

Andrea Rácz

Child Protection as Fragmented Social Institution

*Interpreting Corporate Parenting
in Hungarian Practice*



Presa Universitară Clujeană / Cluj University Press

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INTRODUCTION

The source of inspiration for the research topic *Is state a good parent?*¹ came from ideas on the productive nature of power in the domain of specialized care in child protection, or in a more general sense in the encompassing area regarding the treatment of children.

The birth of information society in the 1970's eliminated modern ideas and engendered post-modernity. According to Bauman (2000) trust is the most significant, the most important building block in the constitution of modern society: trust in ourselves, in others and in institutions. Each form of trust is indispensable; when one of them is lost, the other two weaken and collapse in the end. People function in such ways as to transform anxieties chaos generates into tranquillity order offers: "*Society, its institutions, practices, images and compositions, structures and management principles are all parts of this endeavour.*" (Fenyő 2007: 103). According to Beck (1997; 2003), risk society exists when traditional institutions lose meaning, social roles of individuals are blurred, personal life-paths, biographies are individual, pretty much resembling patchworks. Social theorists of late modernity do not refrain from the concept of modernity, but see it as entering a new phase and setting

¹ The question left its mark on me like during the presentation with the same title held by Ágnes Darvas on 2 October 2009 as part of the National Conference on Child Protection in Kecskemét. The detailed statistical analysis – commissioned by the Opportunities for Children Service in the Prime Minister's Office carried out in 2008 in the frame of the Revita Foundation – was an important antecedent for my research. The subject matter of the research concerns the question of how children benefit from children welfare and protection institution if they benefit at all (Erdős J. - Lakatos I. - Rácz A. - Prókai O. (2008) *Vajon tényleg jobb a gyerekeknek?* [Is it really better for children?]) (Final research report). Debrecen: Revita Foundation (May 2008)

new challenges societies have to confront (Rényi et al. 2014). In Giddens' words (1990), contemporary life-paths consist of rather autonomous projects. Anxiety and identity crises are the pathologies of this new era. Its particularity consists of lack of universal knowledge and truth; complexity and fragmentation replace predictability and order. Local solutions, difference, individual choices occupy the foreground (Bauman 2000; Bányaí 2008; Banks 2012; Marston 2001). Decreasing authority of expert knowledge brings through wide institutional crises and only institutions expressing constant concern for individual needs can fill in the void left by the loss of authority; *"reflexive institutions have particular potential for emancipation, they contain possibilities for life policies"* (Rényi et al. 2014: 53). Features of late modernity appear in different forms and with varying significance in the writings of certain scholars. For Boltanski and Chiapello the main features of late modernity are capitalist expansion, dissolution of traditional hierarchical institutions, global network capitalism, the prominence of projects. All these go hand in hand with exploitation of workers and devaluation of personal identities. Within the realm of possible reactions, one can find the prospect of creating new systems of regulation, strengthening the existent ones, or putting forward experiments aiming for increasing transparency. Lahire speaks about multilayered socialization and considers that during this particular process contradictory dispositions create tension in individuals. Dubet lists other factors, such as the dissolution of a unitary society, decline of institutional programs. and the concomitant increase in personal autonomy, which leads to role confusion, decreasing trust in institutions, and the emergence of new forms of power.² Martucelli thinks that norms and values are empty, void; solidarity between members of society fades away, while indifference to social injustice and inequality increases. According to Fassin, gaining empathy, pity is a type of action, and suffering and misery becomes the foundation on which individuals make ends meet, a base on which they get by. Privatization of public sphere and making public private life represent

² According to Dubet, only individuals who can mix different logics of action can adapt successfully. He sees the decline of institutions as a process of transformation, which can bring even positive changes (Rényi et al. 2014: 54).

features of late modernity, which imply fragmentation of individuals. Moreover, Singly writes about decreasing role of families and the increasing fragility of family life and a simultaneous increase in the importance of institutional intervention (Rényi et al. 2014: 20-21).

Several important changes occurred regarding childhood too: earlier notions of child development are not anymore suited to describe socialization; child-adult relations have also changed; borders between stages of life are blurred (See for example: Vajda 2000; Szabolcs 2004; Buckingham 2002). In *Children without Childhood* Winn (1990) writes about children who do not live the life of a child. Globalization and information society with its challenges reshapes quality time spent in the family, which results in significant decrease in the influence parents have on their children and a simultaneous decrease in the responsibility parents commit for their children. According to research data on child poverty, 22,3 percent of children aged 12-14 do not talk with their parents every day, 14,6 percent feel lonely. In addition, psychological problems and somatic symptoms are also frequent (Darvas–Tausz 2004). According to researchers Költő és Kökönyei (2011), pupils (boys and girls) aged 11-17 frequently complain about apathy, anxiety, and fatigue. Nearly one fifth of children suffer from sleeping disorder.

All those social challenges affect social work and child protection since they too operate in conditions of late modernity. In accordance with the postmodern interpretation, power is not primarily oppressive, but rather multidimensional and complex, as Marston aptly states (2001). He calls our attention to the fact that social policy research generally treats state as unified, homogenous object, an object that has its own sense, motivation, and interests. This normative approach places welfare state as a “thing” that thinks and reacts, while late modern narratives emphasize various and contradictory practices that affect and shape its constitutive elements. Post-structural and late modern approaches do not place high significance on state’s position, as the main carrier or vector of power. Foulcault speaks about the so-called governmentality that shapes practices centered on governing others and ourselves on every level of social life, on the level of state administration and the level of personal life (Takács 2005; Rác 2012).

The research entitled *Is the state a good parent?* aims to analyze principles and professional concepts that define practical work related to fulfilling tasks and assuming responsibility in corporate parenting. The research question is not standard, it is rather challenging, since we do not expect the state to act as a parent. However, in the case of children and young adults growing up in public child protection institutions the role of the state is evident and decisive. It has to assure a family environment for the children, has to reach a high degree of fairness regarding the decision of getting the child out from the family, in case other measures proved useless. In addition, rearing has to be in accordance with child protection aims, and has to be consistent (Darvas 2010: 1).

State is a good parent, meaning that corporate parenting operates in an adequate manner, when the state takes responsibility for the children under its protection, and it is able to satisfy their need. In addition, the state creates all the necessary conditions for children to reach the same level of school performance and have the same results in other domains of life, as the ones responsible parents desire for their own children. In the case of young adults, being a good parent means preparing individuals for life by securing participation in an adequate educational institution and integration in the labor market. It also means support and personal counseling to support their endeavor to satisfy needs. A fundamental expectation regarding foster parents is to act as good parents in their capacity as members of the public child protection system (Jackson 2007; Scottish Government 2008; Corporate parenting strategy for Clackmannanshire 2009-2012; Parent & child fostering scheme procedures 2010-2013; 'Staying Put'...2014). In thinking about children and their treatment it is of utmost importance that they receive all the support they need in promoting, unleashing their inner abilities and potential. Professionals working with children must trust children and support children in protection systems or at the margins of this system. The support would take into consideration their personal, individual needs – along with special needs – in a similar way as families support their children. Recognizing the role of family in children's life is inevitable, and the system of provisions in this domain should move toward an integrated family and community system that has the ability and capacity to provide effective services for the child protection system's primary and secondary target groups. In doing so it adapts to the double function of child protection: *"Child protection is a social institution created to support families, to aid tasks related to the children's*

personal development and social integration, and finally to take the responsibility of caring for vulnerable children whose families cannot raise their children.” (Domszky 2011: 3-4).

What kind of social institution is child protection in late modernity, how it can be described, how the institution reacts to challenges of late modernity? Is the institution becoming reflexive or is it looking for new ways of control by strengthening expert positions promoted by the power? To answer the following questions, in this study, I use several materials: international references, published research and data from my own research. I review and analyze the aims child protection, in a narrow sense, can meet compared to the aims stipulated in the child protection act. I also analyze the way theory (ideas) relate to practice and the other way around. What does mentality of experts and professionals comprise? What do they think of the profession, related professions, and the society in general within which child protection activities take place? What are their opinions about the beneficiaries of child protection, children, and the family of origin? I am interested in and focus on possible interpretations of corporate parenting in Hungarian practice. I am also concerned about visible alternatives of development and paths toward professional operation.

In the first chapter of the present study,³ I review the structural-functional approach regarding provisioning in child protection as a social institution that satisfies needs. I also refer to the theoretical frame of public child protection, a frame that represents the space in which one can interpret the role and tasks of child protection.

³ The study is based on the following publications: Rácz A. (2014) Jó szülő-e az állam? – fejlesztési igények a gyermekvédelmi szakellátás professzionalizációjáért [Is state a good parent? – development needs for the professionalization of professional care in child protection]. In: Rácz A. (ed.) *Jó szülő-e az állam?– A corporate parenting terminus gyakorlatban való megjelenése*. [Is state a good parent – the emergence of corporate parenting in practice] Budapest: Rubeus Egyesület. 215-245. http://rubeus.hu/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CPnemzetkozi_2014_final.pdf; Rácz A. (2014) A korporált szülői szerepvállalás. [Responsibilities in corporate parenting] *Metszetek*, 2014/1. 280-290. http://metszetek.unideb.hu/files/201401_13_racz_andrea_.pdf; Rácz A. (2014) Az előítéletes gondolkodás megjelenése a gyermekvédelemben. [The emergence of prejudice thought in child protection] *Esély*, 2014/3. 24-47.; Rácz A (2015) A gyermeki jogok érvényesítésének gyermekvédelmi példái. [Examples of reinforcing children rights in child protection] *Kapocs*, 2015/1. 2-13.

In chapter two, I analyze the system of services provided for children, the systemic logics it relies on, and the need to consolidate children rights in the domain of child protection. While describing international models, I interpret child protection interventions according to their main rationale, aim, and type. I describe relations between services provided by child protection and family support, the nature of cooperation between the state and the parent, the role of the state in general, meaning whom does the state protect and from who? All these approaches help the interpretation of the Hungarian child protection system since they identify social norms at work in public child protection interventions. These norms also disclose attitudes toward vulnerable families and children and mark public actions in prevention and problem management including their future paths of development.

Chapter three, in its empirical part, comprises an analysis of developmental needs as they appear in professional child protection activities. In this chapter I present the results of *Is state a good parent?* research, and in addition the reflections of the children's parliament regarding provisions. The aim of the research is to find out how provisions of child protection system serve the children's interest, and how mechanics of operation defines what needs are satisfied and how. Research results show which domains of child protection provisioning are dysfunctional and discloses systemic challenges the domain faces.

In the final, concluding chapter, I am concerned with the problem of standardization and the multidimensional frame for interpreting interventions that are focusing on family and targeting children. We delineate the path of development in child protection along the ethics of justice and the ethics of care. These two have the capacity to create a complex system in which the children gets an active role. Finding a balance is important. It is also important to assign an empowering role to care in child protection system. In this system, building capabilities is dominant, but control is also present. Control is particular to organized operation in the name of the productive exercise of power.

Research is instrumental to child protection work and public policies. They can exert instrumental and conceptual impact along building capacities (Nutley et al. 2013; Gough et al. 2011). I am confident that the research on *Is state a good parent?* might have a contribution in laying methodological ground for working in child protection, designing trainings, and shaping the perspective professionals and decision makers have.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF CHILD PROTECTION

In the following I tackle the issue of how and along what theories one should trace an interpretive framework for understanding child protection social institutions. The issue is crucial since, as Peter Lüssi aptly puts it, it is about a practical theory, meaning that practical experience, practice contributes to system development. This is why it is important to think about what government of complex system means.

Functionalist approach holds that society is a complex system, a system of various interrelated, connected, mutually dependent parts. All these parts cooperate to maintain stability on the level of the society as a whole. Subsystems are functional when they support stability, while they are dysfunctional if they compromise or put social stability in jeopardy. All elements of this system have specific functions in the workings of the system as a whole. These functions work for satisfying the needs society defines and accepts. According to the AGIL scheme developed by Parsons (1949¹/1985; 1951/1991) there are four clearly distinguishable primary functions that put a certain subsystem in the service of society as a whole. Meeting objectives or aims means that in order to survive, systems have to maintain essential connections to the environment, to provide and mobilize resources. Meeting aims requires adaptation and provision of means. Integration serves stability

¹ In original: Parsons, T. (1949) *The Structure of Social Action*. New York – London: The Free Press.

in connections, relations between parts of the system. According to Parsons, successful integration requires means; power does not assure integration using primarily coercion. Successful integration stems from conforming to normative expectations. Maintaining models and patterns serves this end. Models need value systems and transfer mechanisms. He demarcates societal community in the social system. This societal community comprises organizations, structures, institutions defined as normative social contracts that can integrate people having similar statuses. Individuals can integrate in community if they are sufficiently autonomous, and capable of independent action.² Families are institutions dedicated to the maintenance and preservation of models and patterns. Families preserve values and transmit them to the next generation. According to Parsons (1951/1991), collectivities are systems that integrate in various ways actors holding similar value systems. In addition, these actors feel that they belong together and they uphold a moral obligation to enforce, observe certain norms and to conform to various role expectations. Child protection as a social institution that substitutes families³ takes over families' function in maintaining models and patterns, fulfilling thus an integrative role in society. A system is adequate when it works and it meets its objectives set by definition or design. Relations between parts of the system and their adequacy related to aims also relates to the problem of change (in a positive direction). When speaking about a system that works one should consider many factors. Embeddedness is one such factor. It means that children grow up in families and the family is obliged to protect the children. On its turn, families are part of, and embedded in a system of families, which is embedded in a community system and in a broadly defined social system. *Reciprocity* means that the system and the elements, building blocks of this system interact and the effects of these relations reverberate on the system as a whole. One possible definition for the

² Institutionalized individualism needs differentiated and inclusive society and a high degree of individual self-control and internalization of norms.

³ In general, institution means the following: 1) particular system of expectations and rules, respectively, 2) observable patterns of behavior, systematic interaction, 3) probability of attitudes, dispositions for interpretation, 4) a given group or organizations, 5) one part of society or a social sub-system (Farkas 2007: 34).

functions of the system: they are organized activities that support meeting systemic goals. The *structure of the system* suggests the way in which fundamental elements of the system connect to each other. In other words, it gives the context for warranting services. *Capacity* refers to material resources, competent professionals and financing. *Caring as a process* facilitates efficient, integrated and preventive approaches and creates the condition for implementing a more comprehensive provision of services. *Accountability* has three meanings: financial accountability is about distribution, payment and use; performance refers to achieving expected output; and political/democratic accountability questions whether the government fulfills promises they made in the electoral campaign, represents citizens' interests and reacts to social needs. *Governing complex systems* means that child protection system works with many actors in close cooperation with several subsystems, and it is embedded in the social system. Success is measured by evaluating how close and commensurate is protection to children rights, and if it is not, how one can eliminate systemic dysfunctions (Wulczyn et al. 2010: 11-17).

Child protection Act XXXI/1997 uses structural functional approach in child protection According to this act, children's welfare means assuring physical, cognitive, emotional, and moral development and individual, patrimonial and other rights for children. Child protection means giving primacy and support to living and growing up in family, preventing and eliminating, stopping vulnerability. It also means and represents professional activity, action aiming to assure protection for children who are no longer benefitting the care of parents or other relatives.

Child protection is a social institution having an already shaped organizational structure, it functions according to laws that regulate its activities, it has a well-defined function for the members of society, and there is a system of trainings for professionals working in child protection. It aim in education is to inculcate social reactions to individuals by transmitting community's value system. Being aware of oneself, self-consciousness, as well as being aware of others is a social activity, meaning that self-awareness

and the perception of others are social processes (Mead 1973: 318). One can interpret the task of child protection on the level of society, which aims to facilitating social integration of marginal, vulnerable children and the ones growing up in child protection institutions on the one hand, and on the level of children on the other hand, a level that ought to assure conditions for the development of children. As corrective institution works for decreasing social inequalities, and the individual development of children and for compensating for disadvantages (Domszky 1999a; 1999b; 2011). When needed it replaces, substitutes the most natural social institution. However, it cannot stand for a source of love and identification provided by the family, therefore satisfying needs rests on normative regulations. *“(...) for children and families it is a contingent institutions defined from outside, which tries to harmonize in a mutually complementary way the aims of social integration and personal development in situations and concrete cases when these two are obstructing each other in the midst of need or damaging factors. Complexity, multi-causality, intricate interactions and accidental results of trials are the main characteristics of this institution.”* (Domszky 2011: 4).

It is a reflective profession with social institution background; it is an organized social intervention with little self-imposed scientific requirements (Domszky 2011). In the same time, professionals working in child protection institutions and foster parent provisioning need to mould their knowledge into socially accepted form. In other words, their knowledge is standardized. In the apt words of Lüssi (1997) this knowledge is practical theory that structures practice, builds on scientific results, and contributes to system development based on practical experience.

State has to assure legal frame,⁴ define the tasks of the institutions, give financial support for smooth operation throughout the system and provide professional control. As an implication of its competence as regulating body,

⁴ Legal regulation is in a sense narrower than moral norms, because it is limited to a given community and its problems and they regulate behavior. On the other hand, it is also broader in the sense that it refers not only to interpersonal relations but also to setting and pursuing political aims (Szűcs 2012: 28) (See later on pragmatic, moral, and ethical discourses.)

the state guaranties and constantly verifies the quality of child protection as public service (Domszky 2011). In addition, it is state's task to assure opportunities for continuous professional development and renewal, and multidirectional and multilayered burden-relieve possibilities for professionals working in the domain (Bogács 2015c). In the term governmentality, Foucault connects two words: government and mentality. In this interpretation, power cannot be linked only to state action. People are equally part of exercising power; individuals are objects and subjects of governing in the same time. Practicing negative (punishment, normalization) and positive (assuring social security and welfare) control makes up its core. Central power disciplines while the individual subjectifies.⁵ State appears as a segment of a more extensive structure of power relations including for example professionals or experts, organizations, institutions and beneficiaries. Normalization is one of the main methods of regulation; as such, it is also a fundamental value in child protection too. Thus, it sees power as real system of relations, where central power can adapt to citizens' needs while individuals, as acting subjects are able to take part in the exercise of power, are able to influence the shape of power relations. Government is responsible for ordering, stability and regulation in power relations (Foucault 1980; 1990; 1998). Disciplining techniques are effective and fertile if they connect with given institutional frames. Power relations are changing, they are asymmetrical and do not aim at equality⁶ (Sadan 2011).

Foucault defines three types of power relations: strategic games, government, and domination. Strategic games are ubiquitous in human interaction. However, they do not necessarily lead to neglecting others' interests. Power relations do not always take away liberties, sometimes the result is

⁵ Subjectification means internalizing technologies of power, when individual thoughts and behavior becomes subordinate in relation to social relations. Power and subject are mutually constitutive.

⁶ According to Giddens, power is part of a complex social practice. According to the so-called dual structure model, both social structure and individual actors are constructing social relations. Power is a part of both. In other words, power is a fundamental component of human relations and an organic element of social interactions. It is a process on a continuum stretching from autonomy/independence to dependence (Sadan 2011: 44-45).

empowerment or taking responsibility. Government is the sum of more or less systematized, regulated modes of power, which goes beyond spontaneous exercise of power over others and follows particular forms of reasoning (rationality) (Lemke 2000). “*Governing people, in the broad sense of the word, is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with integration and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by itself*” (quotation in: Lemke 2000: 4-5). On the contrary, domination is a stable and hierarchical power relation that does give to dominated people nothing but a little space of maneuver (Lemke 2000). Writing on education, Foucault describes what kind of disciplining techniques education institutions and their practices stem from, how they fulfill their function on individual and collective level, how school exerts social surveillance and moral regulation on families and in a much larger context. Schools embody epistemological power that gains information on individuals from individuals. Regulated and attuned systems fuse with human resource capacities to manipulate words, people, and things; to shape behavior, structure education and learning processes by regulated communication and the exercise of power. Education system puts communication on the top of the two other dimensions of the capacity-communication^{7,8}-power relation, contrary to what happens for example in prisons. Education system enforces, executes power that normalizes (Deacon 2006; Felber 2007). Rules, systems, and processes mobilize our will and disposition to gain knowledge by shaping a discursive practice. Rules of discourse are strongly connected to the exercise of power: social system builds it and assures its reproduction by mechanics of selection, exclusion, and domination (Hook 2001).

⁷ There is no knowledge without a system of communications, recounting, accumulation, and of changes in analytical perspectives. The system is a form of power and operates in relation to other forms of power. It is similar to the operation of power, which does not function without the production, distribution, and retention of knowledge. (Kiss 1994: 46).

⁸ Disciplinary society stems from another, novel type of power. Foucault refers two both meanings of the term “discipline,” disciplining and science. Accordingly, gaining knowledge is only possible within certain configuration of power relations. Moreover, in other cases power relations are the motors of knowledge (Gordon 2002; Ocskay 2002).

Power is positive when treats individuals (people in child protection system in our case) as subjects, meaning that beneficiaries are not in subordinate position in institutional structures, professionals offer them opportunities to develop their individual abilities, and the system has the ability and capacity to satisfy personal needs.⁹ In this sense, child protection as social institution is a system that regulates not only social interactions related to its primary and secondary target groups, but it has the capacity to regulate the thoughts of beneficiaries, to shape their value systems and actions, and to shape their habitus (Domszky 2011: 8). It is important to note that governing is not done by *“a central bureaucratic facility and not by an abstract public provider/actor, but subjects who accept the rationality, normalizing and disciplining power of the government and also accept different, not necessarily, but at least partly state regimes that mediate governing practices of power”* (Kasnyik 2007: 61). Multi-sector is of outmost importance in child protection. Needs,¹⁰ the narrative of social problems according to which the lack of certain goods and opportunities puts people’s wellbeing in jeopardy, so that it justifies society’s actions that are adequate to ameliorate those (Szöllösi2012). Thus, power is productive if it assures protection and support for children growing up in child protection care, and provisions can satisfy individual needs, professional methodology is adequate and professional responsibility is guaranteed on both individual and on systemic level (Rácz 2012).

One of the main tasks in child protection is facilitating integration. Solidarity actions make integration prevail in a given society. According to Durkheim (2001) families have the means to assure mechanic solidarity (principle of values), that feeds on community of people holding similar cultural values. Organic solidarity appears between people with different social background and of different conditions occupying different positions in the hierarchy of the division of labor created by inequality and differences in interests. In Durkheim’s sense, child protection as social institution rests on organic solidarity (principles of value and interest). In order to meet the dual

⁹ In a term from social work: *empowering*.

¹⁰ Several narratives approach the problem of satisfying needs. Below we use the Bradshaw’s typology.

manifest¹¹ aims put forward by child protection institution – interpreted on personal, individual, and systemic levels – there is a certain division of labor among individuals and a significant social distance between helpers and beneficiaries. Organic solidarity means also that individuals are indirectly connected to society; society is a system of particular functions, and goods are redistributed to disadvantaged people (Némedi 2006; Utasi 2002). Patriarchal state care, centralized institutional system assured integration in state socialism, while confrontation between those in power and those deprived of power – to use a term in the domain of social work – consolidated mechanical solidarity. To the extent that individuals have limited relations in the context of market economy, they can resort to family solidarity to solve their problems. People are excluded from society, in case structures dedicated to helping those in need, structures built on organic solidarity cannot play and fulfill their role in society. Characteristically, those governments can integrate isolated members of society, which allocate significant resources to solidarity actions (Utasi 2002). In societies that lack resources, even democratic institutions fail to protect marginal groups from isolation. It is a great danger when the sole agent that can assure integration is the powerfully centralized government. With the mass isolation of traditional helping communities, societies fell apart, which endangers safety of those in power, and on the long run it endangers the viability of society (Dahrendorf 1990¹²; Merton 1980¹³ cited in: Utasi 2002: 385).

According to Dahrendorf, becoming a society rests on three fundamental principles such as the norm (regulates the behavior of the members of the society), sanction (guarantees enforcement of norms) and domination (provides the means to endorse sanctions). “(...) every society is able to create the integration it requires in the form of particular bonds between social actors exclusively through coercion, in the sense of domination exercised by people over people in order to create an acting community.” (Neidenzu 2000: 188).

¹¹ According to Merton (2002) manifest functions are recognizable, purposefully pursued implications or consequences, while latent functions are unintended, and they remain hidden.

¹² Dahrendorf, R. (1990) *Reflection on the Revolution in Europe*. London: Chatto and Windus.

¹³ Merton, R. K. (1980) *Társadalomelmélet és társadalmi struktúra*. [Social theory and social structure] Budapest: Gondolat.

Beyond the analysis of state's role in parenting, foster parenting provision is an important sociological topic also because the state creates a particular type of family for a given period. This family is heterogeneous regarding cultural and ethnic background, and after the dissolution of the unity of the family of origin, state creates a new model of family, which comprises many actors: foster child, blood relatives, foster parents and their children, their relatives, circle of helping professionals. Integration of people with different identities into a family might create a field of forces that might generate several conflicts. Conflict management is the task of the state. Compared to traditional families, constructed ones are challenging the public opinion and the actors in the public child protection system (Neményi–Takács 2015: 70-71¹⁴).

With the institution of shared custody, the state gives certain parental rights and duties to foster parents while custody rights of biological parents are put on halt temporarily. The interesting thing in this family model is that foster parents benefit from the support of a professional guide, namely the parental counsellor. Although the latter does not fulfill any direct parental task, it has an important role in gathering information and monitoring activities and processes like caring, provisioning, educating, rearing the child. It also contributes to defining areas to be developed. Many professionals become part of family life (Bogács 2015b).

