

# Introduction

## *Poverty and Welfare in Modern German History – Recent Trends and New Perspectives in Current Research*

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The history of the welfare state has been one of the main themes in contemporary European history and, together with Britain and the Scandinavian countries, the history of welfare and social policy in Germany has always been at the centre of comparative interest. But in sharp contrast to the British historiographical tradition, the link between research on poverty and that on welfare policies has been rather weak in German historiography. The welfare reforms in 2001 and 2004 and the impact of problems like rising levels of (relative) poverty and inequality, the spread of low-wage jobs and the accumulation of social risks for parts of the German population have shifted perspectives among historians of welfare, and the complex relationship between poverty and welfare has come into view.

### **Recent Trends in the Historiography of Poverty and Welfare: the Particularities of the German Case**

Historical research on welfare and poverty is strongly informed by national particularities. Institutional settings of the national welfare regimes and intellectual traditions in social philosophy and welfare doctrine have an impact on how historians and social scientists approach the problems of social policy in the past and present. In the German case, three aspects are striking. Firstly, the dividing line within the welfare system created by the passage of the 1880s reform laws, separating the world of social insurance (*Sozialversicherungen*) from that of social assistance and social welfare (*Fürsorge* or *Wohlfahrtspflege*) has become a pattern for the intellectual division of labour in historical and social scientific

research. Academic specialization has given further support to this trend, as has the extensive focus on the problems of social insurance provision by the political mainstream in East and West Germany. As a consequence, the so called lower levels of German welfare regimes – the system of social assistance for the poor and the politics of poverty – were marginalized as topics of contemporary history when (West) German social history was at its peak during the 1970s and 1980s. Public debates addressing the ‘new poverty’ during the 1980s and 1990s, later the reforms of the Schröder government in social policy, blurred this well-established border between the worlds of social assistance and social insurance. The return of social assistance as a necessity for millions of people in contemporary Germany has raised interest in historical studies on poverty and welfare in the recent past.<sup>1</sup> Different research teams have started to work on new historical and social studies of poverty more or less simultaneously. One group gathered in Munich around Hans Günther Hockerts, who launched a series of studies on welfare and poor relief covering the whole period from the Weimar Republic to the recent past of the Federal Republic.<sup>2</sup> In Trier, a series of historical studies on poverty and welfare started in 2001, linking for the first time the early modern and contemporary periods.<sup>3</sup> In 2006, another project on poverty and welfare in Germany after the Second World War was established at Freiburg University. Together with other individual studies, they served to compensate for the slower development of research on poverty in Germany compared to Britain or France, and to re-establish the link between historical studies on poverty and those on welfare regimes.

A second demarcation line separates studies on social policy and welfare written by political scientists on the one side and historians on the other. Again, this intellectual division has been established over a long period and is still very strong: political scientists and sociologists dominate the field of welfare state studies, particularly when it comes to comparative research and the period after the Second World War. The Centre of Social Policy Research at Bremen University has become a vital centre for new empirical and theoretical approaches in these fields of scholarship.<sup>4</sup> German historians have intervened only reluctantly in the debates over the European welfare model and the three or four ‘worlds of welfare’ invented by Esping-Andersen. From Kaufmann to Leisering, most of the authors of seminal contributions to the debates about the particularities of the German welfare system and its embeddedness in political and economic systems since the end of the nineteenth century have been social scientists by training.<sup>5</sup> The exception to this is the long-standing tradition of bilateral Anglo-German comparisons of welfare regimes composed on both sides of the Channel since the pioneer studies of Ritter and Hennock.<sup>6</sup>

The third particularity of German welfare historiography has to do with the impact of the Christian denominations on the field of welfare and care. Since the Reformation, Germany has been divided into Catholic and Protestant territories and the competition between the two main Christian Churches has been strong for more than four centuries. Confessional institutions such as the Protestant

