

**Antrittsvorlesung Prof. Dr. Catrin Heite**  
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## **Was die Simpsons mit Sozialpädagogik zu tun haben - oder: die Familie, das Soziale und die Pädagogik**

With this title I would like to highlight some topical and historical aspects of Social Pedagogy as an academic discipline.

*What do the Simpsons have in common with Social Pedagogy? A first answer is: they both make the family a subject of discussion.*

Was die Simpsons mit Sozialpädagogik zu tun haben -  
oder: die Familie, das Soziale und die Pädagogik

### **Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik thematisieren die Familie**

For this first answer, I will begin by showing a short scene. You will see the former president of the USA, George (Herbert) Bush, who talks about his goals in family politics. To express these family-political contents more pictorially he refers to two fictional families, namely the Waltons and the Simpsons. This is what he has to say:

Was die Simpsons mit Sozialpädagogik zu tun haben -  
oder: die Familie, das Soziale und die Pädagogik

### **Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik thematisieren die Familie**

"We are going to keep on trying to  
strengthen the American family, to  
make American families a lot more  
like the Waltons and a lot less like the  
Simpsons."

(George H. W. Bush)

This is how, in 1992, the former president of the USA brings the objectives of family politics to the point. In the words of the French sociologist and social historian Jacques Donzelot, it is, in political terms, a matter of supporting the "order of family", and this task is assigned to Social Pedagogy.

With his statement in 1992, George Bush points to a contrast, a line of differentiation between the two medial representations of family. Using this reference should demonstrate what the ideal is that an American family is supposed to follow; what the prototype of a “good” family looks like, and what its antithesis is: what is to be avoided and what a “bad” family looks like.



The Waltons are shown as a family with a large number of children. Soundly based through three generations, they have – performing contemporary norms of gender, culture and class – finally successfully overcome various burdens and strokes of fate of the 1930s and 1940s (The Great Depression, World War II).

On the other hand, the Simpsons, as an uncultivated and unsound “chaos family” seem to be the opposite, the unwanted other – in the words of the philosopher Judith Butler, the object of the hegemonial discourse of family politics

The Simpsons are discussed here as the family-political criteria of demarcation, which symbolizes the negativity of the dysfunctional, disorganized family, which thus represents the counterpart to what (neoliberal and neoconservative) welfare states imagine the “order of family” or the “orderly family” to be.

Thinking in terms of family as the core, the most important social foundation of society, we must also consider Hegel’s reflection on family, bourgeois society and state as three dimensions of the moral order –, so the political objective becomes the strengthening of this *familial foundation of society* in a *specific way*, in order to maintain societal order.

Ideas about gender and generational relations are inscribed in this political program. And Social Pedagogy is involved in a specific way in these political efforts to influence “the family” as a core category of society.

This means that *Social Pedagogy as a profession* intervenes (in terms of educational counseling, social-pedagogic family assistance and crisis intervention) in the living space of family.

*Social-Pedagogy as a science* deals with these specific interventions as well as with the relationship between historically specific political programs, their inscribed norms and social-pedagogic thinking and action.

For example, Social Pedagogy deals analytically with the “power of gender norms” – to use another of Judith Butler’s terms. This “power of gender norms” imposes specific requirements on men and women, fathers and mothers, which evoke gender-specific tasks in the family. Even today, these ideas are still dominant: that of the male breadwinner and that of the caring housewife and mother.

In the framework of her analysis of these hegemonial ideas and family-political demands, Martina Richter shows in her recently published study of social-pedagogic family assistance that this professional practice is structured by those political, social and societal norms of "the bourgeois nuclear family as the yardstick and (hetero)normative, gender-coded criteria of comparison and orientation" (2013: 15).

Social Pedagogy as a science can therefore reveal that professional practices are implicitly and explicitly normative – in the example of the family, the dictum is still the heteronormative relationship with gender-specific task sharing in terms of paid labor and housework. This heavily criticized and actually outdated dictum is based on the dominant family political programmatics, as well as on social-pedagogic interventions, as shown in the current heteronormative to homophobic debates on rainbow families and adoption rights for homosexual couples.