Child protection has known a two directional process in the last two decades. One the one hand, developments induced the creation of more familial institutions as a response to de-institutionalization. On the other hand, foster parenting and provisions in childcare and protection have become more widespread and more professional. Regarding solidarity-actions, the two-directional process resulted in the following. One the one hand, organic solidarity has consolidated in relation to the widespread and more differentiated provisions. Centralization of professional provisioning in child protection since 2012 aptly illustrates this tendency and situation. On the

¹⁴ Authors use Fisher's (2003) theory in their social interpretation of adoption, which is quite adaptable for opening a series of problems related to foster parenting. Cited work: Fisher, A. P. (2003) Still „Not quite as good as having your own”? Toward a sociology of adoption. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2003/1. 335-361.

other hand, due to enlargement of foster parenting provisions there has been an increase of expectations toward artificially created families, according to which they should build on mechanical solidarity since they are part of the public child protection system. The expectation required an altruistic attitude on the part of foster parents that was not met because of low social prestige. I consider that mechanic solidarity stems also from foster parents' isolation; we observe a similar situation – described in more detail in the research part of this paper – in other places where children live: institutions and homes. In this approach, we can say that child protection as social institution rests on organic solidarity. However, it enforces mechanical solidarity due to lack of resources, rapidly changing structures that are not powerful enough, in terms of professionalism. This poses high risks for the primary target group of child protection since integration does not lead to the family of origin or to society. Integration efforts lead to temporary integration in an artificially created family, prevent external connections to and relation with others, and this type of social integration – insufficiently based on processes of becoming an adult – leads to this system of social provisioning, and consequently to an increase of dependency on welfare provisions. It is a risky process also for biological parents because families having several problems do not stand a chance to integrate in society through their children. In this sense, the question is about which is the reference group (Merton 2002) for people living in the child protection system: the individuals who find themselves in groups. In other words, how organized behavior of social groups influences children and young people's behavior and performance. No doubt, we expect actors in the child protection system to fulfill the role of the *significant other* (in the sense Mead understands the term) in the process of socialization, on the path leading to adulthood (Mead 1973). According to Castells (2006) identity – as a process of building aims and as something that shapes our actions – is a social construction; shaping identity is embedded in power relations “(...) *those who create the base for collective identity define symbolic content of identity and the aims it induces for those who assume it or delimit themselves from it.*” (Castells 2006: 30). Castells (2006) distinguishes three types of identities: 1) *legitimizing identity*, represented by socially dominant institutions that expand their power. 2) *resistant identity* of those excluded or

stigmatized by the dominant identity and forced to redefine their social position; their aim is resistance¹⁵ (to principles represented by the power) or survival (on different principles than those held by the power). 3) *project identity* promises that society is going to be reshaped for social actors; individuals create new identities and try to change social structure. In this sense, child protection serves legitimizing identity. However, the identity of those living in child protection system and of their parents – as members of socially excluded groups – resembles resistant identity aiming survival, although it is important what strategy they use to this end. According to Boltanski–Chiapello (2007), social work aims the social integration of the excluded. Integration means connections to others as well as to different organizations. On the contrary, exclusion means fragmented or broken connections, and as a result, excluded people end up on the margins of networks and lose their visibility. Following Breakwell (1986)¹⁶ we can use the term of so-called threatened identity in case of individuals living in child protection systems. Threatened identity refers to the situation in which “(...) *identity processes of individuals do not conform to basic principles governing and regulating identity, namely continuity, individuality and self-esteem. (...) identity processes comprise assimilation of new components, accommodation to the newly created structure, and evaluation that gives meaning to old and new identity contents*” (cited in: Albert 2002: 15). Confrontation and struggle may appear on many levels (inter-psyche, interpersonal and intergroup) and follow various strategies. On interpersonal level, there are four solutions: negativism (individuals confront those who threaten their identity); isolation (individuals reduce to minimum contact with others); and submission to threat (accepts the role society defines for and expects from them) (Albert 2002). According to Bourdieu (1999: 167) social capital means resources based on belonging to a given group: “*which are connected to having a durable network of more or less*

¹⁵ According to Foucault, and compared to consensual behavior, resistance and struggle are the best way for exercising rights and freedoms. (Flyvbjerg–Richardson 2002) Power has many centers, and in a similar way, resistance is also unregulated, spread in time and space. (Kiss 1994) There is no general balance between finite actions, systems of communication, and power relations in any given society. According to Foucault, there are various forms in different places, environments, or occasions during which relations between them emerge according to a particular model (Foucault 1982: 787).

¹⁶ Cited work: Breakwell, G. M. (1986) *Coping with threatened identities*. London: Methuen.

institutionalized relations of mutual acquaintances and recognition (...)." Relations are symbolic capital that can be converted in other fields. Members of excluded groups have fewer relations, connections and they mostly connect to people having limited amount of capital. According to Coleman, information/flow between people is an important type of social capital. Social connections play an important role in getting information. Social capital defines the capacity of actors to use relation in asserting their interests. It facilitates the actions of individuals or corporate actors in social structure. The author presents three basic types of social capital: obligations/expectations, information channels, and norms/sanctions. For Putnam, social capital is collective criteria. Speaking of social capital, he distinguishes five working mechanisms. Thus, social capital 1) facilitates solving collective issues/problems; it serves as a kind of blueprint or recipe; 2) represents the foundation for community development and competitiveness; 3) widens our perspective on social life; 4) ensures information needed for successful definition and implementation of aims; 5) improves quality of life and satisfaction of individuals through community participation (Putnam 1995). For people living in child protection system supporting both strong and weak ties is equally important¹⁷ (Granovetter 1991). It is also important to recognize the extent to which parent-child relations, and relations to peers and relations between child-parent-expert (in school and in child protection provisions) are important and may have a positive impact on shaping performance in various domains of the child's life (Coleman 1998).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development aims at understanding human development. According to the model, individuals develop all the time in mutual interaction with others and the environment. Thus, if we want to understand the other we need to understand their experiences and development. Failing to consider other perspective paints us only partial image of the children's character, evaluated from the beginning by our own preconceptions and prejudices. In childcare institutions, cooperation between different professions ought not to be accidental. Shaping a working relation requires interdependence, flexibility, fighting for shared aims, looking

¹⁷ According to Granovetter emotional charge and the quantity of the time invested in a relation defines the strength of the tie between two actors.

for new professional challenges and thinking together on given processes (Burns et al. 2010). Thus, child protection is a system connected to several other formal and informal systems with which it cooperates. However, it is important for these relations to have unequivocal functions, capacities, processes of caring, accountability and responsibility. All these are requirements for proper working of the system, for eradicating or minimizing eventual errors in child protection activities. Child protection cooperates with social policy systems such as welfare provisions (family, children well-being, welfare and social provisions and services), educational and health system, family/kinship and local community systems, juridical and criminal system, for example in cases of abuse (Wulczyn et al. 2010; Forbes et al. 2011). Institutions react in two ways to challenges of late modernity. Firstly, they become reflexive because of adaptation to changing conditions; they adapt to individual needs while they strive to assure safety and rebuild norms and knowledge that have been emptied previously. Secondly, they search new ways of control; compared to the previous ones, now they experiment with more encompassing, total forms. They consolidate and empower the position of professionals while putting the burden of responsibility on individuals. Thus, they increase and legalize lack of institutional transparency and arbitrariness (Rényi et al. 2014: 55-56).

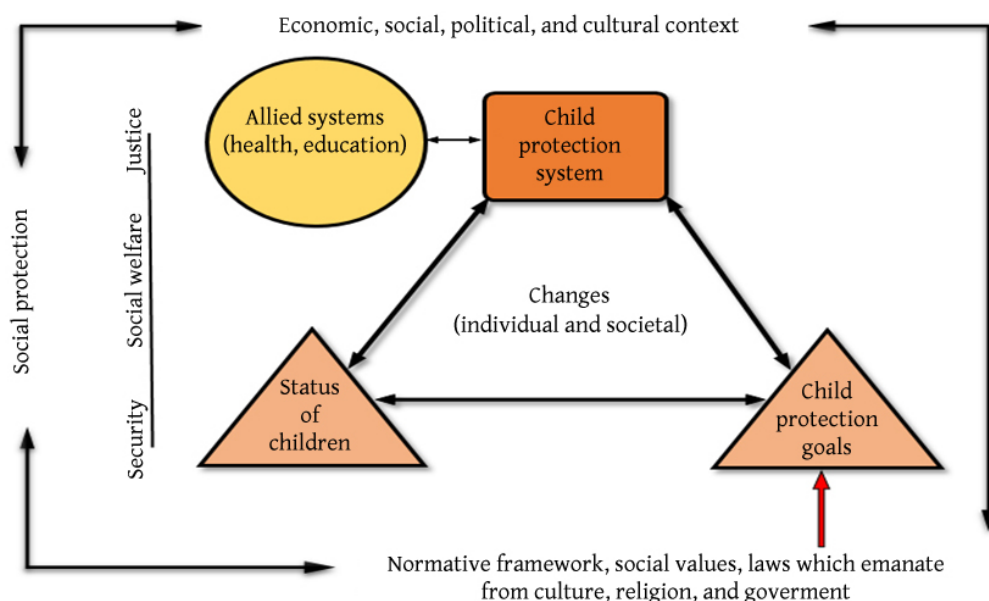
Child protection is a system of formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that prevents or reacts to violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children. The system consists of human and financial resources, legal regulations and policies, monitoring, data gathering, protection and problem solving services and case management (UNICEF 2013: 3). Forbes et al. (2011) delineates five actors, such as family, child, community, state, and international bodies (for example UNO, UNICEF) and seven elements of child protection. The elements are the following, on formal and informal levels: 1) juridical, policy background, standards, regulating documents; 2) system of services; 3) material and human resources, capacities; 4) coordination and cooperation mechanisms; 5) taking responsibility for full validation of children rights; 6) care framework, which comprises values, attitudes, and practices related to protection, and also the supportive and protective environment; 7) children's resilience, participation and abilities. Children related tasks of different actors find their interpretation on micro-mezzo-exo and macro levels. Family and

relatives, kinship are the most important actors on micro level. Provisions for toddlers and institutions like kindergarten, school, and children community have direct impact on the third level. On exo level, the significant actors and dimensions are parents' workplace, accessible services. These are all dimensions and people who have an indirect implication on the family. On macro level, interpretation focuses on cultural, economic, and political implications and consequences (Forbes et al. 2011: 11).

According to Wulczyn et al. (2010: 25) it is necessary to approach the five actors in child protection to identify available components in the child protection system. Grouping the components, the analysis has to include relations to other systems, physical conditions from the perspective of needs, the extent to which public service's framework is secured, including government, management, executive level, conditions regarding professional workings such as infrastructure, financial support, available human resources, conditions for proactive and reactive intervention, conditions for evaluation and follow-up, and quality framework including data gathering, quality standards and qualitative research and impact assessment. Focusing on these components, the analysis has to tackle the followings: is child protection assured from the perspective of children rights; how should undesirable effects of the system be filtered to assure that child protection capacity is adequate to meet its aims and fulfill its function on social and individual levels? As shown in figure 1, child's status and the aims of child protection are strongly connected. However, child protection does not work in isolation and it is not the sole institution responsible for the well-being of children. Focusing on children in child protection system follows four main topics and ten principles: I) critical timeframe: 1. principle: early intervention, ensuring all opportunities that connect children and their families on the one hand to services and support on the other hand; 2. principle: taking all measures to intervene immediately as the problem arise, "linking" the problem or services. II) Development needs and the children's universe: principle 3: procedures and protocols on all levels should take into account the stage of child's development in all areas. III) Ensuring participation: principle 4: there is a need to assure possibility for children to express their emotions and desires regarding the support of adults whom they trust; principle 5: policies, procedures and protocols have to avoid

the “one size fits all” approach in the area of children participation; principle 6: they should use family decision-making and problem solving methods, such as family conference, to maximize children participation. Principle 7: should inform children about child protection procedures and protocols. Principle 8: should inform children and parents as early as possible about legal and administrative decisions related to them. IV) Cooperation for strengthening child protection and connected networks: principle 9: knowledge and professionalism need to be shared; Principle 10: should strive for adequate working of the network surrounding children (UNICEF 2013: 8-9).

Figure 1: Context and dynamic of child protection system¹⁸



Source: Based on Wulczyn et al. (2010: 19).

¹⁸ Welfare and protection are two well-delimited domains in international child protection. In this case, I use the term child protection in a narrower sense, meaning that welfare provisioning aiming at prevention do not belong to child protection system. In my interpretation, the term child protection comprises case based services for cooperation in basic children's welfare services and the institutions of professional care (For details see: Rącz 2012).

CHAPTER II.

MODELS OF PROVISIONS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN SEEN THROUGH THE ROLE ASSUMED BY THE STATE

Child protection means intervention. Starting from international theories, this chapter describes existing models of provisions and services for children; aims defined by the state in child and parent support; timing the respective intervention, state's perspective on family and the extent to which cooperation is also a partnership. Through reviewing particular models, it also marks out Hungarian childcare system's position. Finally, stemming on several statistical data the chapter presents the most important tendencies in childcare in Hungary.

Following Smith (2005)¹ I present three theoretical models for building typologies of services offered to children, namely the models set up by Hardiker et al (1991), Frost and Stein (1989) and Fox Harding (1991, 1997). Hardiker et al (1991) distinguish between four types of approaches to services provided to children that consider also the role played by the state: 1) residual, 2) institutional, 3) developmental, and 4) radical. Residual model rests on individualism values such as freedom and difference. The model emphasizes satisfaction of needs, which necessarily generates conflict of interest in the case of particular actors. However, resolution rests in well-defined legal and moral frameworks. Despite existing legal and moral frameworks, state plays only a limited role in assuring welfare and in providing and caring for children.

¹ In his study, Smith mentions its own model previously (1991) elaborated as the fourth one in his typology. In this model he analyses three terms, namely welfare, protection, and rights in the light of the British children act of 1989 (2005: 22-27).

Intervention aims to manage implications and consequences of inadequate parental care or to ameliorate provisioning where this is impossible by other means. In addition, it also aims to ameliorate situations in which normal social values are arguably missing or significantly altered in family life. State intervention is decisive and compelling only in cases in which parents do not fulfill their fundamental, elementary obligations. State has a limited, albeit positive role in the institutional model. It aims at supporting social integration and cohesion. It also aims to guarantee that individuals will be able to satisfy their own needs. One of the roles of the state is precisely to prevent accumulation of problems for vulnerable people. Another aim is to facilitate commitment to social norms; therefore, it has further, special obligations: it has to protect vulnerable children and to urge the formation of adequate parental behavior. When parents cannot adequately fulfill their obligations, state supports fulfillment of parental tasks and meeting children's welfare needs by providing welfare services and programs. State is not punitive. However, it is prepared to intervene in cases when child needs long term protection and care. In the developmental model, state has a more central role in supporting, enhancing children's welfare, preventing families falling apart, and assuring reasonable treatment within the family. State intervention gets a positive interpretation as positive good that aims to provide freedom and consequently, guarantees higher-level quality of life. Therefore, basic child welfare provisions make up a significant part of good quality services until the children remain in the family. State does not blame parents for the weakening of family's ability to satisfy specific needs, which is the reason why families cannot anymore duly fulfill their obligation. Quite on the contrary, interventions aim at strengthening and empowering parents in their ability to fulfill their parental obligations, and in consolidating their own control on their own life (of an adequate quality). Radical model rests on concepts of radical practice and resistance. In this model, state is purely negative; disadvantages experienced by children are in fact implications of an oppressive structure. Therefore, there is no effective intervention but social actions and protection of rights and interests and the widest possible scale.

Frost and Stein (1989) have developed a tripartite terminology that focuses on the nature of interventions. The main notions they operate with are "child

protectors”, “child welfare”, and “child liberators”. The positions are not necessarily unambiguous. For example, child welfare position comprises both those who prefer giving greater control to service providers and experts and those who emphasize children participation.

The most comprehensive elaboration of ideal types regarding services provided to children is the one developed by Fox Harding (1991, 1997). He distinguishes four “value positions” on which he builds model typology: 1) laissez-faire; 2) state paternalism; 3) protecting the family of origin; 4) protecting children rights. Fox Harding admits that there is room for uncertainties and overlaps concerning the four positions. Nevertheless, he considers that each one of the four models represents a particular direction in childcare politics and practice. In his interpretation, the laissez-faire model rests on the conviction that state should not intervene in the family’s natural processes. The only intervention allowed in this model is minimal and belongs to the category of enforcement. State power and limitation of parent freedom are seldom exercised in practice. Fox Harding interprets the approach in a wider ideological perspective and relates it to the existence of a powerful father/head of family role. He thinks that the laissez-faire model is not just a theoretical abstraction. The approach was clearly identifiable in practice in certain historical periods, such as the Victorian era, or during conservative government in the 1979/97 period. A critique of the model holds that state interventions are negative and there is a particular gender model built in the roles of man/father. State’s role in this model of state paternalism needs to be limited, but it has to retain a function of guiding or orienting. There is need for powerful and efficient state intervention for protecting children when they are vulnerable in families or when parents cannot adequately take care of and provision for them. There is profound belief and trust in the abilities of professionals and in interventions mechanisms, that every situation or case receives proper evaluation and proper interventions prevent maltreatment. The goal is to put together disintegrating families and to offer good quality alternative services to children and families. According to Fox Harding this is the model that has prevailed in United Kingdom at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s, when the number of children in state care increased significantly. The model is criticized because it does not give

but little space to families and children, while professionals' authority is to powerful. Belatedly, people have realized that interventions have not been efficient and reliable enough. In particular, the case of poor and excluded families might frame state intervention as oppressive. We may interpret the *model targeting protection of family of origin* as a belief in the positive role of state intervention, a model in which interventions aid and support family welfare. Material and other types of support also serve family autonomy. There is partnership between families and welfare service providers. Adequate amount of support is indispensable to help families make ends meet. Even in the case of individual needs, intervention has to be supportive. Even in case the system takes the child away from the biological family this is a temporary situation, intervention for strengthening family functions and not for satisfying long-term, continuous need for care. Fox Harding sees two approaches, tendencies within this model: some support family rights while others think that the goal of state intervention is to assure that children grow up in family. In this, the model diverges significantly from the *laisses-faire* model, because preserving family unity or reuniting families is a value in itself; parenting is a psychological term in this model and growing up in the family of origin is highly important. In addition, it starts from the central assumption that the main cause of problems regarding children welfare and child protection resides in material deprivation. Thus, state qualifies as an important actor giving material support for families. It takes into consideration the fact that there is a complex relationship between family and child, and this relationship becomes the foundation of interventions. Some of the criticisms, addressed to this model are that it idealizes the family of origin, it does not see the real capacity and willingness of the welfare state as to the amount of expenses it can dedicate to supporting families, and its optimism regarding efficiency of prevention activities done by professionals is highly exaggerated. In the model protecting children rights protection of children rights and social responsibility occupy central places. The Agreement on children's rights of 1989 has effected an important change regarding perception of children's treatment. Satisfying individual needs is of utmost importance in the model that aims at protecting children's rights. Interventions should take into consideration these needs, and invite children to be active

players in interventions. Contrary to other models in which the emphasis is on protection, here participation of, expressing opinion and hearing a child is essential. However, Fox Harding notes that there are certain children's rights that one needs to grow up too, meaning that rights are neither universal nor evident from birth. Liberals hold that children are entitled to the same rights as adults are. However, they get little support, although the birth of children's right decisively facilitated children's participation in designing, planning provisions and in decision-making. Protection of children's rights claim cooperation of adult society. Among others, the criticism directed to this model is that defining obligations standing along rights is difficult (Smith 2005: 22-27; Kirton 2009: 7-8).

According to Smith (2005), models that protect family of origin and build on protecting children's rights give place to practices that support empowerment. The author considers that the model protecting family of origin characteristically engages in practices centering on family and prefers routine state intervention. On the other hand, the model protecting children's rights prefers limited state intervention and practices focusing on children. Social control, as a function, gets special emphasis in state paternalism and laissez-faire models with the difference that state paternalism implements interventions focusing on children, while the laissez-faire model practices family-centered interventions.

Table 1: *Values in child protection provision*

Models	Type of intervention	Aim of intervention	Primary target group
Laissez-faire	Limited state intervention	Social control	Centered on family
State paternalism	Routine state intervention	Social control	Centered on children
Protection of family of origin	Routine state intervention	Empowerment (giving power to those disempowered)	Centered on family
Protection of children rights	Limited state intervention	Empowerment (giving power to those disempowered)	Centered on children

Source: *Based on Smith (2005: 32-33).*

Table 2 compares the three theoretical models on common dimensions and elements. For Smith (2005), residual services dedicated to children described in Hardiker et al. is similar to or shows overlapping commonalities with Fox Harding's (1997) laissez-faire type. Institutional type is somewhat close to state paternalism and to the model focusing on child protection. Developmental model, child protecting, and protection of the family of origin have common elements, while radical approach is similar to models aiming at child liberation and protecting their rights.

Table 2: Comparing models

Theorists	Models / approaches			
Hardiker et al. (1991)	Residual	Institutional	Developmental	Radical
Frost and Stein (1989)	-	Child saver	Child welfare	Child liberation
Fox Harding (1997)	Laissez-faire	State paternalism	Protecting family of origin (working in partnership)	Protecting children's rights

Source: *Smith (2005: 28)*.

Skivenes (2010) calls the attention to the fact that all decisions taken by public and private institutions working in social protection or by different authorities and legislative bodies stem from taking into consideration the very best interest of the children. However, guidance regarding the interests of children is scant for those whose decisions influence children and their families. Therefore, there is some kind of uncertainty around what is children's best interest, whether decisions do serve the best interest of children, what are the main criteria according to decision makers, what does support decision: rational arguments or subjective presuppositions. Pragmatic discourse stands on empirical facts, builds on rationality and interprets the workings of society and the world trying to find out what does meeting a goal needs. It is important to have empirically proven facts about the child's case and it is equally important for professionals to have

knowledge about the child's situation, evolution to solve a dilemmatic situation. These cases document decisions and have realistic goals. The discourse is ethic, when values are in conflict, individuals or the community has to clarify what they want. It reflects on what good life means for individuals, and it seeks the best solution in which one can serve the best interest of children. Ethical values stem from individual life histories. Moral issues² are more general in their nature; they do not depend on cultural context and touch upon issues of truth and justice. Normative issues have legitimate solutions in the frame of a rational discourse if all involved take part in the process and engage in open debate. The aim is to give voice to all arguments and counter arguments, and to let participants freely express their opinions and proposals regarding change (Habermas 2001; Skivenes 2010; Szűcs 2011; 2012). *"(...) political decision making has to give particular discourse of self understanding, so-called ethical discourse as much space as it needs. Deliberative politics stands on a decision making model that allows for reasonable compromise, gives space to ethical discourse sensitive to "contexts of justice," but makes legitimacy of laws dependent on universal, moral and particular legal expertise"* (Szűcs 2011: 87).

Child protection has changed in important ways on international level in recent years. Child protection as social institution adapts to and follows social change. Global competitions, mobility of capital and workforce, acceleration of economic processes and interdependence of national economies, and the economic crises of 2007 has their impact on the operation and workings of welfare systems (Gilbert et al. 2011). Gilbert et al. argue that the number of children growing up without a family remains the same in the countries they have studied³ despite the broader provisions

² Habermas considers that social policy problems are morally relevant problems, since he thinks that they can lead to oppression when there is no clear reference to universal principles in considering the context of different life-worlds (Szűcs 2011: 116).

³ USA, Canada, England, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Netherlands.

in children welfare and more extensive prevention services. One of the reasons is that children stay longer in care. There are differences regarding the age when children enter childcare programs. In general, children in United States, England and Canada get into the system at a younger age, while children in Scandinavian countries resort to child protection care at an older age. The form of children placements has also changed in most countries – except for Denmark. Placement of children in foster families becomes more and more frequent, while institutional placement becomes secondary. There is also a growing interest in placing children at relatives.⁴ Children belonging to minorities are overrepresented, as a rule, in each country. Personalized education and particular methods applied in child rearing for child's development in harmony and accordance to the institutions philosophy have become basic need (Gilbert et al. 2011; Burns et. al 2010). According to Eileen Munro, emphasis should rest on holistic approaches and not atomistic ones. Holistic approach means acknowledging and approaching the system as a unitary field of interconnected elements. One needs to count for unintended consequences of certain processes, interventions and for the cumulative nature of implications. One needs to facilitate and support professional operation and workings, meaning socio-technocratic approach. Services have to adapt to the needs of the children and for the management is important to be supportive and enabling (Munro 2010: 13).

Extending child protection can have two meanings: it could be an experiment in developing prevention and early intervention on the one hand, or it could be an extensive social monitoring system of the families. Both interpretations signal the changing relation of state-parent-children. The difference between supporting families and child protection is that the latter is more regulated, emphasizes analytic approach, and requires more

⁴ Brisebois et al. (2013) raise the question regarding placement to relatives. It shows that relatives go through the same problems as those biological parents do from which the children were taken away.

bureaucracy work on the part of professionals. Official procedures regulating child protection work have increased in most countries. Beyond all these, they prescribe bureaucracy obligations and introduce means and techniques that facilitate accountability of professionals and workers in their activities in child welfare organizations. Although professionals recognize the importance of multiple professionals in child protection, social worker remains the single bearer of most obligations and responsibility (Gilbert et al. 2011; Munro 2010). For families connected to child protections system all these appear as if the aiding process is all about following rules and regulating beneficiaries instead of meeting organizational goals. Therefore, a formal relation between social worker and beneficiaries become also impersonal and makes social work an asocial activity. Formal practice wants to minimize informal, personal aspects of intervention, while beneficiaries expect personal, unique solution to their own personal problems. This divergence creates frustration among parents and tension among social workers (Merton 2002; Szilvási 2006; Munro 2010). The introduction of evidence based practice as well as trainings and support for professionals are essential factors in advancing the scientific base of professional practice (Gilbert et al. 2011). Thus, many factors have shaped the evolution of child protection system since the birth of children's rights: more children and more families benefit from support and there are more interventions; control of professionals has become more important, evaluations might question their abilities and the quality of their work. These evolutions make recruitment of social and child protection workers more difficult. Keeping them in the system becomes more difficult, too. In addition, normative operation and workings according to formal rules has gained importance. Focusing on children, the state assumes more responsibility in widening the scale of early intervention and prevention services. This role shows state's paternalistic concern regarding the needs and welfare of children. Seeing children as independent entities in the family decreases responsibility of parents and

family (de-familiarization) and places children's rights above family rights. Protection of children's rights means state sees children as citizens and not as future labor force (Gilbert et al. 2011: 252-253; Munro 2010; Munro–Manful 2012). Investment in children comprises services stemming from prevention, which treats problems in their early stage. It also comprises prescription of more powerful rules of conduct both for professionals, who are responsible for the execution, implementation of policies, and for parents and children, because it state expects improvement of children's condition in their family environment and relations, as well as improvement in treatment of children in general (Gilbert et al. 2011).

The approach focusing on children on the one hand and the orientation toward child protection and family support on the other hand have several common elements: the idea of social state⁵ creating, investing in opportunities and processes of individualization (Gilbert et al. 2011: 253). In 2012, UNICEF and Save the Children updated Gilbert's model (2011) and has introduced community resources and opportunities provided by the power of community care. This lends an important complementary dimension to the original concept, namely interpreting the relation between support dedicated to child protection on the one hand and to keeping the family, on the other hand (Table 3). It is important that children benefit of quality services and it is important that the state support families in accessing protection services. Thus, they enhance flexibility of families and their capacity to cope in different situations.

⁵ According to Giddens (1999), state's role in relation to welfare focuses on solving problems and hardships produced by unpredictable markets. Interventions aim at empowering excluded individuals and groups, giving them the right opportunities to maximize their own capacity and integrate in labor markets.

Table 3: *The role of the state in various approaches to child protection*

	Child Focus	Family Service	Child Protection	Community Care
Driver for intervention	Individual/children needs in present and future; society's need for healthy taxpaying citizens	Family unity needs help	Parents neglect and abuse their children	Community reaction to those implications and effects of child welfare policies that are inadequate in terms of discrimination and culture
Role of the state	Paternalist/de-familiarize, it looks for a solution to place children in family environment (foster parents, relatives, adoption)	Supporting parents, state seeks to consolidate family relations	Sanctions: state is observer and it ensures children's safety	Developing partner cooperation with local community, consolidating their role regarding children welfare issues
Problem frame	Child development and unequal outcomes	Social/psychological (system, poverty, racism, etc.)	Individual/moral	Dominant relation between children's welfare system and minority's cultural system
Mode of intervention	Early intervention and regulation, needs assessment	Therapy, needs assessment	Juridical, investigative	Consultation with parents and extended family and members of local community
Aim of intervention	Facilitate welfare through social investment and or equality of opportunity	Prevention/ social connections	Protection/ decreasing harm	Decreasing harm, keeping children in families and exploitation of community resources
State-parent relationship	Substitution/ partnership	Partnership	Inimical (hierarchic)	State acknowledges values of traditional parenthood

	Child Focus	Family Service	Child Protecion	Community Care
Relation between services aimed on child protection and family maintenance	Child protection services as parts of a more encompassing system of child welfare services	Child protection services embedded in broad programs aiming at family preservation	Services regarding child protection and preservation of family become separate	Child protection services embedded in broader family and community preservation system
Balance of rights	Children's rights /parents' duties	The right of parents to family life mediated by social professional	Enforcing children's and parents rights through juridical means	Balance in children's, family and community rights

Source: Based on Gilbert et al. (2011: 255) and Unicef – Save the Children (2013: 7).