Diakonie or Innere Mission and the Catholic Caritas have been central institutions in the field of social services from the *Kaiserreich* to the contemporary Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>7</sup> They have always been an important element in the institutional framework of private and public poor relief, establishing themselves since the nineteenth century as a kind of third party between private philanthropy and public services. Since the Weimar Republic the Churches have been institutionally integrated into the public system of welfare provision, delivering their services autonomously but being financed largely by the state when fulfilling regular services stipulated by law. Social Catholicism and Protestantism have strongly informed the historiography on poverty and welfare in Germany and many studies have been initiated in the context of Church history. The contributions of scholars with a background in social Catholicism, such as Hockerts or Kaufmann, have had a particularly strong impact far beyond their own socio-political milieu.<sup>8</sup>

Historical studies on poverty and welfare in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have mainly followed the periodization of political history, centring on one of the many changing political regimes Germany has known since the 1870s; studies covering only one period, whether it be the Weimar Republic, Third Reich, GDR or West Germany, still dominate. Approaches transgressing these established political demarcation lines are rarer, with most of these studying both the period of the late Empire and that of the Weimar Republic.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Sachße and Tennstedt's four volume overview covering the whole period from 1800 to the middle of the twentieth century is still the best synthesis and reference work when it comes to the relation between poverty and welfare in contemporary German history.<sup>10</sup>

From a mere quantitative point of view, most recent studies have been focused on the German Empire and Weimar Republic, with the Third Reich attracting a smaller number of scholars and studies. The Weimar period is still the best studied when it comes to welfare and poverty. The attention devoted to these topics reflects the importance that economic deficiency and social misery had during these years, with the social and economic consequences of the First World War confronting the social promises and legal entitlements to social protection opened up by the new democracy. The Weimar welfare regime and its collapse during the years of the great slump must be seen as central explanations for the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship in 1933. Existing studies have concentrated on urban situations of social assistance and the different local regimes of urban welfare. Other research has focused on the different groups of war victims who constituted one part of the Weimar welfare regime's large new clientele.<sup>11</sup> Other studies have come back to the problem of unemployment as one of the central problems of interwar welfare policies. New research confronts us with a social reality in interwar Germany quite different from what one might expect. Women's work and rural work, in particular, were not separated sharply enough from private services and household or subsistence activities to count in legal and social terms as 'unemployment'; and various kinds of informal work

still shaped the social existence of large numbers of the lower classes, especially in the countryside. Under these circumstances, the new legal frameworks for assistance when laid off from work were strongly disputed or subverted by the authorities in rural areas. They refused the new rights of assistance to large numbers of people who had lost their regular jobs.<sup>12</sup>

Studies focusing on the problem of poverty and social assistance during the Third Reich are still rare, with other aspects of the Nazi welfare regime, such as health care and the politics of work, standing in the centre of interest.<sup>13</sup> Currently, the corresponding policies of discrimination, criminalization and extermination of those excluded from the racially defined national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) are on top of the agenda of historical research on this period.<sup>14</sup> Specific studies on social assistance and poverty after 1945 remain rare, in marked contrast to the institutional and legal frameworks of the two welfare regimes in West and East Germany, which have been studied in detail.<sup>15</sup>

In sharp contrast to the recent interest concerning the twentieth century, new research on the earlier periods of the nineteenth century is still urgently missing. The history of poverty in nineteenth-century Germany remains largely unwritten and the lists of available literature is short if compared with the rich historiography available for the early modern period and Holy Roman Empire.

## **New Perspectives on Poverty and Welfare**

The intellectual outcome of historical studies on poverty and welfare has changed fundamentally in the last two decades. A new paradigm has started to orientate recent studies on poverty and welfare in modern Germany. It is the level of inclusiveness that different welfare regimes were prepared to offer their clients and beyond that to all citizens that is now the focal point of critical inquiry. Responsiveness to the personal needs of people at the margins or in danger of dropping out of society has become a kind of yardstick for historical studies. Across the range of institutional settings and behind all the political, moral or religious ideas about help and welfare, vulnerability and exclusion have become constant themes. Protection and recognition are nowadays the two key dimensions that historians of German welfare regimes have in mind, as well as the individual as the person in need and as recipient of assistance.

Under the impact of this new paradigm, three themes have dominated debate: the politics of inclusion and exclusion; the impact of biological and racial concepts; and, strongly linked to the last point, the role of social experts in the formation of social policies.