Consequently, it is a matter of professional reflexivity to relate critically to these tasks and exclusions, to these potentially norming, regulating and denying accesses to the addressees' lifestyles. The heteronormative yardstick, which also concerns class and generation – metaphorized in the statement '*a lot more like the Waltons and a lot less like the Simpsons*' – a decisive metaphor and requirement, generates ideas and boundaries of recognizable ways of family life, forms of sexuality, gender-hierarchical divisions of labor and family work – which assign professional work to the man and caring family work to the woman – and linked to that "correct" and "good" education, parental competencies in education, child welfare or children's rights.

These ideas again correlate with specific forms of social-pedagogic framing of the family and the corresponding professional case-work. This case-work addresses all those who do not meet the anti-thetical notions of "should and should not" – like the Simpsons – as being deficient, as undesirable deviants from the directive.

These ideas and requirements, and also the concrete discursive statements about families – and thus about potential addressees of Social Pedagogy – represent the relinquishing of borders drawn for guidance, with which political and social-pedagogic theories and practices mark the lifestyles and situations of persons, families or other actors as problematic, delicate, disturbing. Certain forms of living are marked as unacceptable, as abnormal. Thus those discussed become actors to be modulated, eradicated, pedagogized, disciplined, moralized, normalized, integrated or re-integrated. For *Social-Pedagogy as a science* this is a matter of uncovering, analyzing and criticizing these more than problematic accesses to families – or addressees more generally speaking – with the *tools* of Social Pedagogy as a science.

The political – and thus for us also social-pedagogical – meaning of "family" is also analyzed by the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault. In his critical discussion of forms of power and domination he shows that the family is relevant because – I quote – "as soon as you want to achieve something within the population concerning sexuality, demography, the number of children, or consumption, the family has to be taken into account. However, in doing so the family becomes an *instrument*; it serves as *privileged instrument for the government of the population*" (2005: 167).

And this very analysis applies to the statement by George Bush that I started with.

In this analytical perspective of political tasks and normative statements Social Pedagogy is concerned with finding out where in this understanding of political and societal commands there are

possibilities to weaken and circumvent those commands in order to open up possibilities of *being different* for the addressees.

In terms of theories of recognition and boundaries – I will come back to the boundary-analytical perspective at the end of my speech – social-pedagogical theory and practice is about *dismantling* inclusions and exclusions, as well as limitations, and *enabling* by pedagogic interventions against the normalizing, commanding and disciplining requirement *'to make families a lot less like the Simpsons'*.

As a *pedagogic* dimension within that, I would also like to mention the following aspect: How is this negative foil, the politically undesired family, actually presented, and also how is its *other*, its positively considered counterpart – the “*good family*” – presented?

The “*bad family*” – that is, the family denigrated because it does not meet the requirements – is presented as disorderly, chaotic, unregulated, rarely susceptible to education, rarely caring. Bart Simpson, for example, figures as a rebellious, difficult, obstinate, challenging child – and this presentation is criticized as an inadequate role model for children. In the political and medial **mainstream discourse** Bart is considered to be a danger to education because he is proud to be a so-called “*underachiever*” and because he shows an absolutely negative, rebellious or resistant attitude towards his education.



Accordingly, as a dysfunctional family, the Simpson family appears as a potential addressee of social-pedagogical intervention:

Bart is difficult to educate,

Lisa, as a highly talented child, does not get sufficient support,

The baby, Maggie, is regularly neglected,

Thus, the parents – Marge and Homer – do not seem to be doing well with their *educational competencies*.