Merging different theories, Young et al. (2014) distinguish five key elements related to theoretical approaches of protecting children's rights and community enforcement in practice: *child-centered, contextualization, collectivity, reciprocity and family capital*.⁵ Regarding practical operation, all these mean that children are competent participants in every intervention, it is important to voice their opinions as part of exercising their rights as children. It is also important, for the same reason, to take into consideration environmental factors; how families operate, family history, and community resources and capacities. Social being, characteristic of humans, means that collective activity has positive impact on children security and protection. In practice, there are three important criteria such as *rights, ethics, and humans and the environment* respectively. Rights stand for protection of human and children's rights, social justice, and for supporting individual freedom. In this approach, the principle taking into account the best interest of the child means adequate state resources. This in turn makes development possible and support children development, parents' participation in decision-making; family care; preservation of cultural identity; eliminating the practice of taking the children out of the family at the first sign of threatening and seeking a solution after the children is taken away from the family. Ethics serves for observing and respecting professional directives and the expression of professional values in practice. Since Mary Richmond, social workers know that seeking solutions and solving problems means to build on strengths and resources clients and their environment has. In practical work these three factors mean that active and productive participation is presumed, assumed, ethics imposes decent treatment, and investigating people in their own environment assumes that people can develop and they can positively contribute to their own and family life. It also means that environment comprises resources apt for use, exploitation (Young et al. 2014: 900-905).

According to Fox Harding's typology, child protection in Hungary belongs to the model of state paternalism while following Hardiker et al. (1991) it

⁵ They named their own theory jointly constructed social work model (Young et al. 2014: 908).

belongs to the so-called institutional model. According to the approach promoted by Gilbert et al. (2011) child protection is the main orientation in the Hungarian practice, although protection of children's rights is the all-encompassing value of the Child Protection Act of 1997. The British law on child protection, which in fact favors prevention, has influenced greatly the Hungarian Act. This is why at least on the level of principles, there is a fundamental expectation in the domestic system to provide families all the support they need to raise their children in the family. In its spirit, the Hungarian legislation is child-centered regarding provisioning, meaning that it is concerned with and attentive to the special situation of the children, their needs and the children's rights according to the age of the child in question. However, in practice they use the so-called problem centered model of child protection given that services concentrate primarily on families going through crises situations. According to a fundamental principle the law stipulates, child protection exercised by authorities would come in all cases only after children were provided voluntary service provisions. Children can be taken away from their families only in case vulnerabilities continue to remain despite providing multiple support (Domszky 1999a; Rácz 2013a).

Changes and tendencies in child protection in Hungary

Tendencies in child welfare

It is worth highlighting some available data to illustrate, in a first intimation, several contradictions regarding principles and practice in child protection system in Hungary. OSAP data published in 31 December 2013 speak about an overloaded system of provisions for children's welfare. There are 661 child welfare operation units in 621 settlements throughout the country; they provide services for 3147 settlements, which represents 99,8 percent coverage. They provided for 141 thousand children in 2013 meaning 78 thousand families. Out of the total number of children in childcare system 91454 children benefit from basic provisioning, 26721 are included in protection programs, and 935 children benefit of aftercare provisions.

We note that the number of children has decreased with nearly 10.000 persons since 2010. Decrease is more prominent in aftercare because home care is also more infrequent. Children aged 14-17 make up the most substantial target group (40,1%) (Papházi 2015).

According to the size of the settlement, we see that the number of beneficiaries in 10 thousand children in the same age group is higher than the average on national level in *other* settlements, while we find the lowest number of beneficiaries in communes. Most of underage beneficiaries of welfare services live in northern Hungary. Parental neglect is the most common problem whose incidence has increased with 47,1 % since 2009. The number of children provided for because the way of life of their parents or family has also increased. However, the number of children struggling with addiction has decreased with nearly 25% (Papházi 2015).

The number of vulnerable children has been around 200 thousand individuals since 2000. In 2013, the number of vulnerable children was 140 thousand.⁶ However, in recent years the number of children entering protection has increased with 112,6 % from 2000 to 2011. On the contrary, from 2011 we can see a significant decrease with 7000 persons. The system punishes children who have more than 50 absences with cutting their educational support. Absences are closely linked to deficiencies in child rearing, behavior and performance, and cutting material support only worsens the material situation of this families that struggle with many other problems too.⁷ The boom in the number of children entering protection programs in the last two years is due to the changes regarding deficiencies in school life (Papházi 2015). The number of underage children recorded as entering child protection program was 21350 in 2014. This means 7032 families with underage children. The reasons for entering the child protection system have not changed significantly in recent years. However, the number of beneficiaries decreased with nearly 4000 individuals compared to previous years. Out of

⁶ KSH solicited these data using questionnaire 1210 of the custody institutions until 2012. Starting from 2012 children welfare services provide the data on questionnaire 1775. Differences are due to measurement methodology.

⁷ The children get into children protection programs at the order given by the notary of the settlement who also stops education support for the children in question.

the total number of underage children recorded in the registers, 64 percent have entered the protection system following the children's welfare service initiatives, while in other cases the initiative belonged to some other organ. On the other hand, the number of aftercares increased. The number of beneficiaries of aftercare services was 1476 (KSH 2015, preliminary data⁸).

The national level research on child protection services conducted by Rubeus Association calls the attention to the fact that in 2014 the average number of beneficiaries for one social worker (family caregiver) is the highest in county residencies (68 individuals), followed by communes (53 individuals), large communes (28 children) and the capital city (26 children). Psychological counseling is the service that qualifies as the most needed one in 50% of service providers. Besides, there is also need for legal counseling in nearly one third of service providers. In settlements where children's welfare services operate, the third most wanted, needed service is debt management. According to what professionals in children welfare provisioning think, the communication system, the notification system needs improvement. The efficiency of the system has its own implications and effects on the interventions of the children's welfare service providers since late problem detection and management often if not always requires interventions, which are more complex, and therefore more time and resource consuming (Rubeus Association 2015).

Without giving intensive support for keeping families together there is no chance to help families even in critical situation when the vulnerability of the children reaches a degree that raise the question of removing children from their families, but intensive support would prevent removal and help families. There are only few alternative provisions, services and transitory, temporary services are scant. The evolution of the child protection system in recent years left almost untouched this whole domain. Moreover, targeted and systematic development regarding basic services is still missing. Extremely important developments in prevention, initiated in the *Secure start* program (breaking the cycle of poverty, prevention of vulnerability, developing individual skills

⁸ I used the raw, preliminary data gathered by KSH for 2014. The Ministry of Human Resources Directorate of Child Protection and Custody asked for the data I used. I am grateful to Katalin Gábor Balogh for her help.

in children living in disadvantaged regions, settlements), are not in the forefront of attention anymore.

Tendencies in professional child protection care, services

2012-2013 has brought important changes in child protection since nationalization/centralization started and specific tasks on county level as well as the entire professional child protection system found their place on national level. State operates, maintains, and financially supports child protection institutions. Religious institutions play a more active role in professional care than they have played before. On the contrary, civil organizations continue to remain marginal in professional care. In this centralized system, financial logic based on needs (normal, special, and extraordinary) defines costs of care services. Starting from 2015, calculations of costs based on needs includes also the age of beneficiaries.

Recent developments⁹ in professional care have evidently touched on foster parenting, or foster care. One possible interpretation of this process relates to the so-called natural process of deinstitutionalization. This in fact argues that earlier institutional structures do not serve the needs of children and young adults; residential home system does not fulfill initial hopes related to it on the one hand and to targeted deinstitutionalization, according to which creating a new child protection system is a matter of government evaluation and decision making (Domszky 2011: 3). Foster care system has changed in 2014. Categories of traditional and professional have separated; foster parenting now presupposes work contract and foster care has become without doubt the preferred form of placement for children under 12. Children under 12 ought to be placed in foster families except when the child is chronically ill or suffers from a severe disability, or siblings cannot remain together to benefit from the care or there are other reasons that make placement in institution necessary.

⁹ Rubeus Association published a volume of studies focusing on the analysis of development in different sectors or domains of children's welfare basic services and child protection professional services. *A gyermekvédelem megújulási alternatívái* (2015, ed. A.Rác) [Alternatives of a renaissance in child protection].

Alternatively, the other case is when the parent asks for institutional care. Placements take place gradually.

In a document of the government of Scotland they call the attention to the fact that institutional placement has good results in many cases regarding children under 12. After that, children continue to live in foster families. They argue that children do not trust adults; therefore, people working with these children should be dedicated and creative. Many local governments in Scotland do not place children under 12 in children's home. However, the institution based on professional and expert work could prove to be a good choice since failure in family placement engenders rejection and remorse on the children's part, which in turn could preclude success in placement to the next foster parent. The primary aim of children's home care is to create a realistic family environment that helps children prepare for long-term family placement. Working with small, family-like groups allows for a flexible approach in satisfying children's needs. Thus, institution supports children's healing process and development (In Residence 2011).

In 2014 in Hungary a new legal institution was born. Child protection guardianship has many aims, among which there are the following: representing children's best interest regardless of where the care takes place; promoting and supporting the exercise of rights children have; bringing forth children's opinion and informing provider institutions and superior authorities about these opinions. Ensuring continuity is desirable even when there is movement from one place of care taking and service provisioning to another. Practically, the child protection guardian is the person in charge of the child's life course. One professional may be responsible for a maximum of 30 children.¹⁰ According to data gathered in 2014, there are 16 thousand underage children assigned to child protection guardians, and for nearly 3000 underage children the foster parent is also the guardian¹¹ (KSH 2015, preliminary data). There are 561 guardian positions filled in (Balogh 2015: 24).

¹⁰ Because time was too short until today, we do not know what is the practice regarding placement of children under 12 years of age, and we do not know how efficient is the institution of child protection guardian.

¹¹ 36% of foster parents are fulfilling guardian related tasks, all or some of them (KSH 2015, preliminary data on 2014).

Unveiling data referring to how paternalist state fulfills its function of social control in the domain of child protection: 61 percent of foster parents (3200 individuals) fulfilling their role before January 2014 were traditional foster parents who had no income, as in contractual job, meaning that they lived at high risk of existential insecurity. In these cases, the benefits the children receive, the family allowance is the only income for foster parents. Unemployed foster parents cared for 62,5 % of children placed in foster families. This means that nearly two-thirds of children in foster care lived in conditions of existential insecurity¹² (dr. Lantai–Balogné 2013: 5).

Trends in professional child protection care show that the number of underage children decreased from 2000 to 2008 while the number of young adults above 18 increased in the same period. The number of underage children increased again in 2011 exceeding 18 thousand. Starting from 2010, the number of young adults aged above 18 decreased with nearly 700 persons. Changes in legal regulation of aftercare services are the source of this decrease. According to data of KSH (2014) a number of 18674 underage individuals (children and young adults) were in the professional care system in 2013. Out of them 63, 8% (11918 individuals) live with foster parents. The number of underage children increased with more than 1000 persons until 2014, there were 19406 persons (children in temporary placement included), the number of young adults above 18 remained the same (2952 individuals), and the total population was of 22550 individuals. Growth in the respective year was about 10 thousands (newly registered children); a similar number of children left (9266). 32 % of them went back to their families, and in about the same proportion they left the system because they became adult, which is the reason they stop receiving child protection services. in the respective year, there were approximately 10 thousand contact regulation in case of children living in foster families, in 13 % of them contact can take place only in supervised forms (KSH 2015, preliminary data).

¹² According to the data provided by the Pest County Child Protection Professional Service and Institutional network of foster parents, there are more people willing to become foster parents in areas that are less developed in economic terms. http://www.csaladinet.hu/hirek/szabadido/hirek_erdekessegek/21109/a_jomoduak last accessed: 21.07.2015.

Regarding the two main forms of service provisioning we may say that the dominant form was the institutional one in 1997-2000; underage children have been placed in institutional and foster care in equal proportions of 50% in 2001-2003. Foster parent care started to increase its share in 2004. However, a more substantial growth has become visible starting from 2010. In 2014, the proportion of placements to foster parents makes up 62 percent; there are 5531 foster parents out of which 959 are particular and 10 are special foster parents (KSH 2015, preliminary data). (Before unification of foster parenting, the proportion of professional personnel was 5 percent). Nearly 45 percent of foster parents take care of, raise 2 or 3 children, while the proportion of foster families raising 1 child is 21,4%, and 26% of the families take care of 4 or more children. As a sign of unused capacities, we note that 8 percent of foster parents do not raise children, which means a 4 percent growth in accessible, available work volume compared to the previous situation (KSH 2014; KSH 2015, preliminary data).

Children homes could accommodate 9241 persons in the year in question, nearly 30 percent of places are in general children home facilities, 30,5 percent in foster homes, and 5,7 percent of the places are in special children or foster homes. The proportion places allocated to particular children or foster home facilities was of 21 percent. The situation remained practically the same until 2014, places for beneficiaries of institutional services and homes is 9213, while there are 17 thousand places in foster parenting together with external places associated to these networks. (KSH 2014; KSH 2015, preliminary data)

It is worth looking at data to see the evolution of home care within the two main systems of provision: in 2013, a number of 613 children got back home after leaving foster parents and 911 after leaving institutions. In other words, 40 percent of children reintegrated in their families came from foster parents (KSH 2014). This may show also the problem that foster parents do not value highly keeping contact with the family of origin, and that cooperation with parents in the frame of basic service provisioning cease as soon as the child is taken away from the family. It may also show the problematic nature regarding cooperation between basic and professional service provisioning. For the latter it is worth noting that according to children protection data for

2009 about 75-80 percent of children getting into professional care have had antecedents in basic care, meaning that were other organs or authorities which initiated temporary placements¹³ (Papp 2013: 94). This also means that, as we have already mentioned, operation of the signaling system is problematic since the problems children face do not even reach helping professionals.

Regarding young adults with a professional care background, we may note that 55 percent of them remain with their foster parent after coming of age, and 18 percent of them receive care in traditional children home (KSH 2014). Herman (2002)¹⁴ uses the term “kinship by design” for families who adopt children and not for foster parenting. However, we do not know the reasons and motivations why 60 percent of children living with foster parents spent more than 10 year in the system. Only 27 percent of children in institutional care spent more than 10 years in the system. Three quarters of young adults use care services because they continue to study (KSH 2014).

Supporting participation in education is highly important for social integration. There are clearly visible differences regarding the continuation of education among children in the two types of care: in 2011, only 10,3 percent of children aged 15-17 in children homes participated in education leading to high school graduation, while the same proportion was 31,7 percent in case of children in foster care. Foster parents produced better results, and the following synthetic data shows exactly that: in the respective age group 86 percent of individuals in foster care are enrolled in high school compared to 61, 1 percent of the population in children homes (Papházi 2014: 187).

¹³ A series of institutions and authorities, such as – even district guardianship office since 2013 – police, court, border guards and penitentiaries can recommend temporary placement even without prior family care provided by children welfare institutions. This means that children welfare service-providers do not participate in this type of placements. In 2009, temporary placements in guardianship processes were initiated and carried out as follows: 3434 by notary guardianship, 2078 by city guardianship office, and 1513 by other organs such police, court, border guards and similar. Data source: *Gyermekvédelmi statisztikai tájékoztató 2009*. [Statistical information on child protection] (2011) (ed. Papházi T.) Budapest: NCSSZI (quoted in: Papp 2013: 94).

¹⁴ Quoted in: Neményi–Takács (2015: 68).

Data from 2014 clearly show the status of young adults. (Table 4.)

Table 4: Aftercare beneficiaries on December 31 according to education and employment status

Highest level of education	Number of aftercare beneficiaries in the current year
Did not graduate secondary school	98
Graduated secondary school	1886
Graduated high-school	932
Out of which: high school	226
Out of which: technical or vocational high school	265
Out of which: vocational school	441
Out of which: special vocational school	118
University graduates	36
Out of which: MA	7
Out of which: BA	15
Enrolled in secondary school	16
Enrolled in high school	2187
Out of which: high school	270
Out of which: technical or vocational high school	473
Out of which: vocation and other types of school	1444
Enrolled in university education	197
Employment status: employed/not employed	403
Employed and enrolled in educational program	96
Employed, stable workplace	76
Works occasionally	39
Community work	18
Registered unemployed	156
On maternal leave, allowance	18

Source: KSH 2015, preliminary data.

Regarding educational level of young individuals leaving the system after coming of age we can say that 56,3 percent have graduated secondary education – its value on the labor force market is unknown, - nearly 40 percent graduated upper secondary and 3,2 earned a diploma. One third of those who left the system are working, but we do not know what type of work they are engaged in (KSH 2012: 12). There are approximately 800 individuals who benefit from aftercare, which means support for making a home (Papházi

2014: 214). According to data from 2014, the destination of 1096 individuals leaving the system is the following for the year in question: 21 percent goes to his/her own family, 16 percent in their own apartment/house, 12 percent rents an apartment, 12 percent goes to acquaintances. The astonishing fact is that 16, 5 percent remain with their foster parents after the program and care services end. The rest leave for other places. Transfer in the social institution affects 58 individuals (KSH 2015, preliminary data).

CHAPTER III.

THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE PARENTING

In the present chapter, I focus on the concept of corporate parenting. In other words, I describe the responsibility of the state in assuring provisions for the children and the conditions for their growth and development; whether the state considers the satisfaction of individual needs important or not. The chapter approaches other problems too, such as how the state contributes to enforcing children rights; what is the role the state would like to take in supporting successful social integration of children and young adults leaving the system. Starting from the Anglo-Saxon literature, this chapter presents basic standards in child protection provisioning and indicators of quality in work. Reviewing these topics and areas of investigation defines and shapes the theoretical and interpretive frame of my own research.

Integrative interventions in child protection

Reflecting on the implications of provisioning is of utmost importance in child protection on international level. Transparency is a requirement. The following has to be clarified: planned tasks and the description of steps taken to accomplish them, measures taken for assuring children's welfare, keeping families together, and measures for reuniting families if keeping them together fails. Another point of interest is that evaluation has to cover both the unsuccessful and the successful measures in intervention and the way

professionals have participated in the actions taken (Tomison 2002; Gordon 2000; Rácz 2012). Unfortunately, systematic evaluation analysis and impact assessment of procedures, programs, and measures in child protection are largely missing in our country. One of the most important aims of evaluation is to protect beneficiaries from unintended and adverse effects interventions may have, and to describe the adequacy of the method, or instrument they have used.¹ So-called auto-evaluation is a special case of evaluation when professionals evaluate or supervise themselves; reflect on their own work, learn how to perceive cases in their own context. In other words, professionals carry out qualitative and quantitative evaluations (Lüssi 1997).

Investigation of children's needs has to take into consideration available support, the support children benefit from (UNICEF 2007). Szilvási (2006) starts from the assumption that the analysis of interventions in child protection has to consider whether the concrete intervention adds to alternatives given to children and parents, strengthens family relations and mobilize internal and external resources (so-called integrative interventions). Or, - quite on the contrary - interventions reduce alternatives, produce uncertainty in family life, make family members passive in challenging dangers (so-called disintegrative interventions). Integrative interventions rest on three fundamental principles. The first one speaks about the *importance of time*. The principle suggests that children experience time in a different way compared to adults. They are able to cope with transition, provisory arrangements only to a limited period. Therefore, in case of children taken out from their families, it is highly important that professionals make all that is needed to reunite children with their families. If this is not possible, professionals have to find a secure, permanent, and final place for children. The second principle is about the intensive *participation of parents*. Parents are not enemies even if the Hungarian practice frequently considers them as

¹ In 2005, Rubeus Association designed models for evaluation regarding professional service provisioning in child protection. These models have been tested in institutional and foster care. In this frame, the study of Szilvia Szombathelyi gives a comprehensive review of the challenges evidence based practices face as reflected in the international literature (Rubeus Association, manuscript).

being enemies. Support from parents is important in helping children, and this support has to be emphasized. Szilvási quotes Bowlby, who considers that a society which values children takes care of their parents too (2006: 7). In international child protection, intensive programs aimed at keeping families together build on this principle. They also have trainings on developing various skills in parents. The third principle is that of *conceptual interventions*, meaning that professionals need a vision about the way they support or help the family: “*working with families with children requires not only interdisciplinary work but it has to attract and involve all forms of institution for children and child support programs. To properly serve the child’s best interest, programs need to have sensitivity to parents, to the family as a whole, and the immediate environment of the family.*” (Szilvási 2006: 5) According to Francois de Singhy (2010) the family in late modernity appears as individualized, and its primary function is to create a personal identity to its members and its not the transmission of values from one generation to the next. Pursuing autonomy within the family is one of the characteristic traits of this family model. This brings a decrease in the authority of various external institutions, for example the school. Due to blurring the borders of private and public spheres, families become more and more dependent on a state whose interventions are more and more widespread (quoted in: Rényi et al. 2014: 46). Munro (2010) stresses uncertainty as an all-pervasive trait of working in child protection system. Even when we define what is acceptable parenting, vulnerability and abuse seems uncertain and controversial. What happens in a certain case can be uncertain, as well as the interpretation of what has happened. Working on a case benefits from “respectful uncertainty” and “healthy scepticism,” which should be maintained during the work. Ambivalence in child protection originates also in the fact that the safety and welfare of children and young adults generates a protective feeling in the adult society, which confirms and supports society’s motivation for assuring good quality services in child protection. However, witnessing disintegration of families because of the interventions of more than eager professionals also elicits strong feeling in the members of the adult society (Munro 2010: 20).

Interpretive framework in child protection research

Washington (2008) reviews the theoretical frameworks available for research in the domain of children's welfare and child protection. *Crisis intervention theory* starts from the assumption that individuals are able to cope with change. Crises challenges and tests the ability and capacity of people, since crises are states of both danger and opportunity. A critical state emerges when family balance tilts and habitual or secondary ways of processing novelty are ineffective. Solving the problem that has created the crisis brings the state of crises to a resolution (Szabó 1994). The main research questions are: are children able to process the fact that she/he was taken away; is the children able to confront and cope with abuse and neglect; what is the relation between family crises and vulnerability? *Anti-discrimination theory* assumes that there is a dominant and oppressive environment; therefore, the research question of interest in this approach asks why minority children are overrepresented in child protection system.² The approach holds that issues related to equality and social justice should permeate and inform both the practice of social work and the research in this domain. Following Berger and Luckmann, the *theory of social construction* starts from the assumption that understanding reality emerges from participation in social processes. Social "problems" are not problematic by nature. They become problematic when a group labels them as such and calls for action. The social construction approach in child protection looks at the strengths child protection professionals can build on. It also tries to identify the forces, powers that define what behaviors count as normal or deviant. Another question in this approach is to evaluate the extent to which various family models, such as single parent families or adoptive families can be seen as dysfunctional by their nature. Social constructionist approach holds that people build, construct, create their own reality in their immediate environment and social workers are part of this reality

² For child protection in Hungary, see for example Herczog–Neményi (2007), Neményi–Messing (2007) and ERRC (2007) researches.

(Washington 2008; Young et al. 2014). As Berger and Luckmann (1998) put it, the reality of everyday life is an inter-subjective world that we share with others.³ Instead of putting people's welfare as centerpiece, *critical approaches* hold that people should strive to change all social practices that oppress and exploit. The main question in critical approaches refers to how social work supports, promotes, and participates in unjust social processes. Other question critical approaches ask is whether decision-making in child protection rests on considering the best interest of the children or on economic considerations. Research inspired by critical approaches could catalyze systemic change (Washington 2008: 11-13). This short review of theoretical frames used in child protection research traces a conceptual map for the research entitled *Is state a good parent?* Research results described later in the study disclose the topic of corporate parenting in the spirit critical approaches promote. It identifies and calls the attention to dysfunctional operations and points to possible routes toward instituting professional operations.

Corporate parenting

Reflecting on corporate parenting – interpreted on strategic, operational, and individual levels – proves to be a serious task in mainstream child protection. Assuming the responsibility of corporate parenting is not only an obligation but also an opportunity for a better future for children and young adults in the childcare system. The notion of corporate parenting is a paradox from the start, since good parenting requires continuity, while service providers,

³ Usually constructionist and constructivist appear as synonyms. However, Gergen distinguishes between individual and social construction of reality. According to Gergen, social construction promotes the idea that social relations have considerable effect on mental processes that create reality in relation to the world. The constructivist view accepts that people create their own reality in their own environment (quoted in: Young 2014: 907). In Szöllösi's interpretation: „*social construction is a sociological paradigm while social constructivism is a paradigm in social psychology; construction analyzes the production of knowledge outside the head, while constructivism investigates its emergence inside the head*” (Szöllösi 2012: 36).

organizations engaged in child protection are changing by nature, as well as the professionals working in the relevant organizations. Caring, rearing takes place in an artificial environment even if the children are in foster homes. One of the challenges of good corporate parenting is to deal with organizational and personnel changes as to assure some sort of stability for children or young adults. State is a good parent when it takes responsibility for the children it takes care of, is able to satisfy individual needs, and it strives to assure that children in the system have similar level of school performance and results in other areas of life as children growing up in their own families. For example, in Scotland corporate parenting means also that vulnerable children and young adults taken away from their families know that they are important for the community where they live and therefore they support the children offering them numerous extra services. Both children and professionals working with them should know that successful cooperation, partnership is required in protecting, supporting, and encouraging beneficiaries. The Scottish Child protection act of 1995 stipulates that health care, education, and housing policies have to work together with social and child protection provisions, to take care collectively of children and young adults in a manner in which every sub-system is part of the corporate family.

According to Bruno Bettelheim (2003) – who has been children’s home manager – being good parents does not mean trying to be perfect, but trying to become parents who raise their children properly. Child-centered parenting means that parents continuously look after their children, follow closely their development, situation, actual needs, help them reach their potential and become healthy adults. State delegates good parents who have to be convinced that children are taken good care of, their school performance is adequate, they are healthy and they draw clear boundaries regarding their own and other’s safety and well being, they actively participate in their own life, they create and keep relations with others. In case of young people, good parenting means primarily growing up and preparation for independent, autonomous life, and assuring access to further education, training, and supporting their integration in the labor market (Scottish Government 2008; Corporate parenting strategy for Clackmannanshire 2009-2012). Good

parenting means that professionals do not discriminate; they respect children's personality and the dignity resting on it. It is important that the personnel elaborate in depth the caring-rearing plan, which is an official document that can be used in legal procedures, and the parties are accountable on the content of the document.

In the elaboration of care plan, the personnel will avoid professional language and terminology, and confusion, so that the plan remains objective and transparent. Both planned and "it just happened" cases in the children's life need to be assessed. These contribute to the formation and development of emotional security of the children (Burns et al. 2010).