German historians have been late in taking up the common European social science research agenda on poverty that was launched in the 1990s as an initiative of the European Commission.<sup>16</sup> This impulse for new empirical research on contemporary poverty went together with new theoretical perspectives. Problems of economic hardship and social assistance have been integrated into the larger

problem of 'social exclusion'. The notion itself was first developed in the French debate but was soon taken up by German scholars both in the social sciences and in history. When the notion entered the political debate about the social consequences of mass unemployment and the lack of social recognition in a moment of financial crisis of the welfare state, the debate in sociology and history turned to a broader and more nuanced use of the term, linking it in the German case to its positive antonym: inclusion.<sup>17</sup> In this dialectic view, both terms designate the two different sides of one and the same operation that links the individual to a social unit. In this perspective poverty and welfare are strongly connected: economic deficiency turns into a social phenomenon when it generates operations of neglect and of marginalization. When this happens, lack of work, food and shelter create social groups or individuals whose social status is defined by their need for assistance or their deviance from 'normal' life. Inclusion and exclusion are seen in this model as a fact of both social structure and of language and communication. The use of the pair of words reminds us of the historical fact that they rarely exist in pure form as radical exclusion or complete inclusion but more often in a complex relationship, where a first step of exclusion may lead to a second step of inclusion, or vice versa. Welfare systems are the best examples of this social logic: unemployment insurance or social assistance start when people have been excluded from labour markets. Exclusion and inclusion are often strongly interrelated with regard to different social groups, the exclusion of the one being the precondition for the inclusion of the other. Beggars and vagrants on the one hand, widows and orphans on the other, are examples of this kind. Workhouses and mean tests have been classic instruments in order to operate a social selection separating the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving' poor, giving poor relief to the one and defining legal procedures of control for the other. The perspective of social exclusion/inclusion has largely replaced an approach underlining the dimension of social control or *Sozialdisziplinierung* as a central element of state building from the beginning of the early modern period.

Poverty as a social phenomenon is strongly linked to an asymmetric relationship between those in need and depending on help, and those providing assistance. The cultural and political representations of poverty are strongly linked to the problem of how to deal with the salience of non-reciprocity inherent in this kind of social relationship. Starting from this theoretical perspective, studies of poverty and welfare in modern Germany have been redirected towards new problems and new fields of interest. One such field is that of the relationship between welfare institutions, poverty and deviance.<sup>18</sup> The poor and deviant share the risk of marginalization and becoming an object of social operations linking inclusion and exclusion, such as the obligatory workhouse in the case of recidivist beggars and vagrants in Germany until 1945, or the English paupers going to a workhouse and subscribing to the disciplinary regime inside that institution. The history of deviance and poverty is best analysed in terms of the *longue durée* because the relevant cultural representations and elementary codes of labelling are of astonishingly long-standing continuity. The 'sturdy' beggar – able bodied,

conscious of his rights and an outsider – has been a social and cultural figure stigmatized since the early modern era and handed down to later periods (well into the twentieth century) before transformation into the figure of the ‘workshy’ unemployed, profiting illegitimately from social assistance.<sup>19</sup> Recent studies on the lower rungs of the German welfare system have brought to the surface a large number of different cases where the labelling processes have been prominent elements in the social logic of exclusion. This is particularly true for the group of vagrants or travellers addressed as ‘gypsies’ (*Zigeuner*) by the authorities of the German states. Their exclusion via administrative interventions (prohibition of trading, control of mobility, expulsion and black lists) is part of a very long history culminating during the Nazi period in their internment in concentration camps and outright extermination.<sup>20</sup>

On the other side stands the group of elderly women, particularly widows, or wives with children who have lost their husbands and lack sufficient support from their family group. Again one can observe a *longue durée* of inclusion via entitlement for local poor relief and later social assistance. But this group shares with the aforementioned category of vagrants a high degree of uncertainty about the level of help it could expect from local authorities, whose benevolence was often linked to perceptions of the moral respectability and deference of the women in need.<sup>21</sup>