This is also shown in the episode “*Bart versus thanksgiving*”, with which I want to further elaborate my explanation of what Social Pedagogy as a science deals with. And so, after – or rather, in relation to – the family, I come to the second focus: “*the social*”. Here again, the question is:

**What do the Simpsons have in common with Social Pedagogy? A second answer to that is: they both make “*the social*” subject of discussion.**

Was die Simpsons mit Sozialpädagogik zu tun haben -  
oder: die Familie, das Soziale und die Pädagogik

**Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik  
thematisieren die Familie**

**Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik  
thematisieren das Soziale**

And they both make "*les Misérables*" of this world the subject of discussion.

This answer raises the question of why *the social* – and also *les Misérables* – are handled pedagogically at all.

But first to these two terms: the social and *les Misérables*, since they also made it into the Simpsons.



Here we see a scene from an episode of The Simpsons, in which an employee of a private security firm reads the novel *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo.



This social drama was first published in 1862 and offers a presentation of French society from 1815 to the Revolution of 1832.

In his historical novel, Hugo portrays the condition of life of the so-called lower class. The overall narrative is also interpreted as a call for the establishment of a republican society as a contribution to the solution of the *social question*.

So, the keywords: the social question, the social, *les Misérables* – what do they all have to do with the episode of The Simpsons?

I will just summarize the episode: The task of the security guard reading his historical, socially critical book is to secure the property of the super-rich Mr. Burns. So there sits our guard, reading *Les Misérables*. This citation of *les Misérables* in a current, satirical cartoon series critical of society raises topics that are also present in socio-historical and contemporary analyses:

- Poverty
- Wealth
- Pauperization
- Extreme social inequalities

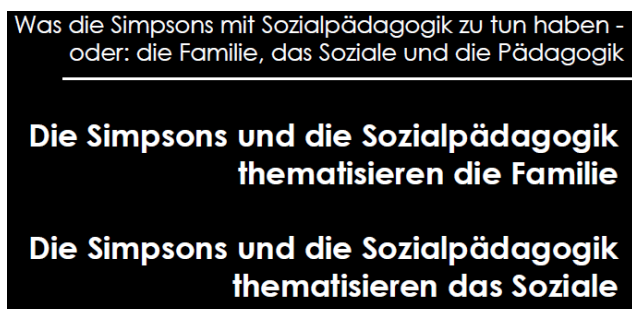
In this episode of The Simpsons, historical and contemporary thematizations of the social, misery, devaluation, recognition and contempt, vulnerability and precariousness come together.



The guard reading *les Misérables* secures wealth and abundance – here visualized by the rich and mean Mr. Burns, who is sitting all by himself at the overfilled Thanksgiving table.

So, in this current citation of a historical text we have condensed all the topics of poverty and wealth which Social Pedagogy also deals with, such as abundance – here with Mr. Burns – and scarcity – here, as we shall see, with Bart Simpson and Jean Valjean, the protagonist in *les Misérables*.

So what is the connection between Social Pedagogy, the Simpsons and *les Misérables*?



They are connected by the concept of *social* and *societal splitting*.

What connects the two protagonists Bart Simpson and Jean Valjean? Well: In this episode Bart is a remake of Jean Valjean, the fictional character, and the two are connected by falling out of the family context, which is seen as the first subsidiary instance of security, support and care, pre-welfare-state, welfare-state and post-welfare-state.

Hence, "the family" is not only social in the sense of human, common, collective. The meaning of the term "social" is more specific. "Certainly," – as Robert Castel writes in *Metamorphoses of the Social Question* – "the human is a social being and so is the bee".

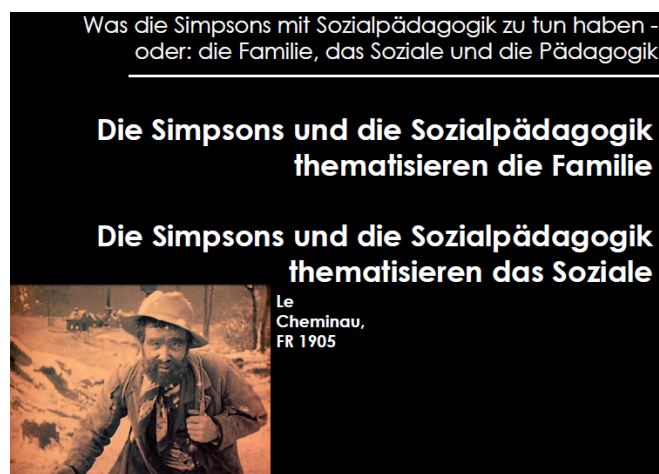
The term "the social" thus designates *more* than human relationships. Going clearly beyond them, "the social" consists of a *specific pattern of practices*, which are based on family and neighborhood relationships, as well as on public, institutionalized, politically established and professionalized relationships and practices – such as Social Pedagogy:

- The family,
- The neighborhood
- The juvenile peer-group
- Educational counseling
- Family support
- Child and youth work
- Drug rehabilitation
- Street social work

These and many other relationships and practices form both the informal-privatized and the formal-institutionalized ensemble that can be described with the term "the social", and within which also, Social Pedagogy as a professionalized institution plays a central role.

So, if the Simpsons quote the novel *les Misérables*, we can say this: Bart Simpson and Jean Valjean are connected by falling out of the family as the social and material instance of support and supply. What they share is being on their own, and consequently having to rely on other informal but *also* public-institutionalized forms of support.

Jean Valjean was sentenced to galley slavery for stealing a loaf of bread for the starving child of his sister.



Here we see a French film adaptation of the novel from 1905.

Valjean has just been paroled and is wandering around in search of overnight accommodation. He embodies the social figure that was described at that time as "the vagabond".

In the 19th century the concept of the vagabond represents the view – still virulent today – that societal cohesion is called into question by the existence of the poor, the unemployed, beggars, vagrants, the isolated and non-integrated.

Thus, the social question becomes a question about the space, the position in society which is permitted to such people at all. Effectively, they belong nowhere; they are despised, detached, with no space and no order – quasi outside the boundaries of the social.



We also encounter Bart as a figure outside the boundaries of the social, as a vagabond. As someone who has broken with his family, he is vagabonding around and his only company is the Simpsons' family dog, Santa's Little Helper.

How come?

Bart had misbehaved badly at the family's Thanksgiving dinner – again: in an argument he badly hurt his sister Lisa by “accidentally” destroying the centerpiece that Lisa had made as decoration for the festive table.

In return, Bart gets into trouble with his parents and as a punishment he is sent to his room. He is allowed to come back to the family celebration only after – an educational intervention by Marge and Homer – he has apologized to Lisa.

This conflictual situation between the siblings and between the generations results in a challenge to familial solidarity. Because Bart is convinced that he has been wronged, he feels blackmailed and runs away. He feels excluded from the – in welfare-theory terms – subsidiary space of support of the family, the informal familial network. As the excluded one, he takes off to find a better place.

Due to the break-up with the family as the subsidiary instance of supply, Bart becomes – like his precursor Jean Valjean – a vagabond, who goes off in search of some other subsistence. In doing so, he finds himself in a “decoupling in the sense of a break-up with the networks of primarily integration” (Castel: 33).

Hence, for Bart – as for Jean Valjean – the only remaining possibility is stealing food.

As we saw, Jean Valjean was sentenced to the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread for his sister's starving child.



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And here Bart the vagabond – excluded from the familial Thanksgiving-celebration – tries to steal a tidbit from Mr. Burn’s overfilled table.

What happens to both of them? Instead of encountering forms of private charity, understanding, social-informal or social-pedagogically professionalized support, they experience what is all too often the historical reaction: repression and criminalization.

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Jean Valjean was convicted, Bart is discovered by the security guard – the one who had been reading *les Misérables* – and is scared away by a pack of guard dogs. In this, Bart equates with the literary Jean Valjean: both needy, they do not get support. Instead, they are criminalized and pursued.

How do their stories continue? First, let’s look at Jean Valjean:

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After his discharge on probation he vagabonds around and finds shelter with a charitable bishop. However, at night he steals the bishop's silverware; he escapes but is discovered and is brought before the bishop by the police the next day. What does the bishop do? He decides – neither punishing or disciplining – on a paradox pedagogical intervention.