Expectations in the fulfillment of corporate parenting role

As the already mentioned document of the Scottish Government shows, the following have supported and helped looked after children and young adults to become successful: more people were sincerely interested in them, they encouraged them, they also have the so much needed stability and continuity, they had a positive self-image and vision regarding the future, they benefited from extraordinary support during their education in school and after leaving the care system.⁴

Defining and interpreting corporate parenting on strategic level starts from acknowledging the need for a complex approach in meeting the needs of children and young adults. Therefore, in order to be successful, the corporate role taken up by the state has to work out a strategy to explain the need and importance of the role, to increase the awareness of professionals involved and urge them to build and develop capacities for taking up concrete responsibilities and assuring flexible and adequate services and provisions

⁴ This means increasing coping capacity for the beneficiaries of services. In other words, inner personal resources are as much a support as natural and artificial resources or supports. According to Masten's notion of resilience (2001) there are many factors that help traumatized children process traumatic experiences and promote, support future success. Some of the factors are for example positive relations with adults and peers, family relations, problem solving skills, autonomy, self-determination, positive outlook on future, and belief.

when and where needed. On operative level, this means that children and young adults in child protection system have the same chances, opportunities than children growing up in their own families. On a personal level, the children and young adults experience multiple connections and several threads that connect them to responsible parents who care for their safety, health, and future. They constantly receive information on their evolution, follow the results they achieve, and know about eventual problems they have. They listen to them and talk to them (Scottish Government 2008). Another important requirement is that there is a plan for each child and young adult in the caring system, a plan that contains the exhaustive list of kinds of support and service children and young adults are eligible for. The system had to ensure that professionals are properly trained and all the opportunities are given for sharing good practices among professionals (Scottish Government 2008).

Many criteria are in use for assessing the way foster parents fulfill their duties and role in parenting. Among the domains subjected to evaluation we find for example foster parent's ability and willingness to give support for parents during the entire period of caring for the children; foster parents' acknowledgement that they are responsible for the children; are foster parents acting in the child's best interest, and so on. Do foster parents have adequate knowledge of themselves; do they have assured supervision? Do they promote and support formal education of children before and after compulsory school age, do they have the capacity, ability to communicate with biological parents and manage eventual conflicts, are the methods they use adequate for caring and education, do they integrate modern knowledge in their professional work (Parent & child fostering scheme procedures 2010-2013). Those who benefit from child protection together with their child or children represent one of the special target groups in child protection systems. Early parenting means challenges for both parents and professionals, since supporting young parents is a complex problem of child protection, children's rights, and children health. In these situations, one of the most important tasks the state should carry out is making young parents good parents. Meanwhile underage parents can go on with and manage their own life: they can attend school, get a job later on,

and become self-confident adults. In the case of young parents who are cared for in the system there are important types of support they should benefit from. Apart from counseling and organizing various service provisions, there is huge need for emotional support, mobilization of relations, and exploitation of resources residing in relations they have with their own biological family. For example, in Scotland the system promotes support groups because they provide a space within which peers talk about their problems while they have a good time together (Scottish Government 2010).

The importance to pursue permanent placement

Need for constancy, permanence in every children appears in relation to the importance of time. Permanence means primarily lasting experience within a family. The document entitled *Permanency policy & Guidance* in 2010:⁵

1. Positive experience of family life,
2. A sense of security and well-being,
3. A positive sense of identity in the child or young person. According to Erikson⁶ ensuring a positive sense of identity requires four factors: a sense of inner, core identity and continuity, a feeling of personal freedom, the existence of an aim or objective worth working for, and a feeling of being accepted by the immediate social environments.
4. Both the family environment and the system that operates the environment are well managed and effective.
5. Positive outcomes, results in the life of the child, especially in education.

The core of attachment theory holds that attachment to primary caregiver in infancy is critical to personal development later on and this relation becomes the blueprint or model for the child's future relationships. In other words,

⁵ *Families and Social Care Specialist Children's Services - Permanency policy & Guidance*. The owner of the document is: Performance & Quality Assurance Manager (LAC) Approved: March 2010. Revised: March 2011., Revalued: March 2013.

⁶ Erikson, E. (1982): *Childhood and Society: the life cycle completed*. Norton, New York.

attachment during infancy and childhood predicts social, cognitive, behavioral, and educational outcomes. Bowlby considers the child an active part in shaping the relation with the mother (Washington 2008: 8). According to *Permanency policy & Guidance* (2010) there are four categories of stability experienced in family. There is the so-called *objective stability or permanence*, in the sense that the child's place or position within the family lasts throughout the time of childhood and support is assured in the family even after coming of age, for example in what regards accommodation if needed or material support from parents. The so-called *subjective stability or permanence* means that the children feel they belong to the family. The third domain we distinguish is *enacted stability or permanence* where all concerned behave as if the child is a family member. The fourth category is *uncontested or non-alienable stability or permanence* when the child does not experience conflict or clash regarding bonding and attachment between their immediate and larger family environment. For each of these dimensions or levels of stability and permanence, children and families face different challenges. When taken away from the family, children's experiences are traumatic without doubt. The aim is to find permanent placement where there is no room to establish legal background for stability and permanence in the sense that the child is vulnerable in the family. The sense of security and well-being as criteria of family permanence and stability emerge when in the life of the child there is a close caring person who takes care of the child on a daily basis. Therefore, the child feels the love of adults as if they are their parents, parents work on improving the child's self-confidence, which in turn helps them in coping outside the family, and makes them more independent and autonomous. They attend school regularly; they socialize with friends, and join community events. The sense of security needs to be strengthened even if there are no possibilities for the children to grow up in their own families (Permanency policy & Guidance 2010: 1-2; Sinclair 2005; Munro 2010).

According to Every Child Matters, a White book in the United Kingdom, a book that has come to inform the Children Act in 2004, children should remain with their families for as long as they can. Even when different

alternatives replace family, replacement of children in their families is of utmost importance, until this serves the interest of the children. Siblings in child protection system should be placed together when possible. According to Every Child Matters, there is five criteria long-term or permanent and quality placement of children has to satisfy. 1) Keeping healthy: living in a healthy environment, there are various programs that ensure conservation of health. 2) Secure and safe environment: children are being protected from harm, abuse, and neglect and they recognize healthy boundaries in their relation with others. 3) Enjoyment and achievement: children attend joyful programs and activities that improve their self-esteem. They live in an environment that encourages pursue of self-realization, self-fulfillment. 4) Positive achievement: children are able to manage their problems, they got support that helps them becoming successful and valued member of the society. 5) Ensuring economic well-being: children receive support for improving their problem solving skills and ability to adapt, which later on makes them able to see themselves as adults (Permanency policy & Guidance 2010: 3-5).

It is important to duly consider timeliness too. Decision-making has to adapt to the pace of, time scale of the children. Moreover, children need information in time; they should be involved in every step and phase of decision-making in accordance with their age and intellectual development. Delay worsens life prospects for the children if it does not serve the explicit interest of the children. For every child taken away from the family, professionals need to elaborate a detailed stability or permanence plan – four months after the children entered care system at latest. Care plan or rearing plan needs regular verification to see if it holds the primacy of children's interest (Permanency policy & Guidance 2010).

Permanency guidance speaks also about expectations related to parents. According to the guide, the primary aim is to make parents and family autonomous, support them and help parents in their effort to give their child a loving home. Providing support has to take into consideration family needs and cultural and linguistic background of the child and parent, their ethnic

origin, religious affiliation or any eventual disability. Service development needs to take in to consideration the opinion of families and children. Involved parties cooperate with parents to achieve the best possible outcomes. When children cannot remain with their parents or other caring person with parenting duties, care workers continue to cooperate for the fulfillment of the educational and rearing plan with parents and other members of the family, who play an important role in the life of the children. They give the support parents and other important family members need to make their positive contribution in creating the sense of stability a permanency a child needs even if the child does not live with them at the moment (Permanency policy & Guidance 2010; Harawitz 2006). In Hungarian practice professionals do not involve as much the parents of children in child protection system; although at least in principle parent's opinion is important even in placement in relation to what kind of service should the child receive. When children are taken away from their families it is expected that care givers (professionals in child protection system and institutional programs, foster families) know information relating to child such as their background (ethnic, religious, and cultural), educational needs, any emotional or behavioral difficulties and adequate ways of reacting to these, individual preferences and habits. The long-term plan for the child, its timeframe, objectives and the expected timescale of this placement will be discussed with the caregivers. Interested parties will complete a risk assessment in case there are instances of past behavior that suggest the child or their family may put caregivers, their family, or other children in placement at risk (Permanency policy & Guidance 2010). Stressing family strengths is important in child protection intervention. Strengths support, improve capacity, motivation, ability in protection and caring. Assessment of family strengths helps caregivers in making decision regarding real chances of family reunification and other permanence solutions. Strength of parents refer to the capacity and willingness to prevent child abuse, help social, emotional, cognitive, and educational advancement of the child. Strengths include mobilization and use of help coming from extended family and available services (Permanency policy & Guidance 2010; Hart-Williams 2008).

Social work and child protection takes place in a political context that rests on complex, multilayered and often debated professional policy practices. Social workers, professionals in child protection and representatives of related professions face several conflicts in the public sphere. Moreover, political expectations and claims put more pressure on them. The outcomes of professional work are often uncertain, and the best way to diminish uncertainty is to involve beneficiaries, deepen their own abilities in evaluation and assessment, reflect on practices and their own work, and maintain active cooperation with other institutions and service providers to reach creative solution to complex situations (Lüssi 1997; Watts 2011). According to Munro (2008) the only solution for minimizing errors in child protection is to admit the mistakes and errors.

Management and tolerance of stress, uncertainty and conflict on the one hand and understanding and accepting ambivalent situations in life on the other hand are the very abilities that define the profession of helpers and caregivers. Late modern challenges urge professionals to understand their client's perspective and to take into consideration that clients have most information on their own life. Moreover, they have to acknowledge that complex situation requires particular concern and management. Reaching consensus rests on discourse, and it helps understanding the problems beneficiaries have. In many cases, turning toward clients and attentive listening are already helping (Meagher–Parton 2004; Szilvási 2006; Bányai 2008). According to Leadbeater (2004) public services need to rest on partnerships without any doubt. Adapting provisions to individual needs forms the base of cooperation; this is what connects individuals to groups and the other way around. Effective partnership means that parties cooperate for a common cause: there are more chances that these relations emerge if families feel that others listen to them, respect and understand them (Griffiths–Roe 2006; Szilvási 2006; Fischer–Gruescu 2011). Several studies show that children and families are suspicious because professionals abused knowledge of personal information about them, have not acted in accordance with confidentiality obligations they have (Szilvási 2006; Henning 2005). Many families think that professionals are prejudiced when they meet clients. There are several reasons why they

think that: past experience, initial resistance of the family to intervention, memories of leaving the family, or past encounters with power holders. Past experience show that listening to families is a real challenge for professionals too. They have hard time in trying to understand their perspective and give them unprejudiced support for reaching positive changes (Griffiths–Roe 2006; RÁCZ 2012).

According to the document entitled *Adopting a Child Welfare Practice* the following factors and criteria need to be taken into consideration in child protection practice (The Child Welfare... no year: p. 3-4):

- Children and families are more likely to enter into a helping relationship when the worker or supporter has developed a trusting relationship with them.
- Children and families are more likely to pursue a plan or course of action when they have a key role in designing it.
- When children and families see that their strengths are recognized, respected and affirmed, they are more likely to cooperate.
- Children experience trauma when they are separated from their families. When children must be removed to be protected, their trauma is lessened when they can remain in their own neighbourhoods and maintain existing connections with families, schools, friends, and other informal supporters.
- Reunification occurs more rapidly and permanently when visiting between parents and children in custody is frequent and in the most normalized environment possible. Office based visits and supervised visits are the least normalized environment.

The cited document highlights that there is indispensable need to elaborate a framework that defines practical operations, and which besides legal frames and professional regulations serves as moral guide to professionals, and promotes consistence of perspectives within organization. Practice model can shape the design of quality assurance processes, and expectations regarding performance/achievement of employees. As expectations for the treatment of

children and their families change, so should the formal expectations for practitioner performance change (The Child Welfare... no year). In the apt formulation of Stonehouse–Duffie when children’s experience in the system is very different and they cannot relate it to life outside institution, than we have a situation resembling a day at Disneyland. It is very pleasant, but is just a day and it falls far from reality. If we want children to learn something about real life during their stay with the services, we have to make linkages, connections to life outside the system inescapable (Stonehouse-Duffie 2001: 26).

Children in child protection system are different. The variety comes, probably, from difference in cultural and linguistic background, but children also differ by gender, way of life, or social and economic status, family structure, skills, competencies, and also by beliefs and values they hold. Differences in ways of life and class differences create the greatest tensions between families and professionals. Variety often leads to conflict and tensions in child protection. Moreover, these conflicts seem irresolvable. Acknowledging and accepting variety is unavoidable in cooperation with children and families. Respect for human dignity forms the base for accepting variety and differences (Stonehouse– Duffie 2001). When working with children professionals have to take into consideration and be attentive to many components in their relation to children, such as the desires and feelings of children, their physical, emotional, and educational needs, expected outcome of contextual changes, sex, gender, background and personality traits of children, the relations they have with their parents and the environment. However, when parents have abused children in unacceptable ways, the state withdrew the right of parental guardianship even if the decision contradicts what children desire. Service provisioning and placement alternatives have to follow and adapt to the particular needs and strengths of children and families. Service provision planning includes security and risk assessment related to family condition to identify what resources they can mobilize to ensure security, permanence, and well-being of children. The probability of meeting these objectives depends largely on the quality and type of available resources (Standards of Professional... 2003; Eglin 2001). Professionals always see risk as something negative, a thing to be avoided.

They are all afraid of being blamed and of eventual liabilities. Therefore, institutions are becoming more and more risk averse. Without risk taking even visions that could be successful eventually, die out or get particular interpretations in child protection systems (Government of Western Australia 2011; Rácz 2012). Throughout the mainstream literature on child protection we find much support for ideas based on participation. However, as Healy (1998) argues, one must take into consideration the fact that outcomes based on participation practices are limited. There are serious obstacles that prevent fulfilling the ethos of participation among the beneficiaries of various services. Social and economic exclusion may prevent clients to feel they are equal to service providers. Some obstacles in fulfilling the ethos appear also among professionals in child protection systems. They also refrain from sharing professional power and status to participate in a more equalitarian relation based on participation. Social differences between workers and beneficiaries are hierarchical and they conduct practices that feed domination. Carder argues that most professionals are white and middle class socialized in an environment that distinguishes between low-status persons and themselves. Moreover, authorities (or the court in the Anglo-Saxon practice) decide about issues of child protection practices regarding the taking away of the children. Thus, decision comes mostly and largely from white, upper-class males, whose decision rest on the particular value system of this class. Unfortunately, the organizational context is also largely against participation based practices. The relation between workers and beneficiaries are formal in most of the cases, and the infrastructure is poor. Formality of relations increase with the number of cases the service provider has to manage and the limits human and material resources impose (cited in: Healy 1998: 903)

Monitoring and key indicators in child protection system

Fluke and Wulczyn (2010) argue that according to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, child protection systems should include several broader objectives such as protecting the children from violence, abuse, exploitation, and several other forms of mistreatment. Ensuring accountability is one of the most important objectives on systemic level. In other words, one has to make clear whether interventions have engendered positive changes, does the situation of children in caring programs improve, does future outlook improve or not.

According to Hart–Williams (2008) some issues regarding the quality of corporate parenting need clarifications. Does the state own structures and systems required for ensuring that the state or local administration fulfill their task efficiently. Have they assured conditions for cooperation, have they established partnerships? Professionals working with children should ask themselves the same question: do they have access to qualitative and quantitative information on the given services; do they own adequate knowledge to interpret and evaluate the given information? Moreover, are they able to listen to what children in care system, young adults just leaving the system and their parents have to say?

They have defined the following criteria for key indicators measuring efficiency and success in corporate parenting:

- What proportion of children lives in foster homes? Is the proportion increasing or decreasing in time?
- To what extent are placements permanent? What proportion of children in child protection system moves too often? Is the respective trend improving or not?
- Are all needs of children satisfied? Which are the needs the system cannot satisfy or provide for and why?

- What proportion of children in the system need special catch-up type education programs?
- What are the results and abilities of children in care system compared to other children living in families?
- How do performance change with age and length of time spent in care system?
- What proportion of children above the age of 10 has committed felonies?
- What does improving performance require? (Hart–Williams 2008: 25-27)

It is important to note that key indicators we just mentioned above do not refer only to quantifiable activities. There are several qualitative or general level indicators such as the ones referring to measures to be taken for the improvement of children's performances.⁷

Chu Clewell–Campbell (2008) considers that indicators elaborated in the child protection system should conform to the following criteria: direct measurement; adequacy for gathering particular data; usefulness, meaning that they should contribute to a better understanding of what we want to measure; there is the need to consider the utility, utilization of time and material resources; they have to be relevant in the given cultural context; they

⁷ Rubeus Association (2015) has elaborated indicators and evaluation models for the assessment and measurement of the professional service provisions in the Hungarian system. They also conducted 5 case studies to test these models. During their work, researchers conceptualized service indicators as to measure operation efficiency throughout the path the children follow in childcare system. They defined and specified territorial indicators for the service in a system of three elements with which they defined the given activity (what do we measure?), fixed the indicator (how do we measure it?) and the associated source (where do the data come from?). After elaborating quantitative and qualitative indicators, they elaborated evaluation or assessment models. For each service provided in the childcare system, the models record expectations, and results in case of meeting or fulfilling expectations. They record results from many points of view, from the perspective of the relation between actors in the system and the assessment of service and the broadly understood professional services under investigation on the one hand, and social systems on the other hand.

have to be adequate according to what we measure and what are the resources at hand. In order to be valid, measurements should include interested parties in deciding what indicators they want to use to assess programs, measures taken in the program, and successfully implemented services. They distinguish between two major groups of measurements: 1) assessing performance, which measure changes in behavior, knowledge, skills or performance, and 2) assessing attitudes, which measure changes in beliefs, value systems, and emotional state. Regarding the assessment of performance in child protection systems UNICEF–Save the Children (2013) stresses that there are only few indicators in general and there are some limitations on international level regarding the number of accepted or acknowledged indicators. Comparative studies of various topics in child protection systems are difficult given that different countries have their own particular problems in their particular child protection system.

According to MacLaurin (1998) taking the children out from home is neither a positive, nor a negative event, despite the fact that this type of intervention is disintegrating and potentially traumatic, and it is mostly born from a constrain, since caring for the children at home is not assured as it should be. On the part of the system, one should investigate the continuity regarding caring and permanence. In the Canadian practice evaluators use three key indicators: proportion of transfers, history and permanence of transfers. Trocmé (1998) calls attention to the fact that in thinking in a system of multidimensional outcomes one should consider children's immediate need for protection, their need for a stable, caring home on long term, and the possibility for parents to grow their strength in a supporting community environment. There will always be cases when protection will come first and family support second, when placing children in stable foster families will keep them away from the community they come from. This is why one can estimate the extent of the success in intervention if they use complex measurements that reflect connected, but sometimes conflicting objectives and principles in child protection systems.

Love (1998) emphasizes that measuring efficiency and risk analysis is also dangerous. For example it may happen that the model for risk analysis applied all the time during the life of case has been wrong, or the analysis is excessively dogmatic. Multidisciplinary assessment team is needed for analyzing complex cases. Meanwhile professionals are left alone in this process too, and they feel they are incompetent and consider that the method is nothing more than a bureaucracy mean. However, one of the major advantages is that on long-term event-based approach replaces risk-based approach and professionalism gains its due prestige in a child protection system still highly informed by collective wisdom. In the elaboration of monitoring processes and measurement systems one should consider that changes in the children's condition, aims of the child protection system, and child protection system (including social and economic changes) have their own dynamics. The elements in the child protection system have their own borders and certain parts in child protection connect to other systems, such as healthcare, social system or education. Understanding these structures and analyzing their workings from the perspective of children's well-being is certainly one of the most important challenges for the future (Fluke –Wulczyn 2010).

Some of the main standards in child protection^{8 9}are:

- 1) Standards regarding access to provisions: the investigation focus on how organizations ensure access for their target group. It is important that they focus on the need, culture and worldview of the children, young persons and parents who want to use the services.

⁸ This brief introduction regarding standard in professional childcare service provisioning builds on the document entitled Child Protection Regulations 2000, Section 4, Service Agreement Clause 20, Department of Communities.

⁹ Hungary started the elaboration of social and child protection standards in 2006 under the guidance and coordination of the National Institute for Family and Social Policies. They also started to test the standards in practice, but these standards have not yet been integrated in fieldwork practice. Standards of children's home have 41 components. Among aims marked as important we find unconditional acceptance of children, satisfying their individual needs, preserving their family identity.

- 2) Standard for satisfying children's, young persons' and family's needs.
The standard focus on how much structured organizations are in approaching target groups. The extent to which services that are in fact reaction to certain situation adapt to needs and the extent to which they build on strengths. Service providers should cooperate with children, young adults and parents in accordance and harmony with legal provisions and they should also cooperate with other organizations in managing children's condition. The standard shows how to monitor and control the case and how to help children and young adults who have left the system of professional provisioning. The needs of children and young people in the system refer to respecting their security, well-being, human dignity, and rights.
- 3) Standard for participation and choice: Creating the condition for children, young persons and parents in the system to express their opinion. It is important that the primary and secondary target groups in child protection understand the implications, consequences of their decisions and that they can live an independent life as beneficiaries of professional help; they should be able to live the life they choose. In this approach participation is interpreted as a right.
- 4) Standards regarding data protection and confidentiality: organizations help enforcing rights and duties of children, young persons and families when they protect their right to personal data and private life according to legal provisions. Standards apply also in conditions when other rationales come first compared to the rights to confidentiality.
- 5) Standard for feedback, complaints, and appeals: they assure that children, young persons, and families can express their feedback and service providers will use these opinions and reactions to improve the services they provide.
- 6) Standard for protecting the safety of children and youngsters: the standard refers to how service providers and institutions try to protect children and young adults from abuse while they benefit from certain services. Abuse during service provisioning includes self-abuse, and abuse perpetrated by colleagues, employees, care personnel, volunteers, management, or anyone else benefiting of service provisioning.

- 7) Standard regarding selection and employment of personnel and volunteers: Organizations ensure that the personnel, employees with work contracts and volunteers meet the requirements for the job in terms of training and experience, they are competent and can fulfill their tasks. All of that are very important warrants regarding the quality of the professional work.
- 8) Standard regarding the training and development of employees and volunteers. Organizations ensure that employees and volunteers have uninterrupted access to trainings and professional development.
- 9) Standard regarding the support for and supervision of colleagues and volunteers: Workers receive feedback regarding their work all the time, whether they work in teams or individually. Continuously relieving professionals from emotional load is very important.
- 10) Standard for organizational coordination and harmonization: the standard focuses on how well harmonized are decision-making and accountability on the one hand and child protection values, objectives, and views the organization stands for on the other hand.
- 11) Standard for coordination and accountability: the standard is about the way superior organs and managers ensure internal and external accountability regarding professional work (Child Safety Service Standards 2000: 1-34).

Reviewing these standards can contribute to bringing a new perspective in the Hungarian child protection system because they formulate many extremely important principles in child protection as well as their implementation in practice. To name a few such principles: the principle of the child's best interest, listening to the children, strategy partnership, multidisciplinary, conceptual planning, open communication, and the aim to connect planning, service provisioning, and measurements all together to stimulate professional creativity and innovation.

There is need for systematic and analytic evaluation and for impact studies regarding procedures, programs, measures in the domain of child protection and social work in Hungary. All these concur to create service provisions that are individualized, but they do not adapt to people's personal needs in Hungary, because identification of normative needs is absent or is only partially present. The domain neglects individual needs because fiscal logic superimposes itself on professional logic despite the fact that identification is present in practical work. Without logo centric practice in work process and without acknowledgement of normative systemic needs one cannot do anything but interpret the individual problems of children (or their parents if they are considered at all). Professionals lost their capacity to see professional work in the long-term, the cumulated results. The reason is that professionals in the field are alone in interpreting and managing the problems they confront. In many cases the profession itself works for attaining more idealistic aims (Herczog 2001; Szalay 2001; Szikulai 2006; Rácz 2012; Bogács 2015c). The main task of evaluation is to compare aims and expectations related to a given service to the actual results they produce in practical operation. Further, evaluations aim to protect clients from undesired, and harmful effects interventions may have, and to show whether the provisioning has met its aims or not. Evaluation may comprise also self-assessment of the work of professionals in the process of provisioning. Practically, evaluations work with data collected on national, local, and organizational level, with personal and direct practical experience and observations, as well as with documents related to decision-making and risk management (Lüssi 1997; Statham 2000; Rácz-Szombathelyi 2006; Rácz 2012; HMIE 2009). One of the problems is that present systems of performance evaluation do not adequately represent children's route in the child protection system, starting from identification to gratification (Munro 2010). Lack of standardized processes and accountability on efficiency means that professional work is not predictable, is not reliable in this sense and practices do not rely on mutual trust, partnership, participation of professionals (interested people¹⁰) and clients

¹⁰ Interested parties have large quantities of information about child protection problems in a given case, but information, which forms the base of any knowledge, integrate, and make

(primary and secondary target groups, meaning children and families). In the absence of all these we cannot speak about professional operation of the system. In the sense of the approach social ecology advocates we have to acknowledge that children are part of a certain environment, but they are also individuals with particular opportunities for development, evolution, or change. From the perspective of system-level intervention in the child protection system it means that we ought to search for solutions within and outside families to assure that clients with problems (and not only rule abiding children and young adults who represent the ideal type in child protection systems today) have the opportunity to develop their own abilities and capacities. It is important to integrate this perspective in the system through trainings, for example, and it is also important that workers in the domain of children's welfare and child protection adopt this perspective (Leon et al. 2008).

Leadbeater (2004) considers that partnership should be the base of public services, while cooperation rests on personalizing service provisioning, which in turn links individuals and community together. During the so-called *intimate consultation*¹¹ professionals and clients have a deep and lengthy conversation in which clients disclose their needs and personal endeavors. Ensuring *extended opportunities* means that clients have more alternatives, and may call for complex services to satisfy complex needs. *Enhanced voice* means that using extended opportunities helps beneficiaries voice their future preferences. Creating an individualized package of solutions becomes possible only when service providers work as partners. Protecting others' interest is important too; professionals have to represent the interest of their clients helping them find their way in the system. Regarding financing, the

sense only in daily activities. Interested individuals are in difficult situation from many points of view; even if they carry all personal information in their own life story, their ability to articulate their interest is poor as they are members of excluded, vulnerable social groups (Domszky 1999).

¹¹ It would be important to integrate this perspective in the work of expert commissions in the Hungarian system as long as they work with parents too not only with children. Another issue of interest is the elaboration of individual caring plan where it is important to establish cooperation, meaning that the guardian, the representative of the caring institution, the parent and the child, depending on their age and maturity, should participate.

author emphasizes that it should follow user needs and in certain cases users should receive financial resource directly to fulfill their needs with the adequate help and advice of professionals, for example to avoid situation in which children are taken away from their families because of poor material conditions (for ex. housing problems) (Leadbeater 2004: 57-60).

On the one hand, late modern social challenges undermine traditional values in helping professions – regardless of the identity crises in the Hungarian child protection system, be the profession based on social work or pedagogy – on the other hand they urge professionals to understand clients' perspective, to take into account that the client bears most of the information on their own life, and to treat situations in their complexity and local determination. Discourse is the base of reaching consensus; it helps understanding the problems clients have; dialogue and conversation are the motor of creativity that helps exploring many routes toward solving problematic situations. The very fact that professionals turn to clients and engage in active listening is already help in itself (Meagher–Parton 2004; Leadbeater 2004; Irving–Young 2002; Bányai 2008). According to the model of reflexive praxis,¹² reflexivity¹³ needs to replace the use of work processes built on purely logical, analytical algorithms and standards of service provisioning because needs are complex, and life situations, conditions are contradictory, and every case is unique. Reflexivity is the base of helping activities in late modernity, which in turn work with personal histories and their morals instead on relying solely on scientific methods (Hegyesi–Kozma 2002; Bányai 2008). Parton–O'Byrne (2000) emphasize that one should integrate the impact of new social changes and reflections in social sciences into social work. In the same time, they should also find junctures with earlier traditions in the profession.