These historical studies of social exclusion have turned the focus of social history writing on poverty away from a mere economic understanding of the phenomenon, but they do not fall into the pitfalls of purely cultural analysis by ignoring the impact of elementary deficiencies and their social consequences. They have introduced into historical research the notion of vulnerability, taking up the findings of French sociologists such as Castel and others about the social consequences of unemployment and the deregulation of labour markets.<sup>22</sup> Thus the history of poverty is not only restricted to the registered clients of poor relief and other social services, but it includes the lives of those who are living more or less constantly on the verge of depending on makeshift economies to make ends meet and who are reluctant to address the local authorities for relief. It is only recently that statistical data is available concerning contemporary Germany which allows us to measure how large this group is. Unlike their British counterparts, German social historians cannot use social enquiries into poverty like those of Booth or Rowntree from the 1900s, 1930s and 1950s to reconstruct this area of precariousness and vulnerability essential to the understanding of poverty and the logics of including or excluding those in need from the welfare system and its services and economic support.

The second topic takes up the particularly strong and long-lasting influence of socio-biological and racial concepts on welfare policies in contemporary German history. Eugenics and racial hygiene had growing support in Germany among medical experts at their beginnings as an international movement at the turn of the nineteenth century. Both disciplines presented themselves as hard sciences distanced from legal or moral discourses on poverty. They pushed forward

a socio-biological worldview where the social could only be changed profoundly by interventions in the genetic code of the population and a strong guidance of the individual. Both profited from the upheaval caused by the First World War and racial hygiene became one of the favourite disciplines whose argument the radical right used to attack the Weimar welfare system. Welfare specialists nevertheless also evoked these disciplines in their struggle for reform and rationalization of welfare services and expenditure.<sup>23</sup> This resulted in the establishment of racial hygiene as the core scientific support for welfare policies during the Nazi dictatorship. It legitimized the exclusion of a growing number of welfare clients from standard services and initiated a trend towards repression and violence in dealing with all those clients of welfare services regarded as deviant or racially different. Medicine was the academic discipline most directly involved in these trends, but physicians got strong support from lawyers and social scientists in putting the new racial doctrine of welfare into practice.<sup>24</sup>

The third new approach is strongly connected with these studies on the interplay between welfare, political ideology and scientific knowledge. This approach studies the role of experts more generally in the transformation of German welfare policies in the modern period. Since the late 1990s, the 'scientization of the social' has become a particularly innovative field of interdisciplinary research in Germany. 'The continuing presence of experts from the human sciences, their arguments and the results of their research had in administrative bodies and in industrial firms, in parties and parliaments'<sup>25</sup> has been particularly strong in the field of social and penal policy. Taking a long-term view, the presence of social 'experts' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries stood in a line of continuity from the roles of theologians and lawyers in the construction of poor laws during the early modern period. But this early presence was much more limited in time and number, designating both the routine business of poor relief and the administrative supervision to clerks without academic knowledge. This changed dramatically in the last decades of the nineteenth century when psychologists, psychiatrists and economists entered the arena of political debate concerning welfare policies. They relied on their own knowledge regarding particular aspects of poor relief, vagrancy or delinquency to intervene in the field.<sup>26</sup> Human sciences – this originally French term encompasses medicine, socio-biology and the social sciences – were embedded in the institutional settings of the welfare regime in different ways: one was the establishment of consultative boards of scientific scholars giving regular advice to governments; the second was the professionalization of the personnel engaged in providing the various services for the poor. In Germany, schools for social workers and social assistants were created before the First World War, but it was the Weimar period that witnessed the decisive steps towards the creation of new professions in the field of social services. The academic social sciences took rather a long time to really get in touch with this new field of expertise largely controlled by men and women combining practical knowledge and various combinations of academic and practical training.<sup>27</sup> Social engineering became a particularly strong trend in German welfare politics concerning poor relief and