Face to face with the police, he claims that the silver was a gift for Jean Valjean, and he sends the police away. And then he does exactly what he said: he gives the silver (and even more) to Jean Valjean. Of course, Valjean is not supposed to do with the silver whatever he wants; he is supposed to use it in a certain, "good" way. In fact, the bishop says to Jean Valjean – I will read a short passage from the book:

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**„Vergessen Sie nie, dass sie mir versprochen haben, dieses Geld zu verwenden, um ein ehrlicher Mensch zu werden. [...] Jean Valjean, mein Bruder, Sie gehören nicht mehr dem Bösen, sondern dem Guten. Ich kaufe Ihre Seele frei. Ich entreisse sie den finsternen Gedanken und dem Geist der Verderbnis und übergebe sie Gott.“**  
(Hugo 2004: 132)

“Never forget that you have promised to use this money in order to become an honest man. Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to the evil, but to the good. I have ransomed your soul. I wrest it from the dark thoughts and the spirit of depravity and pass it to God.” (Hugo 2004: 132)

Thus, the pedagogical intervention is clearly manipulative.

And still ambivalent:

Since the message of the novel is quite clear:

The poor need *material support*. The poor lack *money* and it is *this* shortcoming that needs to be remedied.

*Material support* as an essential form of support in the welfare state – instead of many pedagogical, moralizing interventions, material support would probably be the most helpful for the poor, in the

novel, historically and also today. However, neither in the novel, nor historically nor today is material support supplied substantially and unconditionally. Rather, it is used pedagogically:

Jean Valjean in *les Misérables* is emblematic of this:

In particular the bishop makes Jean Valjean promise that he will make use of the money in a *specific way, in a good way, in a right way* – and lo and behold: Jean Valjean thus comes into a fortune, which he uses to support the poor; he himself becomes a benefactor.

In this sense, the novel tries to answer the *pedagogical* question, with which a great amount of social-pedagogic theory, research and practices is concerned:

“How is one supposed to turn someone who is dependent on help into a self-supporter?” (Castel 2008:63)

Hence, the welfare-state, and ultimately pedagogical, questions:

- How do you provide assistance to self-help?
- What kind of support is necessary?
- How do you rehabilitate the needy?
- How do you put so-called “deviants” or “unintegrated” on the supposedly “right” way; how do you integrate them into society or, speaking more generally, how should you deal with them?

In the sense of an answer to these questions, the welfare state provides for these pedagogical measures to be taken when individual citizens are limited in their autonomy and possibilities of societal participation to the extent that also the informal systems of solidarity – family, friendships, neighborhoods – no longer represent adequate instances of support.

This is also relevant to Social Pedagogy – in terms of pedagogical intervention in the welfare state – being ineluctably *governmental*.

In his critical discussion of this concept of state, Fabian Kessl analyses “Social Work as Governmentality” and problematizes the pedagogical focus on the addressees’ “subjective responsibility for organizing their life”. And this is seen not only currently, but also historically – here with the example of the bishop’s pedagogic, charitable intervention in the life of Jean Valjean.

So if we ask: “what is the social?” it can be said that the social *state* and *Social Pedagogy* represent an equally originally answer to the social question.

This also means that *Social Pedagogy as a science* is not without a societal-analytical perspective, since Social Pedagogy is an institutionalized state form of professionalized processing of societal problems. Social Pedagogy processes “*the social*” with pedagogic resources in a way mandated by the state.

To put this in the words of the French philosopher Jaques Rancière: “In the modern era, the social has been exactly the place where politics happen” (Rancière 2002; 103).

Consequently, Social-Pedagogy is the actor at the venue of societal, familial, childhood and migration-related political tasks, discourses and conflicts.