Constructive help is valuable; focusing on clients aims at helping them solve problems through dialogue, and regain control over their own life. Professionals need open, reflexive knowledge meaning that social work is

¹² Schön, Donald, A. (1983): *The reflective practitioner: how professional think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

¹³ Schön considers it as a dual process: we reflect 1) during action and 2) after action.

first of all work with the self; social workers reflect on themselves and their work (autopoietic knowledge). Lymbery (2003) considers that open expertise or knowledge comprises debates, polemics, creativity, and as such it completes closed expertise that rests on traditional knowledge. Feminists argue that the origin of standards, rational processes and professionalization itself are masculine. All these build on differences and rights-based service provisioning. The ethics that rests on contracts and assuming responsibilities is an ethic of justice, which is therefore masculine since it rests on rationality, bureaucracy, firm rules and regulations that leave small space of maneuver to helping professionals. In contrast, the ethics of care rests on mutual trust, emotions, partnership, which is basically feminine. Opponents of standardization argue precisely that persons in need become objects of help; they receive service packages (bundles) that do not conform to their personal, individual needs, suffocate creativity and initiative. Moreover, it requires too much administration, management while essential information gets lost. This makes the quality of professional work worse and impairs autonomy. On the contrary, the core of the ethics of care comprises partnership, understanding, and being there for others (Meagher–Parton 2004; Banks 2012; Bányai 2008; Concburn 2009). However, others argue that the ethics of justice and the ethics of care complement each other; rationality and emotion are compatible with each other (Meagher–Parton 2004; Concburn 2009).

I consider that there is no professional operation in this system if we there are no standardized work processes. Standards outline the frame for practices to take place, they acknowledge normative needs too, and these give professionals freedom to create mutual trust in their relationships and also give them the opportunity to react to subjective and explicit needs along normative needs in the child protection system. In the following I analyze these dimensions of the domain starting from our research results.

CHAPTER IV.

CORPORATE PARENTING ACCORDING TO RESEARCH RESULTS

IV.1. ABOUT THE RESEARCH

There is no research data for Hungary regarding the way provisions and services in the child protection system serve children's interest, what kind of mechanisms define satisfying children's need, how the professional provision system in child protection aids social integration of individuals raised in child protection system. The aim of the *Is state a good parent?*¹ is to analyze, investigate principles and professional concepts, ideas that define practical work in fulfilling the role of corporate parenting and responsibility. One of the main questions of our research is where are fundamental interest defining child protection violated. For example, when and why are principles like child's best interest, cooperation between partners, or participation breached? The research also tries to answer the question regarding theoretical and practical obstacles in quality corporate parenting. In other words, we are interested in identifying general and particular principles of various service provisions, describing what kind of mechanisms in decision-making determine improvements, developments in the system, disclosing what managers and professionals think of provisions' primary and secondary target groups, and what are the criteria for

¹ The research was carried out with the support of the internal grant from the University of Debrecen in the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (No: RH/885/2013).

professional or quasi-professional operation in this domain. Research results would like to call the attention on systemic challenges as they appear within the interpretive framework given in critical approaches.

The research used both quantitative and qualitative methodology. In the first phase of the research, we carried out an online survey in which we administered questionnaires to operators working in the institutional structure in the domain of professional service provisioning. After that, we took four individual interviews and conducted three focus group interviews to investigate what professionals think about their profession and the mentality in the child protection system. In the following, we present the main results² of the two research phases, namely the quantitative and qualitative ones, which refer to structural problems of professional service provisioning in child protection and challenges the domain faces in terms of development.

In the quantitative phase, we sent an online questionnaire to 89 operators we identified on an address list of the Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection.³ Due to restructuring in the last couple of years, we can say that the 89 operators cover the structure of professional provisioning on national level including institutional provisions and foster care networks. According to the list of addresses we had obtained, public service providers carried out their activities in 69 seats and an additional 350 sites, service providers belonging to civil organizations and churches carried out their activities in 20 seats and an additional 3 sites. We sent the questionnaire to general managers of the 89 service providers (central institution on county level, independent institution/network of institutions, service provider network). Based on the information we received from the institutions, the respondents were all managers: 6 were managers in professional domain, and in the rest of the cases the respondents were institution managers or their

² I worked with Andrea Gyarmati and Balázs Freisinger in the analysis of research results.

³ There were 121 e-mail addresses for the 89 operators. Therefore, in trying to reach all 89 operators we sent the online questionnaire to all the available e-mail addresses.

deputies. Therefore, the research is representative for the top managers responsible for the operation of child protection institutions. Thus, we targeted the group of operational institutions, meaning units that are the real service providers. There are many types of institutions that provide services. Part of them provide some kind of children home service and/or aftercare services (for example, The Szilágyi Erzsébet Children's Home); others are institutions providing only professional services (for example, Bács-Kiskun County Special Child Protection Service); or there are units that provide all types of professional care, meaning foster care, children's home provisions, after care and professional provisions (for example Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Center for Social Affairs and Child Protection), or other units, which provide only foster care and professional care (for example Győr-Moson-Sopron County Territorial Child Protection Special Services).

Besides basic data regarding the respondent, the questionnaire included 53 questions about the number of places in institutions and the number of beneficiaries, and about the attitudes managers have toward child protection. We received 43 questionnaires filled in and validated them, meaning that our sample consists of 43 cases (48 percent return rate). In other words, we got the attitudes of 43 service providers in the child protection system, which are responsible for the operation of 180 sites. All but three respondents are managers in public institutions, two of them in civil organizations and one of them worked in a church operated institution. Regarding territorial distribution, we received most valid questionnaires from institutions seated in Budapest. Baranya County and Komárom-Esztergom county are not included in the sample.

Table 5: *Distribution by the county where the central office or premise is located*

County	N (number of institutions)
Budapest	14
Bács-Kiskun	2
Békés	1
Borsod	1
Csongrád	2
Fejér	2
Győr-Moson-Sopron	2
Hajdú-Bihar	2
Heves	4
Nógrád	1
Pest	1
Somogy	1
Szabolcs-Szatmár	3
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	1
Tolna	1
Vas	1
Veszprém	3
Zala	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>

The 43 managers who responded to our questions coordinate the work of approximately 5600 professionals in child protection. Evidently, we do not say that managers and professionals they coordinate have the same attitudes. We think that the perspective managers have might influence the opinion of employees whose work they coordinate and in general define the evolution of professional thinking, and the patterns, treatments they use in the domain.

Due to the small number of cases in the sample, we could not aim at disclosing statistically significant relations. We only describe several relations. We highlight some of the most relevant results regarding attitudes. We interpreted these results almost as we interpret interview data, emphasizing that we present the opinion of professionals who manage the entire institutional network in child protection provisioning.

In the qualitative component of the research we have conducted four individual interviews with professionals three of them worked in Budapest

and one in Debrecen who were not only excellent professionals, but also had practical experience. Besides the four individual interviews, we conducted 3 focus group interviews. To get a fuller perspective on each dimension, we organized groups according to three criteria: 1) supporting institution (state, church, civil organization) to disclose eventual differences, 2) the relative weight of the main service provided to get a deeper understanding of the respective models (foster parenting, children home), and 3) according to problems they focus on. In the focus group of supporter institutions, we invited a professional from child welfare to disclose the nature of cooperation. One focus-group interview took place in Budapest, the other two in Debrecen with the participation of professionals from Hajdú-Bihar county. Except for a manager of foster home, for the focus groups we invited colleagues who were not in the management of the institutions but worked in the domains of fostering, guardianship, family care and aftercare. In this way, we tried to find out not only the opinion of managers (people responsible for the operation of institutions) but also the opinion of those who worked with children on daily basis.

Additionally, in order to getting more familiar with the opinion children and young persons have, I approached 35 delegates, all participants in the FICE Children's Parliament in 2014. The topic was social integration, so I asked the participants the question of whether they think that the state is a good parent or not. I also asked them to give reasons to their choice of answer.

IV.2. THE OPINION OF CHILD PROTECTION PROFESSIONALS REGARDING THE STATE AS CORPORATE PARENT

Attitudes toward professional provisioning in child protection

Managers' attitudes

Regarding attitude questions,⁴ we may say that professionals think that planning in child protection⁵ is rather rational although structural development follows mostly financial logic instead of clear-cut professional criteria. Managers think that foster parenting is the most suitable form of provisioning for children less than 12 years of age. For children above 12, and children and young adults with special needs managers prefer institutional care, and this is more so for the placement of siblings.

Several respondents agree that there are situations in which a given form of provisioning does not satisfy children's need. This also means that service provisioning does not necessarily follow needs, although the majority of interested persons think that children's needs and requests come first. One of the domains with most problems is the support system for young adults. Many think that the age of 24 is a more suitable upper limit for aftercare provisioning than the age of 21 introduced by legal amendments in 2010.⁶ Professionals think there is room for improvement in the cooperation between basic children welfare provisioning and professional child protection

⁴ Respondents marked the extent of their agreement on a scale of four values where 1 meant "I do not agree," and 4 meant "I fully agree." Looking at the means, the answers to this question show that a value under 2 means that respondents rather did not agree with the statements and above the value of 2 means that they rather agree with statements.

⁵ The results in the qualitative part of the research, and the research the Rubeus Association conducted in 2013 clarify and nuance the opinion above.

⁶ For a more detailed description of the changes in the support system targeting adults see: Riegler M.–Rácz A. (2015) A gyermekvédelmi szakellátásból kikerülők speciális támogatása, utánpótlása. [Special support, aftercare of individuals leaving professional child protection provisioning] In: Rácz A. (ed.) *A gyermekvédelem megújulási alternatívái*. Gyermek- és ifjúságvédelmi Tanulmányok V. kötet. Budapest: Rubeus Egyesület. 187-206. [Alternatives for the Renaissance in Child Protection. Studies in the Protection of Children and Young Persons. Volume 5, Rubeus Association] <http://rubeus.hu/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/gyermek-es-ifjusagvedelmi-tanulmanyok-otodik-kotet.pdf> last accessed: 24.08.2015

provisioning. Regarding our central question, institution managers think that the state is a rather good parent. We have found that professional agree the least with the opinion that parents' desires are important in service provisioning, which contradicts the spirit of child protection. Cooperation with families should include placement too. Moreover, home care gets more difficult or even impossible when relations with parents are not supported and strengthened.

Table 6: *Mean of responses to attitude questions*

Attitude questions	Mean (ranging from 1 to 4)
Rationality is what characterizes the operator in the development of professional provisions in child protection, and planning capacities	3,00
Accidental planning is what characterizes the operator in the development of professional provisions in child protection and planning capacities.	2,07
The needs and desires of children in professional care enjoy primacy in service provisioning.	2,86
The needs and desires of the parents of children in professional care enjoy primacy in service provisioning.	1,86
Characteristically, financial criteria are the criteria enforced in the development of service provisioning in child protection.	2,83
Characteristically, professional criteria are the criteria enforced in the development of service provisioning in child protection.	2,69
Cooperation between actors in basic provisioning in child wellbeing and professional service provisioning in child protection is adequate.	2,29
There are instances when the system cannot place the children in the form of placement that is most adequate for him/her.	2,74
Foster parenting is the most adequate form of provision for children under 12 years of age.	3,15
Foster parenting is the most adequate form of provision for siblings.	2,66
Institutional provisioning is the most adequate form of provision for children above 12 years of age.	2,61

Attitude questions	Mean (ranging from 1 to 4)
Institutional provisioning is the most adequate form of provision for children with special or particular needs.	2,59
Institutional provisioning is the most adequate form of placement for siblings.	2,43
It is only rational to decrease the age limit to 21 for aftercare provisioning.	1,52
24/25 years is the proper age limit to leave aftercare provisioning.	3,33
What do you think is the state a good parent?	2,62

Principles in child protection

We asked institution managers about the meaning of different notions. In what follows, we highlight three of the notions that need clarifying: protection, primacy of children's wellbeing, and participation.

We grouped responses regarding ***protection*** in 5 different groups:

1. Protecting children (from their family, deviances, themselves) means providing a kind of safety, reducing harm, which together offers some opportunities in child development: *"The aim of professional provisioning in child protection is to protect underage children from those dangerous factors in family, which the basic provisioning cannot address with the means it has. The aim is to prevent children from becoming vulnerable, victim, or deviant personality. Ensuring the possibility for children to become healthy, balanced person."*
2. Protection is also a legal term: *"In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child every adult is obliged to protect the rights and interest of children."*
3. In the opinions respondents expressed, protection appeared also as professional cooperation: *"Protection is cooperation of all involved members (basic provisioning and professional provisioning) of the signaling, identification system (family doctor, school, etc.)."*

4. Protection also means the totality of provisions: *“Service provisioning that ensures the physical, emotional, cognitive, and moral wellbeing of the children. It means that the system ensures regular medical investigation and treatment for the children, a chance for living healthy life, sport facilities, education, catch-up programs, possibilities to improve and develop their talents and abilities. It also means that the system takes care of children’s psychological and mental hygiene needs.”*
5. Protection is the responsibility and the obligation of the state: *“Children entering professional care need state protection. It is the obligation of the state to create conditions for service providers to be able to provide good quality protection for the children in the system.”*

For respondents, **primacy of children’s wellbeing** means care within the frame of basic provisioning, so that institutional measures are absent when parents cooperate well. *“Basic provisioning in child protection is a special, individual welfare service. There is no room for measures taken by authorities when parents, guardians or other persons who raise the child willingly cooperate with care personnel of children’s wellbeing, and fulfill their obligations related to caring for the child.”* In clarifying the notion, professionals referred to problems in the cooperation between basic provisioning and professional provisioning: part of respondents say that basic provisioning does not work properly because children enter the system of professional provisioning too late. Others say that workers in children’s welfare provisioning are afraid of their clients, and as such, they cannot represent the interest of their children. *“Many times children’s welfare system does not operate as it should, because colleagues in the field fear that their clients harm their own families.”* Regarding the primacy of children’s wellbeing, some respondents focus on the needs of children, meaning that they concentrate on the guarantees that the children can live the life of a child.

The principle of primacy of children’s welfare and the principle of protection means that children should benefit, on a voluntary basis, from some sort of provisioning that is available for all children in need, prior to the intervention of child protection the authorities provide (Domszky 1999a). The primacy of

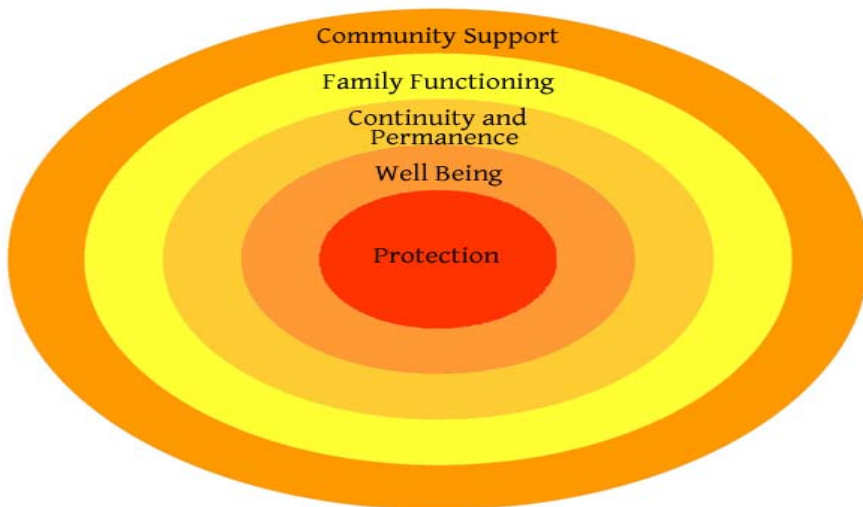
children's wellbeing is related to the principle of earliest intervention and the relevance of prevention, correctly interpreted by professionals. One needs actual, updated information to identify problems in due time and to find the appropriate professional. Each person and service provider getting in contact with the child and his or her families is part of the signaling system. Prevention services are needed exactly in order to prevent vulnerability.

The interpretation of the notion of *participation* is interesting. On the one hand, respondents defined participation, incorrectly, as involvement of colleagues in decision-making. On the other hand, they defined participation, correctly, as involvement of beneficiaries (children and young individuals) in decision-making. *"On the one hand, it is the participation of co-workers in decision-making; on the other hand, it is about enforcing the principle of nothing about them without them, meaning involvement of beneficiaries in issues of concern for them according to their abilities and age. Children discuss topics and issues of interest for them in the Student government in the institution and in group meeting and make decisions."* In many cases, managers did not know clearly, what the participation meant. They mistook it for partnership or gave somewhat improper answers. For example, they spoke about *equal treatment, but nevertheless more caring for, attention on the family, if needed. Looking for opportunities and alternatives that help the family; support in finding a solution, but not solving the problem for them* or *"We participate in the life of the child and family, and in the life of their immediate surrounding and the life of the settlement."* Participation means that children take part, participate to the fullest possible way, given by their age and stage of development, in the decisions regarding their life, e.g. in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of services (Protocol for childcare in children's home 2011).

According to Trocmé (1999), we should distinguish between interventions targeting the children and focusing on families on the one hand and family level interventions focusing on children on the other hand. Given that we take into consideration a modern childhood policy (which in my opinion unites child protection policies and children's welfare policies, for details see: Rácz 2012), this should start from guaranteeing safety for children, meaning

protection⁷ and move toward community support.⁸ The model is a multidimensional framework that takes into consideration children's immediate need for safety, long-term needs for a safe and loving home, possibilities parents have, and reliable resources in the supporting community or psychosocial environment. Figure 2 illustrates aims in a hierarchical order, and shows that protection represents only a small segment of the entire field.

Figure 2: Multidimensional framework for interpreting interventions targeting children and focusing on how family operates



Source: Trocmé (1999: 46).

What managers associate with target groups?

It is worth observing what professionals think about primary and secondary target groups. During the administration of questionnaires, we asked managers to write down the three qualifiers that first come to their mind when they think about children and young adults in the professional child protection

⁷ Trocmé (1999) uses the term protection in the sense of protecting children from abuse and neglect.

⁸ According to the Code of Ethics professionals in child protection have to contribute to “the development of childhood politics, of child protection policies, to the analysis of occurring problems, to the development of a new or improved structure.” (FICE 2007: 28§).

system and their families. The majority of answers represent some negative trait, qualifiers regarding children's personality, or lack of motivation. Beside these, managers described members of primary groups with the following qualifiers: *personality in poor condition, lack of willpower, they are aimless, rootless, deviant, socially immature, emotionally unstable, they have learning, behavioral problems as well as difficulties regarding integration. Moreover, they have unrealistic expectations from children's homes, they take everything for granted, and they have to fight for nothing.* Few responses showed some trace of trust or empathy for the member of the target group.

Respondents paint a similarly distressful image of young adults leaving the system of provisions. The most important qualifiers in this respect are lack of responsibility, lack of autonomy, and there is a general attitude of blaming the beneficiaries. Professionals see young adults in the system and those leaving the system as "problems:" *individuals struggling with problems related to employment, housing, romantic relationships, drug-use, unemployment, they commit felonies, they are rootless, do not have outlook on future, lack of opportunities and chances, and the "I am entitled to that" thinking.*

Respondents used very negative qualifiers describing the family of origin too. The most frequently used adjectives were the following: *irresponsible parents, poverty, and lack of cooperation.* Other qualifiers evaluate their life conditions and situation, such as problems regarding *life-management, marginality, crisis, hopelessness regarding future, usury, criminality, neglect, complicated kinship relations, deprivation, families lacking any future or hopeful prospects.* Other associations stand on stereotypes managers interpret as factors obstructing professional work, for example: *lack of resilience, lack of willingness to compromising, inhumanity, inadequacy, worthlessness, and episodic emotions.* There are also extreme opinions and some even stated that parents who make their children vulnerable should be punished: *"Biological parents should be obliged to deliver community work during the full period of service provisioning for their child, if the child enters the system for reasons imputable to biological parents."* Child protection professionals

would like to broaden the target group of persons to be involved in public work. They would also penalize people who hide missing children.⁹

These qualifiers show and confirm once more that child protection professionals often condemn and despise families and see their attitude morally unacceptable. They wish for ideal clients who can solve their own problems by their own, meaning that they are not clients in the child protection system, or even if they are asking for help they cooperate, are ready to compromise, do the morally right things, have stable value systems, think, feel, and act coherently. There were few who connected parents and qualifiers that suggest empathy, such as *feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, vulnerability*.

Current challenges in child protection professional service provisioning

Needs satisfaction in child protection

According to the findings of the qualitative research, we can say that speaking about the analysis and evaluation of basic decision-making mechanisms applied in the operation of the child protection system the majority of professionals have iterated that despite the fact that there are strict, detailed, and precise rules regulating decision-making in many areas, applying them generates considerable problems. The main reason is that certain presuppositions are not clear enough; their meaning is not univocal for those who apply them. For example, even the core notion substantiating the process of taking away the children from their families, namely vulnerability, lacks precision; it is a component of the system with unclear definition. Thus, it precludes professional and predictable procedures in operations.

“Defining for example, vulnerability as such continues to remain a problem in child protection (...) it is arbitrary, its meaning is defined ad hoc. The law

⁹ Frequently, children run from the institutions and go home to their biological parents. Returning to a romantic relationship, running away from rules, inability to adapt, anger, or previous activities (such as prostitution, drug use) are other frequent reasons for running away. In 2011, 169 children run away 389 times from foster parents and 2813 children run away 17337 times from children’s home (Varga 2012).

stipulates that child protection should intervene when the children are vulnerable, and that is all. However, several cases show that they do not intervene even when the children are starving to death. (...) I am speaking about the case of light eating, where professionals did not know whether intervention is possible or not. (...) In other cases, we see that child protection professionals decide relatively quickly to take away children from their families when they live in disadvantaged communities or vulnerable groups."

Maslow's theory of personality and hierarchy of needs (1987) is well-known and broadly applied in social sciences. It is evident that adult society, interested institutions and the different services have to satisfy all of the seven types of needs of children – physiological, need for security, need for belonging and for love, need for being appreciated and esteemed, cognitive and esthetic needs, as well as the need for self-actualization – to protect children's rights. According to Maslow's theory, needs that are more basic must be met first in order to meet hierarchically superior needs. When children are exposed to situations of vulnerability, their needs are defined by the ability of the family to ward – with the help and support provided by the state – against these dangers (UNICEF 2007). Bradshaw distinguishes between four types of needs: 1) normative needs (needs defined starting from a norm), 2) comparative needs (the analysis of satisfying needs in different groups), 3) subjective need (how individuals feel themselves, the feeling of need) and 4) explicit need (manifest need) (cited in: Tausz 2006: 6-7). *"For Bradshaw, needs are multidimensional, they originate in society, they are relative and rest on value judgments. He makes a clear and important distinction between what individuals feel and consider need and what professionals define as such"* (Tausz 2006: 7).

From a child protection perspective this means that some of the needs must be defined and satisfied or met according to precise standards. Nevertheless, one should not overlook the subjective and explicit needs of primary and secondary target groups. The articulation of the latter needs also supports putting in practice the principles of participation and partnership.

Like Trocme (1999), Makrinotti also considers that the subordination of policies for children to other types of policies constitutes a problem, because it means that childhood becomes enmeshed in the institution of family. Thus, children's needs and family needs are not independent (cited in: Tausz 2006: 14-15). This particular power hierarchy makes children invisible, in the sense that they do not appear as autonomous, full persons and their needs become family needs despite the fact that all human needs are individual needs. It also means that children do not appear as a social group, an autonomous social entity. The notion of child does not cover only an age group (a group of individuals aged 0-18), but also a social group, which bears several particularities. This is why their protection must be variegated and multidimensional (Domszky 1999a).

According to the opinions expressed by our interviewees, one serious problem in the operations of the child protection system¹⁰ is that it is not able to formulate particular reactions to the variety and complexity of the existing needs children and young adults have. Thus, they can hardly manage a situation in which children with disabilities are overrepresented in the child protection system compared to the share of people with disabilities in the total population.¹¹ The proportion of children with special needs is very high 23,5 percent (!) without counting for the 0-3 age-group (KSH 2014). According to the newest data, there are 6931 children with special needs, out of which 4748 are children in the 3-17 age-group, out of which 51 percent are mentally disabled, 22 percent have other neuro-developmental disorder, (meaning that they are confronted with sever learning difficulties, attention deficit or behavioral disorder) and 22 percent suffer from chronic illness, or there are cases of SNI along with chronic illness (KSH 2015, preliminary data).

¹⁰ In the first chapter of our study, we have described the main structural changes and the most important tendencies in for the main types of provisioning as shown by the official statistical data on child protection. In the analysis of interviews, we discuss this issues following what we have previously described

¹¹ According to census data in 2001, there were 577 thousand individuals with disabilities in Hungary, 5,7 percent of the population. The proportion of children with disabilities in the 0-14 age group was 1,7 percent. http://www.nepszamlalas2001.hu/hun/kotetek/12/12_2_ert.pdf last accessed: 20.01.2014.

We highlight the situation of children with dual needs: the number of needs keeps around 600-760 in the last couple of years (KSH 2014), but we may suppose large latency behind it. According to data for 2014, there were 623 children with special needs, out of which 46 percent manifests severe psychological symptoms, 38 percent severe dissocial symptoms, and 16 percent are struggling with psychoactive drugs. The number of individuals having dual needs was 182 (KSH preliminary data). The profession manages special needs equipped with a just a sketch of a structure, which inevitably leads to a great number of inadequate services in provisioning for the cared after individuals (Szikulai 2006; A speciális Ellátás Módszertani Munkacsoportjának Tanulmánya a Speciális Ellátásról 2011; Rákó 2010). Even in case of children entering the system as persons with normal needs, it becomes more and more difficult to sharply distinguish, to separate their status from the status of children with special and particular needs. *“There are more and more special children in the system. Special needs are very simple according to legal definition. (...) One refers to (...) psychological problems. Unfortunately, this definition is too broad, because it includes too much from a simple depression to severe psychiatric disorder. (...) There are the children struggling with depression, anxiety (...), let us say this is a severe diagnosis, but it is not by far as serious as schizophrenia. It is not an explicit diagnosis for a child, but there is a probability to emerge later on when the child becomes an adult.”*

Table 7: *Individuals by needs, records from 31 December 2014.*

Needs	Number of children in the records in 31 December in the year in question
Approved temporary	2465
Institutionalized	17670
Total	20135
Out of Total: number of children with special needs	6931
Out of which: exclusively because of their age	2109
Out of which: the existence of SNI and/or chronic illness besides age	74
Out of which: mental disability because of SNI	2439
Out of which: multiple disabilities because of SNI	161
Out of which: locomotor disability because of SNI	39
Out of which: sensory disability because of SNI	80
Out of which: speech-impaired because of SNI	94
Out of which: autism spectrum disorder because of SNI	24
Out of which: other neuro-developmental disorders because of SNI (serious learning disorder, attention-deficit, and behavior disorder)	1037
Out of which: because of long term illness	874
Out of which: long term illness and SNI	180
Out of Total: number of children with special needs	632
Out of which: manifesting severe psychological symptoms	293
Out of which: manifesting severe dissocial symptoms	241
Out of which: struggling with psychoactive drugs	98
Aftercare beneficiaries	2985
Out of Total: number of children with dual needs	182

Source: *KSH 2015, preliminary data.*

Needs versus available places

The main problem is that available places are the decisive criteria regarding children's placement in the system and not their needs. In other words, financial calculus supersedes professional concerns.