social assistance between 1920 and 1960. After the defeat of the Nazi regime, social engineering inspired by socio-biological approaches lost much of its public support and intellectual legitimacy but nevertheless survived well into the 1960s. It was only in the 1980s that a new generation of social scientists shaped the field of poverty policy formation. Between 1960 and 1975 poverty more or less disappeared from the agenda of the social sciences leaving the field open to experts who were mostly qualified as clerks or managers of social institutions or communal services having studied law, economics or administration. They largely defended the legal status quo and ignored the dramatic shifts resulting from social change under the conditions of de-industrialization and globalization since the 1970s. The political debates on 'the new social question' in the mid 1970s launched by the CDU and those concerning the 'new poverty' launched by the Trade Union Association (DGB) assisted by the SPD served party interests to start strong anti-government campaigns, but both shed light on a new mass phenomena of poverty. It was social scientists giving evidence and advice to political parties who kept the theme on the agenda of German public affairs.<sup>28</sup> Most of these experts defined themselves as defenders of the poor and their claims. Under these circumstances the field of social expertise kept a distance to established administrative interests and government views, largely giving advice and research support for those institutions such as the associations of care and social assistance which defended the interests of the poor.<sup>29</sup> But we still need detailed research into the relationship between the new academic professionals in the field of social work or assistance and their clientele.

The renewal of this field of historiography profits from the opening up of social history towards cultural history and of a change in methods: most of the recent studies are case studies using the procedures of microhistory to focus on interactions at the local or regional level and strongly interested in writing a history 'from below', attentive to the agency and voice of the poor themselves. These studies deliberately take their cue from the microhistory movement of the 1980s, seizing opportunities for new insights that can be gained by changing the focal point of the inquiry and by zooming closer in to the events and contexts in order to get a clearer view of single actors and specific situations. Microstudies have always been wary of master narratives and tend to stick to their critical function – to debunk certainties on the macro level or to deconstruct large periodizations and general models. They have been instrumental in the shift to a new paradigm in focusing on the local, the individual and the agency of the poor and the marginal. The 'cultural turn' has imposed a sharp social constructivist eye on the many languages used to define and describe poverty and social politics. Discourse analysis and microstudies are the two most innovative trends in the recent literature on our subject. Normative orientations have attracted particular attention and the new studies on poverty and welfare underline the historical impact of norms and perceptions.

A last feature common to current research on the 'new' history of welfare is the insistence on agency. It has become a central category in most of the recent



studies and it stands against any perspective transforming those in need or without power into passive objects of state regulations or welfare interventions. 'Negotiation' is the term used to cover the bargaining spaces always, to some degree, at the disposal of the vulnerable and poor. Nowadays the agency of the poor and the vulnerable has become a moral and political claim in itself and has been transformed into a kind of compulsory hypothesis for the historian.

## Long-term Trends: Continuity and Change

This book has chosen a long time span – covering the period from the eighteenth century to the early twenty-first. It starts from two observations that have come to the fore in many of the recent studies discussed above. First, that change in the policies of poverty did not follow the short periods of political change characteristic of the twentieth century, nor the much longer periods of nineteenth-century political history in Germany. Second, that there exist striking continuities when we consider local regimes and the languages of welfare and poor relief during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The normative orientations and intellectual frameworks underpinning German welfare regimes followed their own developmental timescales as they adapted to changing social and political contexts. The categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' are examples in kind. For centuries entrenched in German, as in most European, regulations on assistance for the poor they have had a very long life: even in the 1980s social researchers still found their traces not only in the self-images of unemployed people but in public opinion regarding unemployment in general. This dichotomy established in the early modern period has adapted itself to very different social situations. Thus the history of the different terminology underpinning the welfare regimes in Germany since the nineteenth century must take into account the *longue durée* of mental and emotional frameworks. Deservingness and belonging are two complementary categories of social assistance and welfare interventions and they are linked to different 'languages' or 'discourses' legitimizing welfare. The language of 'deservingness' clearly emphasized the element of exclusion, in contrast to the overall recognition of inclusion inherent in the Christian language relating to poverty. The language of 'belonging' took up the social ties of family, neighbourhood or place (village, parish or town) and kept a key place in the regulation of social assistance throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The argument of belonging was renewed and strengthened by the idea of national solidarity which came to the fore in the long nineteenth century; this culminated in the period of the two world wars, when the idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* became a strong argument in defence of legitimate demands for help from those who could metaphorically claim the German nation as their 'home'. The flip side of this inclusionary rhetoric was the exclusion of all those declared aliens to this political body – national socialist ideology pushed this logic to its extreme, legitimizing a welfare regime defined by sharp demarcation

lines between insiders and outsiders. The prominence of these operations of exclusion and inclusion in German society under the Nazi dictatorship has been strongly underpinned by recent studies on the idea and practice of 'national community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*) during this period.<sup>30</sup> Even after the murderous consequences of such a welfare regime had been revealed between 1933 and 1945, postwar Germany has known continuities of this exclusionary language of national belonging, which is now critically and aggressively turned against labour migrants and asylum seekers, with both groups accused of fiddling social benefits.