Hence, I come to my third and last attempt to answer the question:

*What do the Simpsons have in common with Social Pedagogy? A third answer is: they both have the ability to say something about society.*

Was die Simpsons mit Sozialpädagogik zu tun haben -  
oder: die Familie, das Soziale und die Pädagogik

**Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik  
thematisieren die Familie**

**Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik  
thematisieren das Soziale**

**Die Simpsons und die Sozialpädagogik  
thematisieren Gesellschaft**

As a *family*, the Simpsons are a unit of "*the social*" and part of the welfare state construct of society. In the welfare state, the family is thought of as the first instance of care, support and solidarity. Belonging to a family, with its ties of interdependency and support, is deemed to be the primary instance of integration into society.

In the episode "Bart vs. Thanksgiving" it comes – as already mentioned - to the family conflict that leads to Bart's running off from home and wandering around as a vagabond.

His only company is the Simpson's dog – Santa's Little Helper.

It too was excluded from the Thanksgiving celebration through an educational intervention, because – just like Bart – it couldn't behave appropriately within the family. It wouldn't stay at its appointed place; it couldn't or wouldn't obey the rules.

Homer Simpson punishes the dog by excluding it from the family scope of caring, because Santa's Little Helper had nibbled the turkey – which, of course, wasn't meant for him. Thus, Santa's Little Helper and Bart have in common that they are excluded from the family and expelled from society.

This is about integrity and dignity. With this deconstruction of difference, Bart as a vagabond, in conjunction with the animal – put on the same level with it as a being whose dignity and integrity is not codified by law – is threatened in his dignity and integrity.

Dignity and integrity are also target coordinates of social-pedagogic interventions.

Personal integrity is at core of professional action – or should be – since professional action is about establishing or *reestablishing* self-esteem and personal autonomy.

Referring to Micha Brumlik and Ulrich Oevermann, it can be said that social-pedagogic professionalism is targeted at ensuring right and justice. This idea can also be found in the more recent theorizations of social work as a justice profession, as has been claimed by Mark Schrödter and others.

Now Bart, on the other hand, has reached the most undignified stage of animals and the outer margin of society, disintegration, together with Santa's Little Helper. Together, they now wander off into the world – in search of something better.

In this search for a better world, which knows less social inequality, they have the same experience as all those who are excluded, homeless, poor, whose dignity and integrity is despised. The situation of these expelled, who vagabond at the outer margins of society, might be historically specific, but is in this sense also supra-historical.

As today, homeless and unemployed teenagers, migrants deprived of prospects or the historical social figure of the vagabond, are all excluded, have no or only insufficient access to informal-

familial and formal-institutionalized forms of social support, and have only limited possibilities of participation and involvement in society. They have no recognizable place within society; often, they are even considered to be a danger to the societal order – they raise the “social question”.

The social question is – to quote Robert Castel – the problem “with which a society experiences the riddle of its cohesion and seeks to avert the risk of its fracture” (Castel 2008, p. 17). This question was raised primarily in the early 19th century, when the public becomes aware of a social emergency – those who suffer from poverty and whose life situations, and further, ways of living, are seen as a threat to the political and moral order. Historically, these were vagabonds and urban industrial workers; currently, it is the unemployed, migrants or people are defined as the *working poor* – those who actually work, but do not get a wage that secures their existence.

Back then, as well as today, the dominant opinion was that societal cohesion is challenged by the existence of the poor, the unemployed and vagabonds – or today by “too many” migrants. The social question thus becomes a question of the place, the position, which these people could actually occupy in society.

They have – as today, in the sense of the *new* social question – no shelter, no work, no legal right of residence, no security of existence and they starve. In this way, human beings become degraded to animals, which – thinking in species terms – stand below humans: The expelled, the “scum of the earth” – as the former French president Nicolas Sarkozy referred to the residents of the banlieus – are put on the same level as animals. The topicality of the violation of dignity of humans and of animals in the context of the social question is also reflected in The Simpsons:

Bart and Santa’s Little Helper, these two vagabonds at the border of the social, get back their way after their failed attempt to help themselves from the table of the rich, after their failed attempt to take what is entitled to them, after their failed attempted to participate in the “good life”. And this very way leads them...