"It is a perfect, ideal situation and it is very rare (obviously we look for a place in the system considering the child, there are no doubts about that). However, in the majority of cases available places have the final say in placement. Therefore, the institutions have to solve the problem of service provisioning, which should have been solved with the placement itself because placement implies support and aid."

The research Rubeus Association (2013) carried out confirms the above statement, which says that planning the number of available places is accidental; there are disproportionate regional differences in the level of development of services. Thus, child protection problems cover different types of problems according to regions. Speaking of the experience in the capital city of Hungary László Molnár makes it clear that: *"the operator of a large system should never be allowed to subordinate professional work dedicated to enforce the best interest of the children to "higher interest."* In other words, economy and administration can be simplified to the extent that does not breach the above stated interest. Needs-based planning must always be based on objective analysis" (Molnár 2013: 105).

Lack of sufficient places for service provisioning and the associated inadequate volume and differentiation regarding the content of professional service provisioning has its implications for the aftercare system. There, adequate professional support becomes problematic for young people who leave the system because of their age. Problems arise regarding aftercare placement and regarding the maintenance of their previous place, because institutions cannot provide them adequate support (for details see for example: Szikulai 2004; Rácz 2012). Placing siblings represent another domain in which the quality and quantity of available places is decisive. Respondents agree that of all domains of child protection practice this is the area where tensions arise most frequently in implementing principles in

practical operations. When facing the placement of more siblings, as a rule, one of the following two cannot be met: service provisioning according to needs, or placing all siblings together. Professionals think it is important to note that foster care placement cannot provide a solution in this problem. They also think the problem must find long-term solution with the assistance and support of the institutional system of service provisioning. The data gathered during the survey confirms the opinion that institutional service provisioning has the capacity to manage not only the particular and special needs, but also the placement of siblings. One of the reasons for this is that few foster parents take children who need further services and regular treatment or care due to their condition.

Structural problems in professional child protection services

Professionals we talked to in individual and group interviews taken in the qualitative phase of our research have called the attention to several structural problems in the system. Institutional provisions should emphasize the need for planned organization in service provisioning. They should also stress the thorough enforcement of the principle of normalization in the development of children home and foster home structure that are meant to serve social integration of children and young adults. Time is highly significant in professional services: was the intervention timely and has the duration of the intervention or measure had the adequate length (Büki 2015). *“Conforming to the principle of adequate timing, or timeliness is a determining factor of successful intervention in child protection. The validation of this thesis in the institutions of professional services bears an interpretation based on a threefold approach:*

- (1) immediately engaging in solving problems rooted in the antecedents of child’s life, needs that were never met (traumatic experiences, losses, deprivations, developmental disorders, socialization problems);*
- (2) preventing emergence of other problems, psychological, emotional problems, disorders;*

(3) timely satisfaction or emergent needs and thus initiation of processes of transformation and development.” (Józsa 2006: 39).

It is worth investigating the foster home system in terms of when and for what kind of children or young adults it is the right solution. According to Büki (2015), foster homes, being smaller scale, more familial institutions serve the placement of children whose home care cannot be assured in short time (1-2 years), but who cannot be placed in foster parenting care. One also has to be aware that material conditions, spatial arrangements in foster home placement do not favor solutions involving complex support for families. In the meantime, some things cannot be disclosed to people who are close to us, to our families or foster parents. In this case, children's home can be a viable solution. It gives time and space to deal with loss and sorrow and helps children in learning the basics of to living in groups or family (In Residence 2011).

This small scale, family-type institution comprises 5 therapy principles: 1) Making, establishing, building relation: when someone new comes to the home, it is important for them to have the opportunity to shape the environment, surroundings according to personal taste; the personnel should be caring, available and accepting, it should win children's trust. 2) Setting rules: for children who encountered neglect, abuse, and disorder in their previous stages of life, predictable rules, and daily routines engender feelings of security, safety, and protection. Patterns, routines, and consistency control anxiety and reduce stress. 3) Communication: the personnel should respect the child's relation with relatives and to the past. It is important for the child to process losses without resorting to self-blame and feelings of rejection. People working in foster homes are the guardians of children's memories. The children must know that it is not their fault that they do not live with their biological family. 4) Participation: after they have understood and accepted their past and present it is important that professionals encourage children to find leisure activities according to their domains of interest and to develop their talents and skills. 5) Empowerment: professionals encourage children to accept themselves and to assume responsibility for their actions. Professionals will give them positive feedback and praise (In Residence 2011: 38-41).

Regarding territorial distribution of institutional provisioning,¹² we may say that there were 9642 places in traditional children's home, special and particular children's home, foster home and aftercare homes in 2008. The distribution of places according to type of settlement was the following: 39 percent in county residence, 31 percent in other cities, 21,6 percent in the capital city, and 8.4 percent in communes. Regarding institutional provisioning we analyzed in 2013,¹³ we can say that in the general context of a 1233 decrease in places in the system, the proportion of places ensured in county residences grew to 41,8 percent, while other cities dispose of 29,4 percent of the total places. Finally, 22,9 percent of places are found in Budapest. Communes hold 6,9 percent of all institutional places. The data shows that the role of communes has decreased and the role of county residences and other cities increased in the last five years. Budapest retained its importance in ensuring institutional service provisioning. The reorganization within the system is even more interesting: the number of children's home decreased proportionally in county residences, other cities, and Budapest with a pace of 100-300 places while the number of available places in children's home in communes decreased with 46 percent. The decrease of foster homes proves to be the most spectacular. The decrease is less pronounced in Budapest, it is of nearly 250 places in county residencies, while in other cities the scale of the decrease is about 53 percent and 25 percent in communes compared to the situation in 2008.

The data shows that the foster home system started to retreat most powerfully in smaller settlements. Changes in the number of special children's homes and foster homes show that cities are in advantage. Cities ensure new places in the system. The greatest increase of available places occurs in special

¹² The data do not paint a real picture on foster parenting provisioning because 75,5 percent of the provisions takes place in county residences, which are probably the seat for the networks. The data come from them. Available places in foster parenting are distributed in the following way: 5,5 percent in other cities, 2 percent in communes, 17 percent in Budapest.

¹³ For the year in question, we have data by forms of provisioning (children's home and foster home) for particular and special provisioning. Thus, we aggregated them to simplify comparison. There was no available data for 2014 by type of settlement when I made this analysis.

children's homes and foster homes. Except for Budapest, the number of places has nearly doubled (the increase in Budapest is of 16 percent). The number of aftercare institutions decreased in every type of settlements. The declining role of communes produces overall an increase in the level of needs satisfaction, since in the capital city as well as in county residencies, and cities the infrastructure is larger and better, child protection is not self-encapsulated, professionals are not on their own. There is no research data that show the extent child protection institutions integrate in local communities.¹⁴ It is an important aspect of child protection in the sense conveyed in of the Methodological Letter in Children's Home (Domszky 1999b).¹⁵ In the same time, communities retain an important role in ensuring social participation and thus supporting people in becoming individuals who nevertheless feel that they belong to society, and that they are members of a community. Community can disintegrate and exclude. According to Rees, community as a notion originates in a multidimensional context that contains social, economic, political, and cultural reality, and various institutions (such as health care, education, and various welfare services) are integral parts of this context (cited in: Gorman 2002: no page). Inclusive communities¹⁶ represent a space of cohabitation for individuals having various abilities, opportunities, and desires. As such, it makes room and creates some opportunities for mutual acceptance. *"Acknowledging and valuing variety is the cornerstone of inclusion.*

¹⁴ Anna Légmán and Bernadett Csurgó research the integrative role of communities in community psychiatric service. Their research calls our attention to the fact that the psychiatric system of provision does not make use of opportunities (Őrültek helye a 21. századi magyar társadalomban OTKA pályázat) [Madness in Hungarian Society in the 21th Century - OTKA fellowship].

¹⁵ *"Children's home functions in an independent building, in a house or dwelling integrated in the settlement. Its function is to provide the children the opportunity to exercise natural, everyday life social relations (for example between neighbors) even after they were taken away from their home. (The official act of placement should not mean "de-integration")"* (Domszky 1999b: 7).

¹⁶ The term inclusive community comes from education (its antonym is segregation), and it serves the education of children with special educational needs, children with disabilities, children who face learning difficulties, and children who come from disadvantaged social conditions.

This attitude toward variety has to permeate all levels and actors involved in the process of inclusion. One recognizes this perspective in the positive attitude of people living in the common space, who in the same time cast negative stereotypes in the background. The fundamental idea is that values connected to variety enrich all participants in the common space” (Varga 2015: 11). The inclusive environment assumes a series of statements, such as: material culture is diverse; variety is an acknowledged value; there is quality service and participant professionals have the required knowledge; focus on helping individuals, understanding the individual life path, and foregrounds personalized content and action; cooperation builds on partnership meaning that members, institutions and groups within and outside the inclusive space are capable of continuous renewal, are able to interpret and manage intercultural challenges, and impact analysis and strategies are integral part of all that (Varga 2015).

There is no extensive data on the territorial distribution of foster parenting services. However, in his pilot study, Babusik (2009) finds out that nearly half of foster parents live in settlements with a population below 2000 people, mostly in Borsod and Szabolcs counties. There are small disadvantaged settlements where there are several foster families. In these small settlements, foster parenting is probable an alternative escape route from unemployment. Growing up in such small settlements does not favor advancement in education and does not help later positioning on the labor force market. Moreover, healthcare, cultural and social facilities are also limited very much like access to social and children’s welfare provisions. Exclusion of foster parents carries in itself several dangers. There are no research data regarding the social prejudices foster parents face and how they experience it¹⁷ – we discuss the issue in relation to young people later on in the volume –, but we suppose foster parents experience discrimination coming from foster

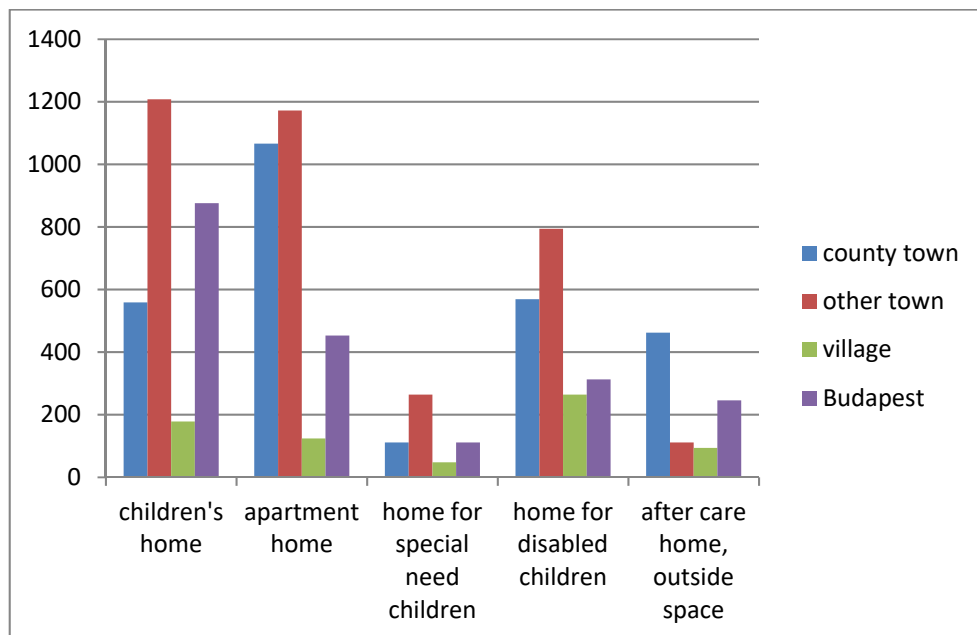
¹⁷ Good examples for deconstructing pernicious beliefs are SOS from Hungary: <http://bezzeganya.reblog.hu/tiz-tevhit-a-neveloszulokrol-es-az-allami-gondozott-gyerekekrol> and <http://gyereksorsok.hu/>.

children, their own children, themselves or the biological parents of the foster children.¹⁸ Foster parenting raises the questions of whether foster parents can break the reproduction of poverty and inequality of chances or not, and to what extent they contribute to their reproduction. The research conducted by MTA – GYEP calls the attention to the fact that research does not confirm the statement that foster parenting is an intentionally chosen way of making a living. To earn somewhat more than minimum necessary for subsistence people need other sources of income (work and transfer) besides the income foster parenting generates. The average equivalent family income recorded in the study is one and half times more than the subsistence level. The reasons behind being foster parents are the love of child, the coming of age of their own children, and the fact that foster parents have always wanted to raise more children. Another important factor is the impact and influence other foster parents living in the settlement have in the whole process (Darvas 2011). Both the foster parenting services and the institutional services are most extensive in Budapest, Pest county, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. Foster parenting networks are distributed as follows: 26,5 percent on the Northern Plain, 17 percent in the capital city, 16,4 percent in the next significant region of Southern Plain (KSH 2014). Regarding territorial distribution, trends are similar to the ones in 2014; nearly 20 percent of the 5531 foster parents live in the capital city and in Pest county, a considerable number of them live in Borsod county (511) and in Hajdú-Bihar county (533); another important county in this respect is Csongrád county with 340 foster parents (KSH 2015, preliminary data).

Almost 23 percent of children's home are in Budapest. Another important region in this sense is the Northern Plain, which hosts 19 percent of the available places in children's homes (KSH 2014).

¹⁸ About adoption as a process saturated by prejudices and stereotypes, see the research of Neményi-Takács (2015).

Figure 3: Evolution of available places in institutional services by type of settlement, 2013¹⁹



Source: KSH (2014), own calculation.

Professional crises: pedagogy or social work?

It is a sign of a crisis in the professional identity of workers in child protection services that they wonder if their work is more pedagogy, education or more social work (Rácz 2005). Supporting education, preparation for independent life, education for living in family and in society is very important in this work. However, in practice one cannot find a single, unitary methodology that serves meeting these aims (Herczog 2001; Szikulai 2006; Józsa 2007). Anglin (2001: n. p.) highlights five key factors in child protection seen as a special, unique profession. 1) It focuses primarily on the development of children and

¹⁹ I have to thank Tibor Papházi for sharing the data. The figure shows main types of institutional provisions. It does not comprise outside places and the hosting institution. The OSAP 1208 form does not record the type of settlement before 2008. In case of foster parenting services type of settlement has been recorded for the first time in 2011. The data provided by KSH for 2014 were not available at the time of analysis.

youth. 2) The profession is concerned with the totality of children and youth's activity, performance. 3) In contributing to the development of children, the profession rests on a model of social competence rather than on a pathology-based approach. 4) It represents regular and direct professional work with children and their immediate environment. 5) The profession includes building therapeutic relations in aiding children and their families. The profession defines beneficiaries or members of the target group as whole persons in order to promote strengthening of social and community skills and healthy development, and their social integration on long term. He considers that the tension between child and youth protection on the one hand and social work on the other hand comes from the belief social work holds, namely that mobilizing adults can lead to social changes, therefore the strength of social work consists in managing and influencing political dynamics. On the other hand, the core of child and youth protection consists of creating order and safety in everyday life of children and of bringing out the latent potential residing in them.

According to the experience professionals working in institutional service provisioning shared during our research, child protection professionals have to perform non-pedagogical tasks, namely caring, necessary for the operation of the foster homes. They have to do this work too because of lack of financial resources needed to employ auxiliary personnel. Time and energy invested in maintenance and housework, attending children, and administration leads to reducing the professional level of the content they provide. Pedagogical work is also diminished by the fact that the infrastructure of the foster homes, the composition of places according to types of provisioning does not take into consideration the possibilities given by the available human resources to meeting certain functions. In the same time, we expect professionals to be competent professionally and in their human qualities as well (Domszky 2004). Goleman (1997) distinguishes between personal and social-community competencies. Personal competencies include self-awareness and self-regulation while social-community competencies include three areas: empathy, motivation, and social skills. Professionals need to be open, sensitive, confident, and action-oriented and, importantly, they must understand the

perspective of the family in question (Action for Children 2011b; 2013; Munro 2010).

“There is no auxiliary personnel whatsoever in the children’s home. In the old system, there was the infirmary, the kitchen, and a series of like things. Now we have none of it. (...) our colleagues are under great pressure, everything that relates to children happens in the house starting from cleaning 150 m², doing the laundry, paying the bills, administration. Often, they are alone with the children for 12 hours in a row. It is a three storey building, the group is heterogeneous, there are children with difficult personalities, there are small and bigger children alike. Meanwhile, they have to eat, to cook, to dress up, to clean up the place, and they have to schedule the activities for children. I think the whole thing is superhuman. We are teachers, but we must keep doing these things for I do not know how many hours a day and this time is taken away from the children and I am not sure is worth it.”

Regarding foster parenting provisions, several professional argue that it is more difficult to provide differential professional help in this type of provisioning, which produces a series of serious hardships. One has to count it when thinking on system development, because the lack of adequate professional support and help creates at least as many and serious problems as many advantages are gained due to easily created personal bonding, and of the family environment, which is beneficial for the development of children’s personality. *“Professionals and teachers in professional provisioning complain about the poor condition of children. Psychologically, mentally, regarding health, bodily condition, etc (...) children in children’s home get help from professionals in dealing with their disadvantages, processing their hardships, reestablish their mental state somehow. They do not have these possibilities living with foster parents. Foster parents can take the children to the professional provider in education or healthcare to which they belong to based on their address. If we assume that the majority of foster parents live in disadvantaged settlements, then we also assume that professional services are scant in those areas.”*

Assessing development of foster parenting provisions

According to the majority of the respondents participating in our research, foregrounding foster parenting as childcare service in 2014 comes with a real risk. Namely that quantity have become more important than quality in development. Foster parents have lower level of education and lower social status (Rákó et al. 2011; Rácz 2012). Returning from foster parenting care to institutions usually happens in adolescence; therefore, current developments in child protection should take into consideration the needs of children entering professional care, the content of the services, and available resources (Vida 2001). Foster parenting is an extremely difficult task that requires serious training and competencies and assumes that parents possess a series of particular personality traits. However, professionals think that the new system does not have the means to stop the flood of foster parents who take up this responsibility just because for them it is a means making a living. Raising the level of training and selection and introducing rigorous criteria in the process could stop this trend. *“We improve and develop the network of foster parents, and in the department of placements we are very attentive not to send children below 12 years of age in children’s home. We train foster parents, but the system sets the eligibility. In this sense, foster parents should have graduated eight grades; the neighborhood of the dwelling where they live should be all right, they should not be chronically ill. There are far too many children in the county whose foster parent is eighth grade graduate. I see there various problems, for example the problem of learning motivation. Why should the children learn? I do not see the quality training for foster parents that will pass on the stimulus to the child to be a useful member of the society.”*

Báló et al. (2015) shows that higher-level operations of the foster parenting network needs trained people who possess knowledge and skills, whether they are managers or other workers. A fundamental requirement for managers is that they should be able to make the network of foster parents work as a support community. Meanwhile, the system expects foster parent counselors to provide adequate advice to foster families regarding early childhood

education, school activities, challenges in adolescence, and the process of coming of age. Satisfying needs locally warrants cost-efficient activities, and only children who benefited from targeted family support services with no results are the ones who enter the professional care system. They also think that one should manage basic and professional provisions as a unit in order to have optimum usage of combined resources. Giving school performance all the support it needs is extremely important because failure at school adds too other disadvantages children living in child protection have. Of course, the reverse is also true. Children growing up without parents have the ability and possibility to improve their school performance when the system provides them complex professional support and help. One needs to look for, find interventions of this kind, and test their action and impact. It is the responsibility of professionals to ensure adequate tasks in education, caring, and support for the children. All this relies on proper definition of priorities, strategic aims, and communication between actors activating on every level of the child protection system. The levels are the following: special provisioning, the level of the service provider institutions, the given circle of beneficiaries (primary or secondary target groups), and the level of interaction^{20,21} (Tordön et al. 2014; Mendis 2015).

It is important to highlight that a considerable part of biological parents has serious aversion against foster care as a form of service provisioning. The reason is partly the lack of correct information and preconceptions based on erroneous information. Yet, on the other hand, there are real and somehow founded fears that placement in foster care increases the chances that emotional attachment with the biological family will substantially weaken. *“There is emotional jealousy, emotional rivalry. If the child enters a foster home where there are five adults who permanently take shifts, this home does not represent a new family which is replacing my family in the eyes of the child, and foster mother and foster father replaces me and the father and we will hear the child calling her his/her mother and not me.”*

²⁰ The inverted triangle of knowledge is well-known in social work. It shows the width and depth of necessary knowledge or information. See: Morales–Shaefer (1989).

²¹ For expert, professional or vocational knowledge see Budai’s study (2008).

The place and role of the family of origin in child protection provisioning

Parents' desires and claims get little attention in child protection, as we have already seen in the first phase of the research dedicated to quantitative data gathering. Keeping contact and maintaining relations with the family of origin carries the burden of dilemmas, heavy emotions, and potential tension: *"they are angry with the 'system', they are bitter, disappointed, and angry. Many times, they project all these emotions on the colleagues present in the situation, on the spot, colleagues who keep contact with them"* (Szabolcsi 2013: 95). All professionals agree that keeping contact with biological parents, especially emotional connections and bonding is extremely important in the development of every child, in the formation of their personality and increasingly important in laying down the basic living conditions after they leave the system. There is a consensus between professionals regarding the effectiveness of early intervention in case of infants and toddlers, especially if professionals give due attention to the emotional needs of the parents too. Furnivall (2011) argues that one of the main tasks in these kinds of interventions is to increase sensitivity and reliability of parents.²² This way parents are able to see not only the actions and behavior of their children but their emotions too. Supporting vulnerable parents requires clear aims at the level of organization and powerful leadership. It is important to organize trainings for professionals and ensure possibilities for supervision. Cooperation with associated branches, flexible service provisioning, and the harmonized operation of professionals are basic requirements the service provider team must meet. On the level of family, all these appear as efficient task-management and proper output (exercise focusing on output). Several external factors can influence the cooperation between parents and professionals. Some of these factors are the motivation parents have in using available support, information and knowledge parents have regarding the problem, motivation for change, level of unmet family needs. However, the

²² See Hüse's study (2014) for details on traumatized parents and their reaction to interventions of public child protection institution.

relation between helper and beneficiary is decisive too (Action for Children 2011a). To satisfy their need for bonding, vulnerable and abused children may resort to someone else in their immediate social context when their biological family is not available. The reason is that children should benefit from all valuable bonding and breaking these relations is not beneficial. It is important to take note of the fact that elder children often establish deep connection with younger siblings, therefore it is important to ensure regular, reliably, and quality relation between siblings when one of them gets into the child protection system (Furnivall 2011).

Processing trauma and supporting resilience

It is important to clarify disadvantages and advantages that come with the particularities of each form of provisioning (Józsa 2005). In foster care placement, one must consider the fact that children experience transition, conditionality, and dual belonging. In institutional service provisioning, we consider the following harms, risks: hospitalization or, rivalry, scapegoating (Kálmánchey 2001). To build their own self-image and personality, children need coherent image on their past, therefore professionals, following a basic requirement, will introduce change in their life only when they have serious reasons to do so. Ensuring that children or young adults maintain their significant relations is important when they change institutions or leave institutional care to start an autonomous life (Furnivall 2011; Action for Children 2009).

Children and youngsters entering the child protection system have often suffered various traumas, and separation from their caretaker, parents, relatives being one of the most serious one of all. National Children Bureau (n. y.) calls the attention to the fact that separation from the family in addition to other changes interrupting continuity (for example changing schools) and uncertainty has an extraordinary impact on children. Missing a caretaker or a place they can call home is a heavy burden. We call the physical, psychological, emotional, social problems of the children traumatic harm and vulnerability. Traumatic harm influences children's ability to connect. One

needs to keep in mind that uncertainty, insecurity, vulnerability experienced in childhood creates problems in adulthood too, and this can lead to continuous dependency on provision for beneficiaries who have left the system. It is important to take care of the emotional and mental health of beneficiaries, because it may serve to disclose the full potential residing in relationships. Children need long-term relationships, secure bonding they can rely on when confronting problems or in general, when they need to take on a new, independent life. When they leave the institution, young adults often connect with their family of origin and they need support in processing eventual emotional burdens this relationship produces. Neglecting these issues not only makes starting an independent life more difficult but it may condemn it to failure (Action for Children 2014). Professionals working in the foster parenting networks should support foster parents in maintaining the children's relations with their families and other significant persons in their life. It is more difficult to establish secure bonding in children's homes since relationships are not secured and certain in this environment, although it is the best solution for keeping siblings together. The greatest advantage of placements in children's home is that many different people work in the institution so that the children will eventually find a caretaker they like. Caretaking based on bonding requires directives that take into consideration and value the healing potential of special relationship of this kind. The children should know that the personnel think about them even when they are not present, and tiny physical contact is of enormous importance. In return for their emotional investment, professional must get support from their superiors and external counselors. Regular and non-judgmental discussions help easing tensions accumulated during work (Furnivall 2011).

The International Resilience Project defines flexibility as universal capacity that gives people, groups, or communities the ability to successfully manage, minimize, or prevent the ill-effects of calamities they confront in life (Newman–Blackburn 2002: 1). Research show that children who are flexible to adapt quickly are more resilient to stress and traumatic life-experiences, they can deal with change and insecurities, they recover more quickly after traumatic episodes. Risk factors are prone to accumulate and the risk

management abilities of children decrease considerable. Flexibility factors work in three dimensions: personal (the following could be decisive: social skills, IQ, age, self-awareness); family (the following could be decisive: loving and supporting parents, good parent-child relation, harmonious relationship between the two parents); outer environment (the following could be decisive: extensive network of relatives and friends, rich school life, support from a mentor). There are three types of flexibility: 1) There are individuals who are successful or at least do not fall behind despite their high-risk status, for example underweight newborns. 2) Others use proper survival strategies in situations of chronic stress, for example children of drug addict or alcoholic parents. 3) There is a group of children who experienced extreme trauma, for example, they lost their parents or experienced abuse. According to certain research findings, parents' behavior and attitude are the factor that promotes the best type of flexibility, adaptation. It is optimum when it builds on parents' child-centered attitude and behavior and avoids the pitfalls of authoritarian education. In general, children consider daily stress more frightening while adults tend to fear long-term problems the most. The research shows that incomplete family and community, long-term poverty and deprivation are consistent with lower levels of flexibility (Newman–Blackburn 2002). Risk-management, dealing with stress, and improving skills using stress in case of children, youngsters, and young adults is a great challenge for workers in child protection too.²³ The essence of skills-education is the “rich child” approach that considers children competent, ingenious, and active, individuals who are rich in abilities, skills, knowledge, and information. Resilience is a process that advances gradually. Here is an illustration using the Learning Zone Model: leaving our comfort zone, where

²³ For a comprehensive introduction to theories of resilience and their utility in child protection in the Hungarian child protection system too, among others, see Homoki A. (2014). *A gyermekvédelmi gondozottak reziliencia vizsgálata a Dél-alföldi és az Észak-alföldi régióban*. Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem, Humán Tudományok Doktori Iskola, Nevelés- és Művelődéstudományi Doktori Program. [Analyzing Resilience among Beneficiaries of Child Protection in the South Plains and North Plains Regions. Human Sciences Doctoral School, Education and Cultural Studies Doctoral Program] https://dea.lib.unideb.hu/dea/bitstream/handle/2437/201731/doktori_disszertacio_2014_Homoki_Andrea_2003_verzio_t.pdf?sequence=7&isAllowed=y last accessed: 22.06.2015.

everything is familiar, we enter the learning zone without passing in or through the panic zone, where fear makes learning impossible. Thus, we see that risk belongs to personal development. One must consider several important aspects. Firstly, it is important to concentrate on the individual and not on the risk, (it is on a proper cognitive level to take risk that are not really dangerous or harmful for their health). Secondly, since gaining risk-competence is a long process of experience and reflexive thinking, the task of the teacher or child protection professional is to create the conditions for the children to learn as early as they can how to get over risks (Eichsteller–Holthoff n.y.). According to the experience in a children's home in Denmark, the *common third* has great role in learning. When the child and the teacher are both interested in the same thing, they share something, that common interest can bond them together and contribute to the development of their relation. The common third can be many things, for example animals. In the Danish institution just mentioned above, they use horses for therapy and educational reasons, because as children learn how to take care of other living beings, they improve their ability to take care of themselves too. The teacher focuses on development, improvement, and the relation between the horse and the child (Eichsteller–Holthoff, n.y.: 7).