The concept of the welfare state has its own history and there exists a particular German tradition of thinking about social policy.<sup>31</sup> Key notions like *Wohlfahrt* (welfare) and *Fürsorge* (social assistance) were until very recently confined to the bottom rungs of the German welfare state, whereas the concepts of *Soziale Sicherheit* (social security) and *Sozialstaat* (social state) were used when it came to the realm of social insurance and general problems of social policy. *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, the German equivalent of the English term 'welfare state' had to wait until the early 1970s before it lost its negative connotations linking it to any form of light-handed social spending and the doctrine of a paternalistic provision of the citizen with all kinds of social service. In the German tradition the state has been the central point of reference in public debates on welfare politics. Both socialist/social democratic and Christian, particularly Catholic thought, have also extensively informed the traditions of German welfare since the middle of the nineteenth century, ensuring that the connotations and meanings of German concepts in this field frequently diverge markedly from liberal Anglo-Saxon understandings of the same terms.

Another long-term factor to consider is the cooperation of Church and state in the realm of social assistance, and particularly poor relief, within the German states. Its roots can be found in the early modern period when the territorial states of the Holy Roman Empire sought to get control over welfare institutions, but in fact had to cooperate with their established Churches when it came to handling current affairs, be that local poor relief, the running of asylums or the administration of foundations and charities. This cooperation survived the liberal reforms of the nineteenth century and became a central element of the Weimar welfare regime that survived the Nazi period and was fully re-established within the West German model. The experience of the Nazi and SED dictatorships has strongly delegitimized any attempt to change this mixed welfare system. Religious arguments concerning the spiritual dimensions of poverty and individual help have coexisted with a political discourse outlining the elimination of poverty via useful work for the commonweal.

## **Themes: an Introduction to the Following Chapters**

The following chapters do not give a comprehensive overview of the history of poverty and welfare in Germany and do not cover all periods within the selected

timeframe. They explore the history of welfare and poverty through discrete case studies. In the first chapter, Sebastian Schmidt discusses the denominational dualism established in Germany since the Reformation, and the political compromise of 1550 ending the first wave of religious wars inside the Holy Roman Empire. This chapter presents a new reading of the differences in poor relief administration between Catholic and Protestant authorities inside the Empire. Schmidt shows that the organization of poor relief was built in both cases on new theological interpretations of *caritas* revising the scholastic Thomist orthodoxy of the thirteenth century. Both confessions preferred centralizing poor relief and welfare activities in the hands of public authorities. But in Catholic territories they had to cope with long-standing traditions and theologies of private alms giving and philanthropy. In the eighteenth century, the political doctrines of the Enlightenment brought together Protestant and Catholic reformers in their will to define poverty as a sign of bad government and to redefine the phenomenon in mainly economic and pedagogic terms.

The next chapter by Andreas Gestrich presents us with a case study in one of the newest fields in the German history of welfare and poverty. In sharp contrast to the English case, the collection and study of pauper letters and other ego documents of the poor has been neglected in German historiography until recently. The chapter offers pioneering insights into the findings of this ongoing research from a sample of documents covering a time span from the early nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. This study of petitions and 'pauper' letters shows the impact the established rhetoric of deference had on the vulnerable and the silent rise of more self-confident languages of demand as the twentieth century progressed. This chapter also studies social networks, local connections and the worldviews of the poor revealed in these documents.

