies of government as it sought to support social workers'
36 consideration of compliance to legislation and economizing with services prior to making the actual
37 presentation reflecting a "conduct of conduct". As the findings suggest, multiple logics coexisted in
38 the AC and the continuous production of service grant were enabled through by the coupling of
39 logics. However, the coexistence of logics did not eliminate mutual contradictions. As described,
40 the introduction of a jurisconsult in the AC contributed to a strengthened focus on compliance and
41 thus (at times) to rising expenses, hereby blurring out the focus on economizing reflecting a market
42 logic. As indicated in the findings, social workers developed strategies to address contradictions
43 fostered by the introduction of ACs. Drawing on the concept of institutional work and the four ways
44 of responding to contradiction presented by Hargrave and Van de Ven (2009), the strategy of
45 detachment from accountability reflected an and/or approach. Through this strategy, social workers
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4 were able to clearly demarcate professional and individual assessment reflecting the logic of
5 profession from managerial decision, simultaneously maintaining and managing contradiction. By
6 contrast, both the merchant and doomsayer strategy reflected a moderation approach as they
7 enabled social workers to adopt and deploy the terminology associated with the logics of
8 management; respectively compliance and economizing, and couple them with professional
9 assessment during AC meetings.
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15 The findings also indicate that some social workers and managers considered bureaucratic
16 allegiance (e.g. as compliance) as well as economizing as more than organizational conditions (and
17 contradictions to “actual” social work), but rather as central traits to the profession. This is reflected
18 in social workers’ accounts of how social work education enables them to become persons of
19 authority in contrast to other (competing) professions (such as pedagogy). This can be interpreted as
20 a professionalization strategy *from within*, as well as a discursive demarcation strategy to maintain
21 prior claim to a specific field. Combined with the merchant strategy this indicates a gradual change
22 in social workers’ understanding of professionalism. This may reflect a strengthened market logic in
23 the institutional field of Danish child protection materializing itself in legislation at macro-level and
24 diffused in assessment at micro-level.
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33 Returning to Evetts (2005) and organizational professionalism, it may also reflect a gradually
34 tighter link between the logics of organization and market with professionalism, rather than
35 positioning them as distinct, clearly demarcated categories. Similarly, the development of the
36 school social worker can be interpreted as an expansion of practice. The school social worker was
37 able to bridge divergent practice between fields, which reflects an agentic awareness of institutional
38 complexity and contradiction, as well as an ability to translate them. Returning to Hargrave and Van
39 de Ven’s (2009) this reflects a ‘both/and’ approach, as the school social worker was able to
40 simultaneously hold two contradictory positions in mind.
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47 These findings may reflect how social workers’ can act as ‘hybrid professionals’ able to acquire the
48 qualifications needed to function outside their primary field of expertise and linking multiple logics
49 (Blomgren and Waks, 2015). Thus, the findings support other studies of professional hybridity that
50 have shown how the dichotomy between professionalism and managerialism is blurred in the real-
51 life organizational practice (Noordegraaf, 2011). Arguably, this hybridity has always existed in
52 social work. As argued by Abbott (1995), social work is characterized by working to draw together
53 varying services from other professions, for example hospitals and special schools (Ibid., p. 559).
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4 However, this hybridity may also explain social work's struggle to define its profession and
5 embedded body of knowledge in any uniform way. Returning to Abbott (1988), social work is a
6 profession of boundaries. Thus, it is possible that further internalization of compliance in social
7 work may intensify the demarcation problems characterizing the profession and moreover threaten
8 its exclusive position and prior claim to case work.
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13 The (intensified) installation of these elements as legitimate professional traits may provide
14 explanatory power to understand how social workers are able to assimilate logics that do not
15 correlate with the dominant perception of the vocational traits of their profession and thus adjust to
16 new institutional elements. Thus, the findings contribute to the literature on how individuals
17 inhabiting organizations are responding to multiple institutional logics (Pache and Santos, 2013).
18 The findings suggest that social workers are generally knowledgeable about the divergent logics
19 and interests in the institutional setting they navigate, which is reflected in their strategies. Applying
20 institutional work involves challenging the widespread perception of discrepancy between
21 organization and professional, highlighting how professionals empirically have the capacity to adapt
22 and cope with organizational work. The findings suggest a case of gradual adaptations to an
23 institutional environment that both constrain and enable specific behavior (such as expansion of
24 practice), which are again a result of professionalization processes from above and within.
25 However, the coexistence of multiple logics can be a challenge for hybrid agents that balance within
26 the margins of different logics (Sirris, 2019). Thus, it is important to emphasize that the observation
27 that some social workers were able to adapt to or even internalize contradictory elements in their
28 self-understanding, is not an argument for downplaying the problematic effects caused by limiting
29 autonomy and exclusive jurisdiction e.g. by introducing ACs.
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43 Arguably, possible pitfalls are embedded in the professional responses. Firstly, as one maintenance
44 strategy is characterized by a discursive demarcation strategy, tightly linking social work education
45 with the organization rather than to similar welfare professions, it may threaten inter-professional
46 collaboration, e.g. needed in timely intervention. Secondly, the findings point towards detachment
47 as a strategy for dealing with contradiction and institutional complexity in both the delegate strategy
48 and in the emphasis on lack of accountability for assessment, which is instead pushed upwards to
49 management. Regarding the apparent movement from professionalism as a vocation targeted for the
50 sake of individuals towards organizational professionalism detected in the study, it is uncertain how
51 such strategies affect the interrelationship with citizens.
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Conclusion

Research on the impact of technologies of government in social work has generally focused on how it constrains practice, autonomy and profession. Thus, implementation of such strategies in child protection are theoretically and empirically likely to result in clashes due to contradictions in everyday assessment. However, a shift in focus to understanding the resistance and persistence of social workers and their capability to produce daily run-of-the-mill services is necessary. As norms, values and rationales at field level have gradually diffused practice, social workers have not remained passive actors. As shown, they depict divergent responses, mirroring the multiplicity and ambiguity of logics in practice, which is reflected in strategies ranging from detachment of accountability, expansion of practice and internalization of new logics as encompassed by – rather than in opposition to – professionalism.

Examples of professional agentic practice to manage contradiction do not obviate reservations towards the introduction or strengthening of technologies of government, how they are deployed and their effects on practice. However, as the implementation of technologies of government is unlikely to decline, it is arguably important for research on the professions to develop further, not only regarding how it is transforming practice, but also how practice is changing to address this transformation. The findings of this article indicate that some social workers' self-understanding is transforming, moving away from professionalism as a logic distinct from the market and the state. Thus, the findings indicate that what constitutes professionalism is presently constructed, and there is reason to further investigate indications of a profession in transition.

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