Opinions on the quality of corporate parenting

In both the quantitative and the qualitative phases of research, we asked the question of *what are the criteria that would make the state a good parent*. We grouped the answers we got from the questionnaires in three groups of recommendations respondents made: referring to beneficiaries and parents, professionals, and the system, respectively.

Regarding beneficiaries and their parents, one of the recommendations was general help and support for families. Thus, the actions should even make taking away children from their families superfluous. The concrete support would come in the form of family therapy, employment for parents, training in parents' role, patterns of socialization, and so on. It would be important to develop prevention services and to develop intensive support for keeping

families together. The services should not depend on the caring capacity of the given local administration and their commitment to supporting vulnerable families. Instead, it needs government commitment (Rennison 2014). Strengthening parenting competencies under the aegis of integrative interventions means that the parents will gain abilities and information that serve children's safe and healthy development. Respondents think young individuals leaving the system do not possess competitive knowledge. Therefore, several respondents mentioned that young individuals should attend trainings in labor market information, and they should get help and support in finding a job, finding a dwelling, making a family, and becoming a parent.²⁴

They think that basic training, as well as state-of-the-art trainings is important for professionals. In addition, respondents consider that knowledge of international models, reviewing domestic and international studies, sharing best practices, and reducing workload are important. There are no specific trainings or specializations that explicitly prepare professionals for child protection. Social workers without pedagogical training and graduates in education without training in social work cannot have the knowledge required in the domain of child protection.

Several respondents mentioned that child protection has low prestige; professionals are underpaid, so that it is difficult to have too many expectations regarding their motivation. Members of our society do not have a clear image of what work child protection professionals have and do. The work itself is complex and this is one of the reasons why it is difficult to have an authentic image of it. On the other hand, society thinks, somewhat reminiscent of a stereotypical thinking, that those who work with "deviant persons" are themselves "deviant" (Domszky 1999a). Elaborating on social work, Banks (2012) argues that social support or help is a "profession mediated by the state," full of contradictions and social ambivalence. Service provisioning expresses social altruism, and control functions express the need

²⁴ For example, trainings built on innovative content and perspective designed and implemented with the support of TÁMOP in 2013-2014 serve this kind of knowledge.

for enforcing social norms. Several people see social workers both as excluded, oppressed (because they take care of people who do not deserve care) and as tyrants, or people who exploit others (because they possess too great a power compared to individuals and families they look after).

Thinking about development in child protection system, professionals we approached in the research are critical when it comes about the supremacy of financial criteria over professional ones in decision-making. Financial support is not sufficient anyway. They also mentioned a more active involvement of professionals in preparing decision. For example, professionals should be invested with greater role in formulating recommendations for legal amendments. As the interviews show, systemic development needs large-scale consensus, but partnership in its constructive sense is exactly what is missing. In general, the rule is that people working on different levels in the system - and in some cases the children - do not get involved in preliminary work for development. *"It would work well with the people in it. Do they have a sense of what depend on them? On a child supervisor, who easily says that he/she is only a child supervisor in the given hierarchy? Or a foster parent can say, that he/she is only a foster parent, there are other here, like the counselors, network managers, the TEGYESZ, they are going to say what I have to do. (...) No, everyone carries great responsibility in this, regardless of his or her role in this story. (...) There is too much patch-up work in child protection instead of thorough thinking."*

Thus, professionals expressed the need to appear as professionals in the eyes of decision makers and not just as part of an auxiliary staff. They would like to make it clear, that child protection in a broad sense denotes organized interventions, including institutional structures and the community of professionals working in them, and educational and caring methodology adapted to the challenges inherent in late modern condition. All this help children have their needs met (normative, subjective, and explicit rights in the sense conveyed by Bradshaw) within or outside their families and they surely and explicitly contribute to the protection of children's rights. In Domszky's words (1999a) this denotes a complex activity, that supports children to

satisfy their needs for their survival and for becoming successful members of the given society. In other words, children should feel that it is good to be a child in the given society, regardless of their social status.

According to the consensual opinion professionals expressed in individual and focus group interview, we can say that in most of the cases both the institutional provisioning and the foster care placement provide better conditions, safer and more secure childhood for children in the system compared to leaving them with their initial families. In the same time, in their analysis of output indicators, the majority of professionals consider that the performance level the operation of the system reaches (regarding the success of education advancement and the successful social integration of beneficiaries leaving the system) remains well below the level one could expect in the light of the material and human resources invested in making the system work. For example, indicators of continuing education are the same for children in the system compared to what would have been if they remained in their disadvantaged families (Rácz 2012; Rácz 2013b; Herczog 2013). This is why we must ask whether professional standards and impact studies, and monitoring systems constitute limits or freedoms for professionals.

During research, professionals have expressed their opinion according to which there is a need for changing perspective in child protection system. Acknowledging the importance of individual performance and responsibility in the complex system of challenges in education and caring could be the key in the movement toward professionalization in child protection. Without any doubt, the process requires adequate conditions, and not least an adequate financial support. According to professionals, scholarly materials regarding child protection are relatively few, although there is a relative abundance of accessible scientific literature in the subject of social provisioning. Literature on methodology is especially scant, particularly methodology that addresses problems of postmodern education, services in mental hygiene, and knowledge that can be adapted in practice. The greatest educational challenge in child protection foster parents and child protection professionals face is to take into account all the three factors defining development: family, school,

and media. They should improve skills and competencies in avoiding aggression, self-definition, solidarity, constructive lifestyle, life management. All these requires several teaching abilities such as communication skills, flexible set of behaviors, non-violent and creative conflict management, capacity for collaboration, and skills to analyze pedagogical situations. Among the expectations the personality of professionals working on child protection provisioning must meet we find capacity to unconditionally accept the children, to be free of prejudices, to turn to children with empathy and to behave in a consistent manner (Birta–Székely n.y.; Farkas 2013). Caretaking must incorporate reflective intentionality, which helps *“recognition of communication intent and prevents misguiding interpretation. (...) communication deficit originating in different communication skills held by the client and helper leads to an unequal situation. The resolution of the situation becomes one of the important and necessary indicator of a successful helping relation.”* (Haász 2011: 7-8).

The extent to which methods and protocols²⁵ make their way into the actual practical work is rather in dispute. It depends on the commitment, openness of the manager of the respective institution. *“There are considerable local particularities regarding the importance institution managers, group leaders or foster parents’ counselors attribute to expanding the knowledge and methodological skills of workers. Where these are important for management, they will find the forums to ensure continuous professional development. Elsewhere, professionals struggle with heavy workloads and isolation, they are burned out and do not have the power to search or look for trainings.”*

The reaction of professionals to protocols, work-packages on standardization, educational films of the last couple of years show that the personnel working in child protection keeps distance from and rejects these products. Resistance comes from overwork and exhaustion in the first place, because detailed regulation of case management carries the danger of overregulation and laborious bureaucracy. For example, the regulations that define how to

²⁵ TÁMOP 5.4.1. financed the elaboration of regulation materials in the domain of social work and child protection (NCSSZI, 2011).

maintain contact with the family of origin require that the worker keep a diary of these contacts, which hardly fit real life situations: *“When a caretaker brings up 12 children from Oroszlány to the Eastern Railway Station to meet their biological relatives, theoretically the parents should sign the diaries the caretaker gives them (...) And when they return with the children they should write about what have happened to the children while being with them at home. Of course, this serves the interest of the children, but there are no conditions to do that.”*

More often than not, the unsatisfactory operation of information channels precludes the more effective practical implementation or professional standards and principles. The culture of teamwork is largely missing in the Hungarian child protection provisioning. This means that actors in the system (such as professionals or institutions) work separately in their own area and they do not share their knowledge, experience and professional resources with others. There is no supervision, there are no discussions on various cases, or these discussions are in a very low key and they occur only when there is pressure and obligation to meet certain administrative requirements. Cooperation means exchange of information, occasional interaction, and distribution of tasks, but also real teamwork and common activities. International cooperation between professions has multiple and important benefits, for example in advancing a holistic perspective, partnerships in cooperation, mutual acceptance, new approach to cooperation, effective communication, a culture of critical investigation and analysis, understanding and acceptance of other’s perspective and role, acknowledging similar and different values, reducing the tension between professions (Farkas et al. 2013: 83-84).

Prejudiced talk in child protection

Recent changes in the structure, juridical, and financial context of child protection have produced some serious challenges professionals must confront. The results of the research call the attention to the emergence of prejudiced attitudes in child protection. Prejudiced attitudes are the

consequence of the identity crises the profession has been going through recently.²⁶ It is worth investigating the source of prejudices toward primary and secondary target groups of child protection. Some of the possible causes standing behind the phenomena are: 1) professionals feel they are left without means in a rapidly changing child protection system, and there is no professional operation without standard practices. 2) The value system of middle class professionals is very different from the value system of their clients, and exclusion may originate in their divergent socializations. 3) In the context of worsening economic and social life, professionals also feel helpless and many live in difficult material conditions just like their clients. 4) Present public policies amplify prejudiced thought.

In the following, we approach areas that exhibit crises, uncertainty in profession seen from the perspective of service providers. All these might serve as motives or reasons for the emergence of prejudices against children and their parents.

²⁶ We did not want to judge or condemn the work of professionals. Neither have we wanted to generalize the emergence of prejudiced opinions expressed during our research to the whole group of workers engaged in child protection provisioning. We must talk about prejudiced opinions in child protection, their eventual spread in a child protection system that is not sufficiently developed and in constant change. We must talk about these, as we also have to acknowledge the daily work of child protection professionals, organizations, which – despite unpredictability and lack of standard practices – continue to represent the position according to which provisioning for children who were taken away from their families, replacing them in their families, or support for their social integration is function of the mentality and attitude of professionals. It is important to note that the analysis of prejudice was not a central topic of our research. However, the shocking results have convinced us to broaden the original research topic of the state as corporate parent as to include the analysis of professional mentality in the future. Such a research would focus on the emergence of prejudice thought among child protection professionals and its eventual spread. The phenomenon needs further analysis and research, but it is worth noticing that earlier studies have already mentioned this problem. In a study concerned with the analysis of the working conditions in children's homes and the workers' attitudes toward work, the majority of respondents consider that relatives do not have the right to interfere in the process of care, and that children are better off when taken away from their families (Rácz 2005). A qualitative research on the condition of Roma children in the child protection system also called the attention to the fact that workers in the child protection system are often prejudiced against Roma children and their parents (Herczog–Neményi 2007).

Problems in cooperation

Lack of cooperation between basic provisioning and professional provisioning is one of the critical issues of practical operation. This lack of cooperation most probably rests on scant human resources and overworked, exhausted professionals. Caretakers working with families in basic provisioning have extremely high number of cases; continuing to take care of families of children entering professional provisioning is low priority, which often means giving up the task all together. As we have already mentioned, only 17 percent of the cases benefits from basic provisioning prior to placement (Papp 2013).

“Many children do not have antecedents in basic provisioning. Thus, professionals do not know their families and if the child has already moved from his/her family, professionals are not very keen to contact the family at all. Even in basic provisioning, some do not see the point of working with families. However, according to the law, children are only temporary clients in professional provisioning and everyone should strive to offer the family the support needed to become a family that can raise their children.”

Opting for a placement that does not provide the proper services according to needs is a frequent choice due to inadequate needs assessment practices (Gyarmati–Rác 2013). There is no preliminary discussion and in meetings about placement professionals work on a concrete recommendation. It is worth revisiting the work process of the expert commission to put more emphasis on preparation. Cooperation is seriously flawed, professional provisioning works with little information, nearly all the information they have is from the standard record the child protection institution used to file. The data is not sufficient to clearly identify and define individual needs. Cooperation is just superficial change of information; there is no real teamwork. *“One can hardly find real supporting work there. Sometimes I feel that there is nothing but holding the helpless parents accountable. This does not represent children’s best interest”*

Interviewees often talk about the general fact that the physical and psychological condition of children entering the system is getting worse all the time. Identifying the most important reasons for that, professional point out the general trend of impoverishment in society, especially among middle class

people. Professionals suggest that treating these problems needs complex approaches. Child protection, as such, is not enough. Restructuring the family support system, in the sense of strengthening its role in prevention is something professionals await. The successful operation of basic provisioning leaves its mark on the ever-increasing level of influx. Professionals do not in general refute the idea of social policy based programmatic intervention. It is surprising that they also think birth control is a means to be applied in the case of families with many children living in poverty.

“The influx is huge. It should be regulated somehow, eventually (...). Some sort of social policy should somehow prevent that the parents who already have 5-6-8-10 children in state care system give birth to other children. They should launch a program or take measure to stop that.”

Similar reasons appear in maintaining connection with the family of origin, when case management is improper and does not follow professional principles. The majority of people working in professional provisioning know that on a cognitive level. Maintaining relation, contact with the family of origin is problematic even though professionals know that keeping in touch with them and maintaining contact with them, knowledge of family history and traditions, maintaining emotional relations are extremely important for the development of the children and their life after leaving the system. Cooperation with family is a burden more often than not, and parents represent some kind of threat to the correct value system professional provisioning transmits to children.

Luxury rights? Rightful luxury?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) comprises the minimum rights to be guaranteed to every child.²⁷ It broadly defines the rights of the child. We can distinguish between three categories of rights:

1. Right to care and provisioning: family support (keeping families united), health, social security, education, leisure and play, special care and

²⁷ Hungary has ratified it in 1991 and entered into force with Act LXIV of 1991. In addition, the Constitution also stipulates that particular measures are in order to protect children. The Children Act is the most comprehensive regarding the rights of the child (OBDK 2014).

protection for example for children with disabilities or refugees, identity, nationality, freedom of religion.

2. Protection rights: protection from violence and abuse, kidnapping, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, wars and armed conflicts, drug abuse, inhuman treatment regarding juvenile delinquents.
3. Right to participation: respect for the child's opinion, ensuring the freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression and right to access information.

The birth of the Convention on the Rights of the Child replaced the view “the child is parents’ possession” with attributing the parent the primary responsibility of taking care of children. The convention has fundamentally changed the interpretation of the notion of child and started to promote a different view on children. According to this, society should value children, should be attentive to how they treat children, how they assess their needs and competencies (Robinson 2010). Modern health care, social work, and child protection see children as individuals who have special rights as children in addition to their human rights.

The existence and evolution of the Convention is related to the problem of child poverty and child development. Enforcing children’ rights has to take into account those macro level social problems that impact on children and the political reaction to ensuring child welfare. It also has to take notice of the implications the economic crisis have on children, on social welfare/protection institutions, and on the broader supporting environment. The UN Commission on the Rights of the Child has already considered in the 2000s that children related policies are rather adequate on a general level in certain countries. However, it also considered states, which do not enforce comprehensive rights of the child approaches. Reports do not emphasize sufficiently the issue of child poverty either. There are only limited opportunities for consultation with children or young people. The economic crises had clear consequences in relation to children: malnutrition, increase of child labor, rising unemployment rate among young people, increasing instances of exploitation, violence against children and abuse in all forms they

might take, decreasing school attendance, decrease in the use of healthcare services, decreasing emotional safety, limitation of access to public services regarding provisions and protection. All these endanger future skills and capacities of children. Professionals call the attention to the fact that states can stabilize the condition of children when they recognize how crises influence the life of children. It can react according to a properly elaborated strategy, and use effective means to counteract the implications of the crises (collaborate with civil organizations, have an active political dialogue, and make governments accountable for anti-crisis measures). These include, among others, childcare services, services targeting psychological and mental health of the children, services for reducing addictions, preventive measures, protection and investment in child protection and welfare services (UNICEF 2009; Harper et al. 2010). For example, in Canada, enforcing the rights of the child is not only a legal and moral obligation of the adult society but also good economic and social investment. They raised the issue of enforcing children's best interest. Thus, they considered that in order to make this happen and to ensure the development of children into full class members of society, the state should centralize children policies, meaning the harmonization and unification of responsibilities scattered among various organs and levels of government (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010). According to Eurochild (2014), besides establishing a permanent operational system for the rights of the child is very important to train politicians, policy makers and functionaries in children's rights. For example, Canada urges the investigation of the impact the annual budget decisions might have on children, and on certain groups of children. Hungary's expenses on social protection was 22,7 percent of the GDP in 2007. The expenses increased in 2009 to 24,3 percent of the GDP, but decreased back to the level in 2007 (23 percent). The proportion of poor and excluded people has increased from 2010 to 2013 both in the total population and among children. In 2013, 33,5 percent of the total population and 43 percent of children belonged to this category (Civil report on the chances of children 2014: 65-66).

A previous study published in 2006 also claims that there is a need to consolidate the rights of the child. According to this study, 75 percent of

people do not know how to exercise their right while respecting others' rights. The research also shows that parents are more knowledgeable regarding the rights of the child than children are (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010: 22). The survey conducted by Századvég Alapítvány (End of Century Foundation) in 2014 shows that having good legal knowledge on elementary or fundamental level is important for a great majority of the people. Most of them (52 percent) need assistance in relation to financial services, 49 percent would like to have more precise information and knowledge in real estate and motor vehicle affairs, and more than 40 percent need assistance in relation to administration and court issues. People use legal knowledge in everyday life mostly in family matters (43 percent) and issues related to labor force market (46 percent). According to more than 3000 respondents, personal assistance is the most efficient way of learning about something, followed by legal electronic publication, and specialized literature.²⁸ There is also a need to put more emphasize on the ways assistants of children and young adults could be involved in transmitting children's perspectives to politicians (Harper et al. 2010). An internet survey among Canadian children aged 9-18 conducted in 2008²⁹ calls the attention to the fact that the least enforced area of children rights are ensuring participation and listening to children. The majority of parents ensure basic clothing, food, and schooling. Ensuring protection rests on shaky grounds: 27 percent of parents protect their child from intimidation, 38 percent takes care that the children are safe while parents work, 22 percent talk to their children about drugs (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010: 23-24). Several researches show that children and young people would like service providers and professionals working in this domain to give them the chance to participate in decision-making and the chance to take responsibility for their own actions according to their age and level of maturity. In this, the key is to ensure that children have alternatives and may choose the type of service provisioning, to ensure that they get involved in designing and planning, give feedback regarding quality assurance, receive proper information on their

²⁸ <http://www.jogiforum.hu/hirek/32990> last accessed: 27.12.2014.

²⁹ Number of cases in the sample: 629 persons.

rights and on each provision or service. For example, it is a problem that the system does not involve young people in planning the whole process of leaving the system, and does not treat young people as equal partners. Research confirms that school consultations in understanding children's rights are extremely helpful for children with disabilities. In the same time, professionals see their disabilities instead of their potential. Yet another research shows that children who were released from school and interrupted study were not asked during disciplinary discussions (cited in Mainey et al. 2009: 20-22).

Understanding children and supporting them in their social environment depends on enforcing two basic perspectives: 1) Holistic treatment for the children, which means that children excluded because of their disability or lack of family, receive the same treatment as other children in the majority society receive. Professional caretakers make sure that they participate in a variety of programs, activities and maintain relations with friends. 2) One cannot avoid family relations and their role in the life of the children. Children see for themselves what kind of support they need to keep the family united. Maintaining relations with the biological family is desirable during professional provisioning too. All of the above signify a move of the system of provisions toward an integrated family and community centered type of provisions that guarantees efficient service and caring packages for children and their parents (Mainey et al. 2009; European Commission Daphne Programme 2007; Volunteer Development Agency 2011). For children living in the child protection system it is very important to have a system of provision, which serves as a sort of therapy environment. An environment that allows them learning how to manage stress, process trauma, develop proper behavior, and enjoy emotional security, all of that with the support of professional help. The approach requires that professionals concentrate on the strengths of the children, to identify the talents and competencies of children and support them in pursuing those talents. Professionals must believe that children are able to unleash their talents. A stable emotional state represents a solid foundation for increasing the responsibility the children assume and it

may also improve their positive outlook on the future. Professionals are the first responsible in creating this foundation (Furnivall–Grant 2014).

Kirton (2009) argues that the Convention is limited on a number of grounds. On the one hand, countries interpret and enforce or execute these rights in different ways. On the other hand, lack of resources is a limiting factor in poor countries. There are no effective sanctions for breaking the provisions of the Convention. The fact that Central European countries embarked on “learning democracy” only at the end of the 80’s makes things more difficult in this domain (Dr. Kecskeméti 2009). Bogács et al. (2015) assume that the most important shortcoming in enforcing the rights of the child both in the frame of international and of national law is that the needed educational process in raising sensibility on the level of society has never taken place. This process would have helped acknowledging and promoting psychological, pedagogical processes and arguments behind the rights on the level of the entire adult society. We should stress that the main warrant for enforcing the rights of the child is an adult society that respects the rights of the child, competent parents, and the children depending on their age and maturity.

Interviewees have expressed their concerns about the rights of the child from many standpoints. Several professionals state that - having in mind the entire system of provisions – the rights of the child are prominent primarily in professional provisions, whereas it should be as much relevant in basic provisioning and in educational system too. The experience in children’s home show that extreme cases are relatively frequent, when caretakers and supervisors are afraid of the eventual violent reaction of children they are responsible for. Having no means to deal with such situation, they rather avoid conflicts instead of trying to solve them. In addition, professionals say that children know exactly what is about the services, benefits, packages they are entitled too, and about the possibilities the provisions ensure. Professionals do not have possibility to use these in a nuanced, differentiated manner in disciplining, not even in cases when it would lead to situations that contradict all pedagogical principles. *“The state provides more for my child than I can provide. The child thinks that is entitled to have an expensive thing,*

the child needs it, right now. And when I do not agree, they know where to complain. They need a phone and they think they are entitled too, even if they sell it in a week. And you have to buy it again for them, because they have welfare benefits."

Obligations are very much less important for children than rights and entitlements. Professionals think that some of the details in how the system operates produce this situation. They illustrate it with the example of welfare transfers conditioned by school attendance. However, the procedure does not work in the case of children who are in professional care. For example, in the case of children in the child protection system there are no concrete penalties for more than 50 absences. Children are aware of this fact.

Opinions show that professionals in child protection system need practical knowledge and pedagogical methodology to apply in their practical work. These would make clear what are professionals' responsibility in endorsing rights and would give proper support and motivation to enforce and exercise the rights of the child.³⁰

Luxury conditions in institutional provisions have been a debated topic in the professional provisioning.³¹ As we have already suggested it earlier, it is important to ensure that children's experience during provisioning have common points, links to their experience outside the world of provisioning (Stonehouse–Duffie 2001). Speaking about possible and necessary trends in the future, respondents in the individual and group interviews outline a system that is more clearly regulated, more detailed and definitely stricter than the present one. In this system, conditions resemble more real life conditions and

³⁰ A great help in this respect is the Manual for Applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Kézikönyv a Gyermekek jogi Egyezmény Alkalmazásához) See: Kecskeméti 2009.

³¹ For example, transitional or temporary care raise the issue of complete provisioning vs. needs based provisioning (Gál 2004), which is a legitimate question in the system that supports parents (Rác 2012). However, one should consider the introduction of the same issue in regard with the target group of children aged 0-18, of course with the proper and efficient involvement of parents. Professional dialogue should extend and tackle a series of issues, such as the right of parents to supervise, the methodology of identifying needs in basic and professional provisioning, setting the price for services in the sense of service-based financial support. (We should note that NCSSZI TÁMOP-5.4.1-12 modernization projects refer to similar areas of concern, although with different emphasis.)

they adapt better to housing conditions. The majority of respondents think that possible interpretation of the rights of child needs revisiting, and they ought to define some priorities in the domain of rights.

“You do not need plasma TV hanging even on the ceiling. It can be more simple, but a bit stricter. With better description and clear limits and rules, boundaries the children cannot cross. When children know their best interest, they learn and it will do them good. We should work within more simple, clearer, and stricter frames. (...) I imagine sort of army camps, where there is a wake-up routine in the morning; there are duties, mandatory things, and the sort. We need more severe boundaries. (...) It does not sound too good but we need some things if we do not want to face a situation in which children become adults with no chance at all, because we exercise all sorts of rights, because we do not stand for setting clear boundaries and limits.”

Interviews show a kind of nostalgia for the old system. At the beginning of the 2000's during the creation of the foster home system (even as compartmentalizing children's homes with great number of children, and establishing so-called inner foster home units) was difficult time because neither the children nor the professionals were prepared for operating in smaller, autonomous units (for transformations see for example, Vidra Szabó 2000). After 10 years of operation, professionals still do not consider that the system is proper for the majority of the children in child protection care.

At more than a decade distance professionals still do not think that the system is the proper place of care for the great majority of children being in the child protection system. On the one hand, the reason is that children have complex set of problems and their condition is gradually worsening. On the other hand, professionals do not feel they are competent in fulfilling their tasks without the help of the background personnel. Professionals are overworked, lack motivation, the profession's prestige is low. This is why, militaristic views, an educational system that is more severe, stricter gains momentum in many interviews. One can observe that professionals working in this domain are nostalgic about the closed or semi-closed systems that have operated in the past. They think that the system was good in mobilizing masses and no doubt,

it rested on repressive practices regarding individuality and variety. Children only wished they survived the duration of their stay in the system and wanted nothing more than to leave the system. Rasell's (2015) narrative analysis cogently illustrates the abuses in the system and the fact that time stands still in child protection. The iron discipline they used was able to make all children look and be alike. Professionals themselves were able to hide in these systems. All these show the reaction profession has developed to late modern institutional decay: it shows the image of an actor who carries the burden of several pathologies, an excluded, anxious, passive, person who lacks reflexivity. The institution is an objectified institution, where responsibility is transferred to others and the aim is to consolidate the power positions of professionals (Rényi et al. 2014: 56).

“Professionals in child protection have started to radicalize. They consider that the best child protection system would be a very strict one. (...) It does not matter if working condition or living conditions of children are more modest. The most important thing is that they have strict directives, concrete protocols on how to treat children. They wish for a strategy for mobilizing the masses. (...) For sure, this is not a good direction.”