The third chapter, by Beate Althammer, considers the field of welfare and social intervention in around 1900 where the mix of old and new approaches can be best observed for the German case. Vagrancy or homelessness is an old problem of welfare. Before and after 1900, German states were familiar with high rates of migration, largely caused by economic distress and the search for work opportunities. Though liberal legislation encouraged the mobility of work much more than had previously been the case, the legal framework still criminalized begging and vagrancy. Althammer convincingly shows that legislation and administrative practice in the German Empire tended to switch from the paradigm of pauperism (and the old image of social danger from vagrant groups) to new perspectives. In these new views, the economic problem was separated from the psychological or medical one. Unemployment on the one hand, and moral or medical deficiency on the other, became the new categories 'explaining' an irregular geographical mobility and an implicit move to the bottom of the social scale that worried and irritated social reformers and Christian philanthropists active in this field alike. The vagrant became the most visible element of a socio-biologically defined 'underclass' from which all other social groups took care to

distance themselves. This social construction generated normative orientations that have had a long, robust life throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. This prepared the ground for the growing attractiveness of repressive 'solutions', later including eugenic and 'racial hygiene' proposals, during the first half of the twentieth century.

Wilfried Rudloff's chapter on the German urban welfare regime reflects on the particularities of the municipal administration of welfare services during the Weimar years. Summing up recent studies it clearly shows the strong tensions inherent in the dual welfare system under the stress of new social expectations and the ongoing instability of the economy after the First World War. The social, political and economic outcome of these short-lived urban welfare regimes is still open to historical debate, but Rudloff insists on the variety of political options and potential manifested in them during these twelve years.

Nicole Kramer's chapter discusses the outcomes of new approaches to the historiography of welfare during the Nazi dictatorship. Firstly, Götz Aly's provocative description of a regime bribing its 'Aryan' population with a series of welfare grants, particularly during the war years, has attracted much public attention but also strong intellectual criticism underlining that the economic transfers in terms of welfare allowances were rather small and never compensated the relative hardships the regime's wartime mobilizations imposed on the German population. Secondly, the new *Volksgemeinschaft* approach equally underlines the regime's strategic and ideological interest in the politics of inclusion for the majority of its loyal citizens, having its counterpart in a deliberate and propagated politics of exclusion towards all those defined as political or racial enemies or outsiders to the German *Volk*. Kramer insists on the priority Nazi welfare gave to all kinds of assistance directly useful and functional to the military aims of the regime – first the symbolic and material uplifting of the victims of the First World War, the younger and the able bodied during the years before 1939 and then, during the war, soldiers' wives and the evacuees. Social assistance was strongly limited when it came to the elderly and the deficient and it was cut entirely when it came to the marginal and deviant. This chapter reopens the debate about the long-term impact of the Nazi period, and particularly the war years, on the development of German welfare regimes after 1945.

Chapters 6 to 8 deal with postwar Germany, concentrating on developments and problems in the Federal Republic. From very different perspectives, all three chapters take up the public debate on the 'new social question' and 'new poverty' during the 1970s and 1980s as a kind of turning point in the relationship between poverty and welfare in West German social policy. After the first years of hunger and general shortage immediately after the Second World War, poverty seemed to disappear from the agenda of welfare politics, but it came back with a vengeance when the limits to industrial growth and welfare expenditure entered the front stage of political debate during the 1970s. Again poverty became a highly controversial theme of social policy.

In Chapter 6, Christiane Kuller gives an overview of the gendered dimensions of the West German welfare state. She reminds us that in the dual German welfare regime (insurance/social assistance) established since the 1880s, women have been the classical clients of social assistance – but they have been systematically marginalized in the social insurance system. As happened in the aftermath of the First World War, after 1945, widows, single mothers and their children constituted a large group whose care became a responsibility of the state and its services of social assistance. Paradoxically, this situation did not challenge the de facto exclusion of most women from the system of social protection via social insurance. West Germany re-established the male breadwinner model, a model adapted to the new economy of consumerism by including an ever growing number of married women into the labour markets as part-time employees. This model became very popular from the 1960s onwards, but still deprived women legally of many social rights, strengthening the dependency on their husband's entitlements to pensions and health care. Kuller shows that it was only in the 1970s and the 1980s that feminist criticism of this gender model, combined with the return of female poverty for elderly widows and young single mothers, challenged this state of affairs.

Winfried Süß's study of the return of poverty to the agenda of West German welfare policies focuses on the interactions between social expertise, political agendas and party politics since the 1970s. The chapter starts from the remarkable fact that poverty had been pushed to the margins of political debate in the 1960s and early 1970s as a result of general affluence and the depoliticization of the new system of social assistance which was introduced in 1961 with a federal law and implemented by a silent coalition of local administrators and social experts. Government and opposition reopened the political agenda on poverty, generating new social expertise concerning its causes and manifestations, but it took more than two decades before the first official report on poverty was published, in 2001.