... outside the residential area of the rich, the established – there, we still see a mansion in the background – across the railway tracks to where the poor, the outsiders, live; into the social hot spot.

What we see here reflects a study that is already almost a classic, a study of the segregation of social spaces.

This is the study by Norbert Elias and John Scotson, firstly published in 1965, called *The Established and the Outsiders*. Here Elias and Scotson show processes of social and special spatial demarcation, stigmatization, unequal distribution of power and influence, the enforcement of norms and the identification of all those who do not seem to meet these norms.

This line of social differentiation runs in that space which has been analyzed empirically by Elias and Scotson – as in *The Simpsons* – as being spatially on either side of the railway tracks.

Elias and Scotson looked at how this spatial boundary – on either side of the tracks, on either side of the valid norms, rules and values – is being sustained and solidified.

This episode of *The Simpsons* quotes this exact boundary between poor and rich, marginalized and established. This boundary is actually not simply social, but also precisely spatial. This boundary can be deciphered with the questions...:

... who lives where?

... who possesses material and social resources?

... who possesses what possibilities for participating in society?

Social Pedagogy addresses such deciphering in critical studies of social space, which deal with the question of social-pedagogic work in districts, as has been done by Christian Reutlinger, Fabian Kessler, Holger Ziegler, Sandra Landhäuser and others. What is taken into consideration here are boundaries between the social classes, between poor and rich as materializations of social inequality and unequal distribution.

What we also see in this scene, where Bart and Santa's Little Helper cross the border between the area of the established and the outsiders, is a wall with barbed wire. The "political geography of the barbed wire" – as the French philosopher Olivier Razac puts it – is a reliable sign of the relationship between the governing and the governed, between rich and poor, between established and outsiders. It is a symbol of the hierarchical differentiation between populations and means – in the words of Michel Foucault – not only the "great lock-up", but also an emblem of lock-out and exclusion.

What are outsiders, the socially marginalized, vagabonds able to do, in order to make a living?

They can sell their bodies – illegal female migrants do that in forms of prostitution, male migrants in exploitative seasonal work.



Bart does this by giving blood, for which he is "paid" with a turkey-leg. However, his body weakened by the blood donation, he faints and his dog, Santa's Little Helper, steals the turkey-leg from his hand.

There is also a historical document comparable to this motive:



Here we see a scene from the British silent movie "*Christmas Day in the Workhouse*", in which a man, who we see here, is in search of something to eat. He resists the "temptation" of stealing a loaf of bread, is rejected at the workhouse, and snatches a bone from a dog.

The motive of the human being degraded to an animal is acted out in these two media presentations. It is about crossing boundaries; it is about violated dignity, about despised integrity and about deprivation of rights.

What remains for the poor, the outsiders – again, historically and currently – is what also remains for Bart and Santa's Little Helper: the feeding of the poor:



With the loss of family support, it is *not* the socially codified rights of social and material support that Bart and his – more or less – trusty friend can rely on.

No, just like people who receive welfare today, or the working poor, what remains for them is an atavistic, pre- or post-welfare state form of civil charity: the feeding of the poor.



Like the poor at the Swiss food bank in real life yesterday and today, and like the poor at the workhouse historically: for those who do not have what is absolutely necessary to live, all that remains is what falls from the table of the rich – but this has little to do with recognition, with the systematic evening out of inequalities, with right or justice.

Moreover, the excluded are merely fed, instead of being supported by the welfare state as citizens with rights and potential.

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**Sozialpädagogik als Wissenschaft und  
Profession**

*Sozialpädagogische Grenzanalyse*  
symbolische und soziale Grenzen  
moralisierende Grenzsetzungen  
professionell-reflexive Grenzbearbeitung

It is the task of Social Pedagogy as an academic discipline and profession to react critically here and to provide analyses for the construction of a just society.

For this task I would, finally, like to introduce an analytic perspective, which we have been developing in the department together with a number of international colleagues – Charlotte Spellenberg, Marion Pomey, Veronika Magyar-Haas, Rebecca Mörgen, Anna-Bea Burghard, Fabian Kessl and Susanne Maurer.

This is the perspective of *social-pedagogical boundary analysis*. And with the concept of the border



I would like to summarize my thoughts about the link between The Simpsons and Social Pedagogy, and also give a little insight into our current discussions.

I started with George Bush's family-political statement on *family order*. If we do social-pedagogic boundary analysis, this is exactly our concern: to take into consideration those defining attributions – like the differentiation between the “good” Waltons and the “bad” Simpsons.

This with the aim of uncovering symbolic, social, moralizing, political and pedagogical definitions of boundaries (like those expressed in the degrading of the Simpsons to a family-policy no-go area, and which are also decisive for forms of professional intervention) and to analyze them critically – in the sense of reflexive professionalism or professional-reflexive boundary work.

For those symbolic boundaries serve the *judgmental categorization* of objects, humans and practices.



They dictate what **should** be and what **should not** be – like The Simpsons, in this case.

Boundaries mark the norm and the deviant, the recognizable and the unrecognizable; they materialize situations – for example, on which side of the railway tracks one lives, which paths one can strike, which paths are refused – and they are generally materialized in structurally unequal access to goods and other valued resources, such as education or political participation.

This means that “the boundary” marks the requirements of the social order, dualisms of the right and wrong, accepted and unaccepted, the normal and deviant, the achievable and unachievable, the possible and the impossible, the desired and undesired: the boundary classifies, arranges, normalizes, excludes and includes, privileges and deprives, gives or denies rights; the boundary is an *expression* of relationships of power and domination and a *means* for their maintenance.

Accordingly, a perspective on boundaries provides *analytical* support for the social-pedagogical investigation of social structures and social conditions, since it takes into account inequalities, power relationships and social relationships as well as (discursive) practices, processes and structures of inclusion and exclusion.

It is a social-pedagogical task to react analytically and critically to these settings of boundaries, limitations, but also to the infringements of boundary crossings:

So, reflexive professionalism consists in – I quote Bernd Dewe and Hans-Uwe Otto – “the specific quality of social-pedagogical practice, which results in extended options for action, multiplication of

chances and the increase of possibilities of participation and access on the part of the clients” (Dewe/Otto 2005, S. 187).

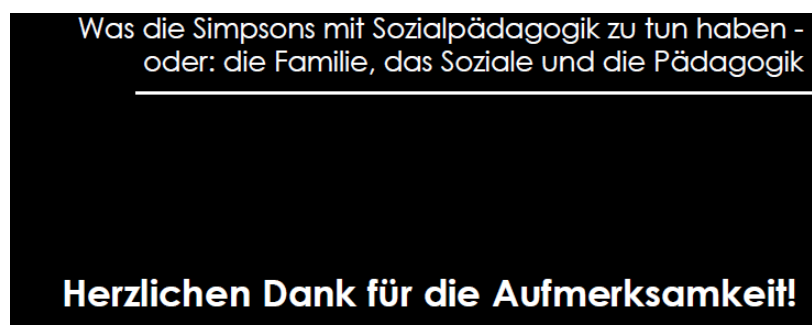
“Therefore, Social Pedagogy cares about the uncovering of *limitation and exclusions* as well as about the *extension of scopes of action*, about the *extension of the addressees’ possibilities for social participation and involvement*, as well as about ensuring integrity and personal autonomy, and the prevention of boundary violations. The boundary thus becomes ambivalent.

This is not only about abolishing boundaries in the sense of limitations, but also about ensuring and respecting boundaries. Such Social Pedagogy takes the addressees’ desires and needs seriously, expands their possibilities for creating their lives, and sets a boundary to professional access to addressees.

Any such professional self-limitation can be understood as reflexivity, *not* demanding that its addressees conform to the values and norms of the majority, but recognizing their way of life ...



... letting the Simpsons just be the Simpsons; and with that, I thank you for your attention.



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