Olaf Groh-Samberg gives a critical account of the concepts that informed the debate about the new poverty among social scientists and he contrasts that debate with the social data available for the last three decades (since 1984) on the spread of social vulnerability and relative poverty in West and later reunified Germany. This chapter relativizes the discovery of the new qualities of poverty since the 1970s, showing that the risks of accumulating insufficient income, bad housing conditions and a lack of financial reserves continued to cluster socially among the lower (working) classes. Groh-Samberg's quantitative approach is based on social data available only since 1984 thanks to the new panel data of the *Socio-Oeconomische Panel* and it estimates the number of those living in poverty at the beginning of the new millennium to be at least 10 per cent of the German population. This return of poverty – even in its classic form of the labouring poor – is still news which the German public is very reluctant to accept, but is central to the social and political debate initiated by the so-called Hartz IV laws, passed in 2004.

## Notes

1. See for example the exposition 'Armut. Perspektiven in Kunst und Gesellschaft' at Trier and Ulm in 2011 sponsored by the German Research fund (DFG): the catalogue: H. Uerlings, N. Trauth and L. Clemens (eds). 2011. *Armut. Perspektiven in Kunst und Gesellschaft*. Darmstadt: Primus.
2. H.G. Hockerts and W. Süß (eds). 2010. *Soziale Ungleichheit im Sozialstaat: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Grossbritannien im Vergleich*. Munich: Oldenbourg; C. Kuller. 2004. *Familienpolitik im föderativen Sozialstaat. Die Formierung eines Politikfeldes in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–1975*, Munich: Oldenbourg; W. Rudloff. 1998. *Die Wohlfahrtsstadt. Kommunale Ernährungs-, Fürsorge- und Wohnungspolitik am Beispiel Münchens 1910–1933* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; W. Süß. 2003. *Der 'Volkskörper' im Krieg: Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhältnisse und Krankenmord im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland 1939–1945*. Munich: Oldenbourg; F. Wimmer. 2014. *Die völkische Ordnung von Armut: Kommunale Sozialpolitik im nationalsozialistischen München*. Göttingen: Wallstein.
3. Namely two research projects on urban and rural poverty in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain and Germany in the Collaborative Research Centre 600, 'Strangers and Poor People: Changing Patterns of Inclusion and Exclusion from Classical Antiquity to the Present Day', have been running from 2002 to 2014. For first results see: B. Althammer (ed.). 2007. *Bettler in der europäischen Stadt der Moderne: Zwischen Barmherzigkeit, Repression und Sozialreform*. Frankfurt/Main, New York: Lang; B. Althammer and C. Gerstenmayer (eds). 2013. *Bettler und Vaganten in der Neuzeit (1500–1933): Eine kommentierte Quellenedition*, Essen, Klartext; B. Althammer, A. Gestrich and J. Gründler (eds). 2014. *The Welfare State and the 'Deviant Poor' in Europe, 1870–1933*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; A. Gestrich, S. King and L. Raphael (eds). 2006. *Being poor in modern Europe: Historical perspectives 1800–1940*. Oxford, Frankfurt//Main: Lang; K. Marx-Jaskulski. 2008. *Armut und Fürsorge auf dem Land. Vom Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1933*. Göttingen: Wallstein. For a full bibliography see <http://www.fze.uni-trier.de/de/presse-und-service/gesamtbibliographie>.
4. See H. Obinger P. Starke, J. Moser, C. Bogedan, E. Gindulis, and S. Leibfried. 2010. *Transformations of the Welfare State. Small States, Big Lessons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; L. Leisering and S. Leibfried. 1999. *Time and Poverty in Western Welfare States. United Germany in Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; H. Obinger, S. Leibfried and F.G. Castles (eds). 2005. *Federalism and the Welfare State. New World and European Experiences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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  9. But see the systematic comparative approach for the period 1933 to 1990 in H.G. Hockerts (ed.). 1998. *Drei Wege deutscher Sozialstaatlichkeit.* Munich: Oldenbourg.
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