The so-called system of youth life-management colleges in the *National Social Policy Concept* (ver. 10) working paper published in 2011 – that would have targeted provisioning for adolescents and young adults with normal needs and aged 16-24 – could broaden the range of provisions. According to the initial concept, the provision would have not targeted only young people in the professional care system but also, vulnerable teenagers in child protection system, and children living in extreme poverty. *“We are convinced that taking away the children from their families or threats in this sense are not the proper way to change the particular behavior of youngsters aged 16–18 or to solve their problems. (...) according to our previous experience, young people feel they are punished when they enter professional care, and think the punishment is unjust. They do not relate it to their previous behavior. This means that the level of cooperation between beneficiary and service provider is much lower than we would like to be.”* (NSPC, early version, was not adopted, manuscript 2011: 67–68).

The Kedvesház Kollégium (Kind House College) in Nyírtelek, an institution established 20 years ago to support the education and social integrations of Roma and/or disadvantaged children and their families, is really a pioneering project and a much demanded institution in social support, family support and child and youth protection. The aim of the college is to provide services that produce opportunities to reach higher-level performance in school while creating a familiar environment. They also managed to ensure proper material conditions and infrastructure and thus children have the needed social security and safety in the institution (Lázár 2015). Unfortunately, replacing locally provided prevention and locally satisfying needs, benefiting from institutional professional care and foster parenting services makes only a superficial solution to existing problems. The calculations Bogács (2015a) made have clearly shown that each form of professional provisioning costs substantially more than the college-type provisioning.

Professionals raised several problems regarding the debate concerning institutional vs. foster parent provisioning. The system is prepared to assist children with normal needs. The current eligibility criteria often lead to unsolvable situations because lack of access to professional support and help, but also because of improper infrastructure.

“Child protection as it is today has been designed for good children. (...) For children you can let on the second floor, children who do their homework sitting at the desk, and then come downstairs and we all go shopping. (...) At our place we bolted the skylight for the twenty-third time, and we have to keep it closed even when are six hundreds degrees, because otherwise children climb the window and get out on the roof.”

The great numbers of teenagers who return from foster parents to institutional provisioning give rise to serious tensions between the two forms of provisioning. These tensions are extremely harmful for the quality of the professional work and the operations based on the cooperation between the two forms of provisioning. Moreover, professionals consider that another problematic area is the conflict of interest between foster parents and the family of origin, a conflict that originates in the intensive development of the

foster parent network and the criteria, or requirements to maintain the status and role of foster parent.

“I think about the situation in which children return to their biological family. Sometimes a conflict of interest arises between the interest of the children and the interest of the foster family. For example, I feel that in many cases foster parents have not yet acknowledged the importance, relevance of maintaining contact and relation with the biological family. Now a new turn comes ahead. Children under 12 can be placed only to foster parents. I’m afraid that foster parents networks begin to rapidly multiply which leads to poor quality and I think children’s life depend on it. I am afraid of too quick quantitative growth.”

Lack of individual responsibility and lack of means

The interview fragment above clearly shows the need for change of perspective of professionals working in professional provisioning. Respondents feel that the majority of professionals do not want to assume responsibility for children and young adults in the system. Their job becomes easy when the children are not in the institution.

“I see that people working in child protection are greatly irresponsible. Concretely, they say it is easier to work when children are not in the institution. They want the children out on leave until 10 or 11 o’clock, and if they take a snack or something to eat with them they do not even have to come to the institution for lunch. And this is way better for workers. (...) Professionals do not even think they should care for the children, and be with them. The need comes from the children, they wish for care. And they need some sort of order.”

In the rapidly changing child protection system, professionals feel that they have no means, which leads to prejudiced thought about primary and secondary groups in child protection. There are several factors behind prejudiced thinking. One of them could be the utter difference between the middle class values of professionals and the value system of their clients and exclusion, separation could come from divergent socialization (Healy 1998).

Since individuals are members of several social groups, they conform to significant groups when choosing a standing or position regarding their value system and norms. They have to create a particular theory that does not endanger individuals' positive self-image and does not challenge their sense of comfort or security. *"The comfort and advantage inherent in prejudice theories becomes evident when it explains social changes generated in part by individuals or their group"* (Csepeli 2001: 493).

The standard of living is getting worse for the majority of the population, 50 percent of the population now live in conditions that are worse than the ones at the change of regime. As Ferge argues, 70 percent of the middle class cannot pay the bills, have no economies enough for one month, and anxiety over insecurities of life is an everyday experience (Magyarország szétszakad... 2014). Bass adds that loyalty to the system feeds on fear, people hope that loyalty does not worsen, eventually improves their situation (Magyarország szétszakad... 2014). Taking all these into account, the third factor we should mention refers to the fact that the struggles of professionals to maintain their middle class positions can make them feel excluded and helpless. Many live in poor material conditions just like their clients and this can easily constitute a fertile soil for scapegoating (Herczog 2001; Szalay 2001; Domszky 1999a). Moreover, actual politics and social policies encourage extreme solutions (see for example public works Csoba 2010a, 2010b, or regulations regarding families when children miss out from school).

The results of research based on qualitative and quantitative methodology show that professionals think that child protection in Hungary confronts serious shortcomings and malfunctions. The system cannot ensure that children's needs are met, planning availability of places is accidental, there are substantial regional differences regarding the level of development of provisions, the system is unable to react to special and particular needs. Many concepts lack clear definition, for example the concept of vulnerability. Professionals think development of foster care is disproportionate compared to other professional provisions, and institutional care has not benefited from

support for development in recent years. Basic child welfare provisioning³² has remained practically untouched since 1997, while prevention is the dominant goal stipulated among legally sanctified aims. However, it is not happening in reality. Professional work lacks proactive methods and means. According to professionals' experience, cooperation is accidental and insufficient on all levels of the system and between all the actors involved. The interviews tell us that prejudiced opinions are gaining momentum, and all these leads to nostalgia of the old regime, and there is an emergence of militaristic ideas in education and rearing. Meanwhile, professionals feel more and more vulnerable both in professional terms and in their private life.

When they are unable to cooperate with families on the margins of child protection,³³ and give effective and proper support for solving real problems, professionals working in child protection choose simple and simplifying solutions, such as blaming families in need and difficulty, emphasizing the harmful actions of families. Of course, they do that partly because they do not assume responsibilities on individual or systemic level, on the level of profession. Professionals in care work have particularly great responsibility in promoting pro-social behavior in the entire society. Combating exclusion and stereotypical thinking while promoting supporting social behavior improve with specification of needs, supporting empathy, teaching and triggering norms regarding aid and help, concentrating responsibility instead of prompting division (Smith–Mackie 2004: 699).

³² The system has been changing from 2016. We do not have knowledge on the operational particularities and professional content after the separation of professional and public authority tasks.

³³ I borrowed the term from Léna Szilvási (2006).

IV.3. THE OPINION OF CHILDREN IN THE PROTECTION SYSTEM ABOUT STATE'S ROLE AS PARENT

In the following, we analyze what children and young adults think about the public aid, help, what kind of developments they would encourage, and their answers to the question of whether the state is a good parent. In this, we use declarations and opinions formulated during the 15th Children's Parliament.

Children's Parliament on social integration

According to article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child every children should have the guaranteed right to freely express their opinion in every issue related to them, and others should consider this opinion according to the age and maturity of the child.³⁴ *"Participation is the process through which young people gain confidence, self-esteem, skills and abilities"* (Dr. Hazai 2014: 359). During participation, the young adults have initiative because they realize that the problem affects the life of a wider group of peers and makes proposals on behalf of others. Participation is a public role (Dr. Hazai 2014). The ethos of the children's parliament is the *"reactive I"* which is reflexive on the life of the children, screens the effects coming from outside, it listens to the *"generalized other"* and receives aid and support from *"significant others"* (Mead 1973). Participation embodies the emancipated actor of late modern times, which has a stable identity, is able to deal with problems, and is resilient, reflexive, and active subject of their own life. On the other hand, child protection is a reflexive institution having proper legal clauses, normative frame, and transparent operations, is able to offer

³⁴ *Gyermekjogokról gyerekeknek* [On the right of the child for children] (2009) (Herczog M., ed.) with the motto *„I have rights, you have rights, he/she has rights ... Every child has the same rights"* Budapest: Család, Gyermek, Ifjúság Egyesület. http://gyermekjogok.ajbh.hu/userfiles/gyermekjogokrol_gyerekeknek.pdf last accessed: 26.08.2015. *Compasito- Manual on Human Rights Education for Children*. (2009) (Flowers, N., ed.), 2nd edition. Budapest: Council of Europe, Directorate of Youth and Sport European Youth Centre. <http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/pdf/Compasito%20EN.pdf> last accessed: 26.08.2015.

ontological security and employs self-reflective professionals who are aware of their work (Rényi et al. 2014: 56). It stands on subjectivation, which requires critical attitude that helps individuals distinguishing themselves from others. The tension on the level of the child protection system arises precisely from the fact that it brings socialization and subjectivity together (Rényi et al. 2014: 38). *“The values of the institutional program – care, equality, scientific progress – were values people considered to be universal in the beginning. Now these values do not anymore constitute the base for working with others. At most, they express the fulfillment of a functional role and not an experience”* (Rényi et al. 2014: 39). Using a social work terminology, the so-called *critical consciousness* related to *empowerment* is the most important personal experience one needs for better seeing factors influencing their life, and to change these. It is a kind of right to state your opinion aloud and to name your own world. *“Critical consciousness means better understanding of our own powerlessness and of systemic forces that keeps us dominated”* (Sadan 2011: 53).

Participation is also the pedagogy of listening, which ensures that people listen to the opinion, perspective of children and create an opportunity to understanding them. Listening is not only about listening to needs and desires. It means paying attention and it means right to an opinion, right to engage in a debate and to question other opinions. Treating children as a vulnerable, powerless group means they are denied the right to express their particular opinions. The extent to which children exercise their role as children depends on how well adults listen to them, on how well embedded pedagogy of listening is in society as an overall perspective (Te One 2011). The first civil report in Hungary appeared in 2013. It reviews the rights of the child and their enforcement in the period of 2006-2013. The civil report is the product of broad cooperation and partnership in which there were many participants such as important organizations, professionals, and child protection experts. Authors also asked children to draw or write about how they see children's rights. (Civil (Alternative) report 2013).

Burns et al. (2010) argue that adults have the moral obligation to involve children and young people in every type of decision-making regarding their life. This is also a legal obligation, but another equally important issue is that this way, meaning through participation, children and young people develop their own independent voice and acquire important skill in decision-making. Not treating children as objects requires listening, quality time spent with them, and promoting processes that aim at understanding what is happening to them while also integrating their thoughts in decision-making (Munro 2010). For example, the Scottish National Care Standard defines clear standards for the participation of children and young people. Children's participation must be meaningful and must overcome the danger of becoming symbolic. The danger is real when adults are not listening to the opinions children and young people voice. It is all the more important for socially excluded groups and victims of discrimination because they have never experienced what is like when others listen to them and when others take into consideration the opinions and experiences they share. Involvement requires that young people believe in their power to bring about change. Others have to avoid using professional jargon, condescending tone because children and young people would like straight talk. Burns et al. (2010) argue that even when we find common ground, efficient communication needs time and energy. One should strive for creative approaches and use IT gadgets as means of communication when approaching children and young persons.

FICE organized the first children's parliament in 2001. There were approximately 40 to 70 children and young adults aged 15 to 20 who participated in the session. They came from children's homes and foster care from all over the country. The sessions host debates on many issues of interest, for example hardships of life in children's homes, the problem of separating siblings through placement, homosexuality in the children's homes, placing underage mothers and their children together, how to use pocket money, claiming and using support for home-making (Dr. Hazai 2014). Children elected delegates to the 15th Children's Parliament through children's governance. Where there are no operational children's governments, delegates are elected in a freely selected procedure. A preparing

session is held before the parliamentary session. Its aim is to prepare delegates for the issues and topics of interest, to form common views, and to elaborate on claims and needs.³⁵ The main topic of the children's parliament was promotion of social integration, the motto of the session was *"To live a full, satisfied, and secure life on our own right."*

Participants approached extremely important topics and they defined the changes successful social integration needs on both individual and systemic level.

Proposals regarding the individual level:

- Opening up professional care toward society and environment through public programs at an early age
- Creating a peer support system, transmitting positive examples toward children in the system
- More intensive implication in home management and activities related to living an independent life
- Acceptance of themselves and their own condition, defining a realistic self-image
- Active exercise of the right to free expression of their opinion

The most important proposals toward their environment and regarding the development of the child protection system are the following:

- Support for programs and forums that promote values children in child protection programs have in order to make these values known for others (raising social sensitivity)
- Support for participation in education, setting the age limit for obligatory education back to the initial 18 years of age, raising the upper

³⁵ The session in the children's parliament was recorded with the consent of the children and organizer professionals. All fragments cited are from this audio material.

limit of aftercare for individuals who are successful in studies for baccalaureate or for vocational studies leading to skills in a craft, according to individual needs

- Training and support for authentic, real professionals
- Support for a system of mentors
- Supporting sport and other recreational activities
- More efficient advocacy and promotion of interest (children's governance, children's parliament) (Major 2014).

Delegates have formulated a series of important systemic developments needed for successful social integration. As we have already suggested earlier, it is of utmost importance to emphasize strengths and talents of children in the care work throughout the child protection system. Positive examples, success stories can have a great contribution in motivating children and young persons (Furnivall–Grant 2014; Rácz 2009). Several studies argue for the importance of building a system of mentors. In this system, a stable person with positive outlook is the proper help for children in catching up in school, improving school performance, and in accessing various services. This relation is built on trust. The mentor is able to stabilize the children even in emotional terms, support them and lead them to an independent life (without the need to rely on a system of support) (LEARNS n.y.). The mentor, or another socially recognized role mediated by the mentor, the work of volunteers and neighbors can contribute to improve, consolidate, or strengthen resilience (Newman–Blackburn 2002). Participants in children's parliament reacted to the need of such mentors or persons. Along with the promotion of success stories, children raised the need for a network of peers in supporting and helping roles for real, authentic information in various topics, for example in addictions. *“(...) my experience tells me that they more readily accept it when it comes from people in the same condition, from authentic persons who really went through all those things and made it, than from someone who learns things from a book, a training course and has learnt about some things, about how these things are done.” “Because I do not want*

to convince them to stop taking drugs. I just tell them facts, I just tell them to look at me, to what I have realized, and I tell them to think about it.”

Both in foster care and in institutional provisioning maintaining contact and relation with the family of origin, strengthening identity are of utmost importance. Several children in child protection system feel that they do belong to no one; they feel rootless. The majority of children and young persons living in child protection confront exclusion and discrimination on a daily basis. Each children's parliament raises the issue of shame; children and young people try to hide their condition; they would like to dismantle the rock hard wall made of negative social images surrounding them (Rácz 2012; Dr. Hazai 2014). Young people do not identify themselves as being part of society. In the sense they retreat, their attitude can be best described by the term *retreatism* coined by Merton (2002). Apathy and passivity are what characterize them the best. Merton argues that people who adapted this way or have not adapted at all, live in society, but do not belong to it. The public child protection system expects *conformity*, meaning acceptance of culturally defined goals and institutional means to meet those goals. Meanwhile, the rights of the child grow on *rebellion* meaning that children struggle for meeting new goals as active subject of the rights of the child. They actively participate in the adult society, but they also shape the institutional system, raise their voice against improper treatment, practices still infused with the myth of a better society. According to the terminology Hirschman (1994) elaborated, child protection system expects loyalty and represent loyalty to the existing power, status quo, while the rights of the child urges voicing and claiming. *“We try, we have an image we always push in front of us, (...) basically we do not have self-confidence and we are emotionally vulnerable.”*

In many instances during their live in the system, children and young people complain that there are separated from their narrower or broader environment, their friends, relatives, their group's traditions, and heritage and therefore is difficult to maintain relations under these conditions. Children speak about the fact that professionals do not inform them about their rights and about the forums that might be of interest for them, and they do not teach them how to

express their opinions. The safety social net is modest also in the case of individuals leaving the care system and in reality they do not have the skills (handling money, house management, looking for a job) and they are not prepared to live an independent life. Many experience aggression, abuse, and neglect in the system and even professionals do not take them seriously. Moreover, they do not have access to certain services (addiction services, child psychiatry) or they have to wait very long for them and get access only after their condition worsens. They have problems in school too; they failures make social integration more difficult. Children and young persons with disabilities have a hard time and a difficult condition, because the majority of them do not have access to proper services, and they are more vulnerable as target groups³⁶ (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010; Rác 2012; Csurgó–Rác 2012).

Several studies show that children wish that professionals gave them emotional and practical support. Hill (1999) has summarized the traits children are looking for in a child protection worker: show willingness to listen, are empathic and reliable, they take necessary measures and action for children, be open to become confident with children, to respect the children and consider them as a full-value person. The incompetent professional, on the contrary, does not listen to children, does not keep promises, has too much power on the life of the children, does not share information with children, does not take into consideration children's opinions (cited in: Oliver 2010: 4). The competent professional consciously contributes to strengthening children's self-confidence, feels the children, and knows when they need care and when they need to be left alone. A relation of trust requires fair treatment (Children for Action 2013). All these require several skills and competences, such as: communication skills (including communication with children with disabilities); ability to share information in accordance with the so-called

³⁶ According to a research carried out in Canada, children with disabilities are overrepresented in children's welfare and child protection systems and the risk to be victims of abuse is twice as high as in case of others. Fifty-five percent has no access to basic provisioning, and the parents' position on the labor force market is worse exactly because of the special needs of their children. The immediate implication is that they live in far worse material conditions (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010: 76).

“you should know” principle; meeting emotional needs; active involvement of children in processes in child protection, collaboration with children in decision making with regard to their program of care and provisioning (Children’s Rights Director for England 2012; Children for Action 2013). *“Do not talk to me like I am a child. Talk to me like I am a person, a human. Ask my opinion, and ask me about how I am doing ... give me some options ...”* *“Give young people the chance to make a decision and to learn from their mistakes”* (Action for Children 2013: 17). There is the need that appeared in the children’s parliament too. Children wish for opportunities and space to give voice to their opinions and to be actively involved in decisions regarding their life.

Delegates stress that they consider continuous training of professionals very important. The same is true for having more male employees in child protection. According to international experience, young people would readily participate in trainings for professionals, in which they address their concerns regarding the type of support they really need directly to professionals (Children’s Rights Director for England 2012). Children living with foster parents say that they would like fewer limitations in the provisioning and more support in keeping contact and relations with their biological parents. In case they return to their families and family-life is not what they expect to be they would like to return to the same foster parents and they wish they can keep contacts and relation with the foster family according to their needs, and would like some kind of support from time to time. According to results in the research about foster parenting,³⁷ children recommend that foster parents should make children feel more supported and being full-value members of the family. They also wish foster parents supported programs outside family (for example sleeping over at a friend’s, going on trips, etc.). They wish they ended up in families with similar religious and ethnic background (Children’s Rights Director for England 2012).

³⁷ A total number of 363 children were interviewed in person and through questionnaires in a research on foster parent provisioning. Sixty percent of them were girls, 28 percent under 11 years of age, and 2 percent over 18 years of age.

The 15th Children's Parliament has reiterated the need for more support for sports and recreational activities. In this sense, children say they do not want sports to be a means of disciplining meaning limitation of sport activities as a kind of punishment:

"(...) not allowing sport should not be a means of disciplining, a punishment. When they would like to spend their time like that or something does not work well in their life, they should not be punished by forbidding them to practice sports, let us say because their school performance is not good."

Delegates referred to the fact that the extent and level of support greatly differ according to regions and type of provisioning (children's home versus foster parenting). Rácz's (2012) research on the support system of young adults over 18 years of age shows that professional support is discretionary since in many cases professionals in child protection decide what kind of support young adults deserve. Moreover, professionals use some sort of implicit selection since even young adults are in doubt about what support are they eligible for.

As the sessions of the 15th Children's Parliament have shown, children and young people can elaborate well-rounded, cogent arguments about the provisions and services they receive. They have a clear image on their situation and they know precisely what kind of individual and systemic change would make them be more successful in social integration. The perspective children and young people employ are of great help in understanding educational processes and demonstrate that young people do not necessarily see things like adults see them. Children have their opinion on their life, the behavior, attitudes, and feelings of their parents and professionals. Their message on exercising their rights addressed to adult society sounds like this: *"Listen to us, see if we need something or not, help us keeping in touch with our families, give us security and keep in mind that we are humans"* (Oliver 2010: 32). The majority of children and young people know what does caring, education, rearing mean, but they would readily learn about it. This is important because their experience with rearing will affect what kind of parents they will become (Madge-Willmott 2007).

Is state a good parent?

I ask this question to 35 young individuals. Fourteen considered that state cannot be seen as a good parent, 11 thought that state is good and bad parent in the same time, eight children said that the state was definitely good parent, and two respondents did not know. Regardless of what they think about the role of state as a parent, the answers indirectly reflect on the operation of child protection system on the one hand. On the other hand, they reflect on social problems through how they interpret operating mechanisms in child protection system.

Positive assessments about state's role as a parent relate mainly to its provisions. The state satisfies the needs children have; it gives them clothing, accommodation, social security, education, talent programs and educational catch-up programs, and assumes the role of surrogate family.

“Of course, there are always things to complain about, not being satisfied with. There are many things to be grateful for. My peers and I have many things to thank for. The state tries to do its best to provide for us, disadvantaged youngsters, to cater for us.”

These functions are put face to face to what their own families give them. They measure the quality of the role the state assumes as parent against how their families work:

“(...) it takes care of children whose families cannot take care of them.”

“I think state is a good parent in the sense that it gives us a chance to become better individuals compared to what our families would make of us.”

Negative opinions suggest several shortcomings in the system. The majority of children think that the system does not adapt to individual needs, does not even take into account individual needs, desires, and plans. Children and youngsters often confront unlawful treatment; for example; they cannot grow up with their siblings. They think the system is unjust, that the system discriminates between children (see for example: Rácz 2012 – “Három T mentalitás,” Three T mentality). The achievements of given individuals during their life in the child protection system greatly depends on

professionals. There are huge differences in the material condition of institutions on the one hand and foster parents on the other hand regarding support for education or leisure activities, as children have aptly shown in the parliamentary session. In this sense, one can raise the question of how the state uses normalization of needs as a means of good governance, how it legitimizes certain consumer goods (Flint–Rowlands 2003, cited in: Szöllősi 2012: 105). Young people think that it cannot compensate for the disadvantages and rules are often unpredictable. Youngsters emphasized that the system was impersonal in its operations and professionals did not strive to know the children they took care of, their traits, skills, capacities, abilities and to adapt their expectation according to what they had learnt about them.

“No!, because there is no equality among children living in public care and the state does not support me in meeting my aims.”

Respondents believe that state is not a good parent because it does not give the support professionals and foster parents need; thus, they greatly limit options and possibilities. Several youngsters think that the state is excessively limiting (limiting love). Although it gives children better social conditions, protects them from abusive families, in too many cases the state is not careful enough, it does not make well-reasoned decisions.

“I think it is not, because they do not pay foster parents properly, the support is not enough. It does not support properly children in the system and in the aftercare program to continue their education, or to enroll in university education.”

“(…) helps children in need according to the possibilities the state has. Places them in the system, re-replaces them to families or places them in other circumstances. Meanwhile it is not very thorough and attentive.”

The state receives negative evaluation mostly in relation with separating children from their parents and with their inability to give love to children.

“It cannot give you the love of a parent. In my opinion, state does not care about the fate of children in public care.”

In this sense, a Scottish youngster declared something similar: *“Social workers give me and my brothers support, but they have not supported my mother. It means that you do not help me, if you do not help her”* (Scottish Government 2010: 56).

Here are the reflections of cutting-edge social criticism from the part of young people:

1) As part of welfare policy or in a much broader sense as part of social policy, child protection is not able to fulfill its function, its role to ensure the harmonious development of children and to promote and support their social integration:

“In my opinion the state cannot be a really “good parent” even if it does everything to be one. A good parent takes care of the material needs of the children, but also of their emotional and spiritual development. Although it likes to present itself as helper and supporter, the state will never understand the thoughts and intentions of young people.”

2) State’s activity in child protection takes place in a social, economic, and political context, which ignores family support:

“No, because they do not take into account the possibilities people have, they ask more and more from them, they collect a lot of taxes while salaries remain the same. National debt is not people’s fault.” “Looking at political criteria, it is my opinion that the state in the 21st century knows nothing but extorting. Taxes collected from people are the solution to everything. No one remains in Hungary if they can leave.”

3) The public system of child protection is not able to contribute to the creation of a positive social image in order to present the condition in which professionals in child protection work and the condition in which children in the system live. It is not able to intervene against discrimination and social exclusion.

“I think state is not a good “parent” because it is simply unable to fulfill the its tasks in reducing social differences.”

Young people think that despite the critical observations just mentioned above, state's role as a parent can be judged only through the people who work in the system. This means that professional work in a formal system rests on informal, personal relations (Domszky 2013). Child protection as formal social institutions was built to support a non-formal social institution. Therefore *“it is an imperfect social institution compared to a family, because even the most advanced, scientifically proven methods and the most comforting provisions cannot possibly make up for the impact that comes from the relation of love and common identity with family members (genetic, psychological, and social) and cannot point beyond the level of satisfaction of immediate needs (compared to standards of needs satisfaction, or the legal minimum of welfare provisioning)”* (Domszky 2011: 4).

Research results suggest that the rights of the child are broken in many cases in child protection. Interventions are accidental and arbitrary. Children and their family of origin are getting lost in the system while even professionals do not know the professional principles they have to follow for doing quality work on the highest possible level. Research results show that decision-makers and managers on the one hand and employees, the children and the youngsters on the other hand think that there is no adequate framework that would ensure professional operation in the system. There is no framework that would serve efficient operation. Professionals and beneficiaries alike think that people in need (children and their families) and the helping personnel get lost in the system, which in turn makes them feel even more excluded and makes visible the disadvantages of the system.

CONCLUSION

Among many other things, scandals in child protection generated the need to come up with standards of practice starting in 1970's. Abuse, sexual exploitation, system abuse, excessive interference in family life, and cases ending with death directed public attention to the issue of professional responsibility. These malfunctions also highlighted dysfunctions in the system of welfare provisions and raised the issue of accountability. All these resulted in a type of operation that instituted more powerful control management, was accountable, and carried considerable more added burden in administration. In the same time, social work has become more and more the servant of politics because of a series of social processes such as the crisis of welfare state, globalization and marketization. Many scholars identify the process as de-professionalization, meaning that the profession has no power or authority to define aims and tasks related to provisioning, and adapt all those to the needs of their clients. Evidence based approaches, systematic data collection, and elaboration of indicators have instituted some sort of safe practice – as warrants of ensuring uniform quality services. In the same time, they suppressed creativity and innovation in service provisioning. They have also relegated individual needs and unique life stories to the background and thus they have enforced impersonal, asocial, and instrumental and defensive practices (Parton–O'Byrne 2000; Meagher–Parton 2004; Marston 2001; Bányai 2008; Hegyesi–Kozma 2002; Lorenz 2003; Szilvási 2006). According to Gilbert et al. (2011) child protection adopted a public and political profile due to intensive media coverage, which Best (1990) describes as *atrocities tales*. Atrocities tales are stories in which the fatal implications of human suffering and child abuse played key roles in bringing change in the system by making these tragedies public and making professionals, managers in child protection, and even politicians accountable (cited in: Gilbert et al. 2011: 245).

Taking into consideration its uneven developmental pace, child protection in Hungary has reached a crossroad. Recently, many scandals in child protection surfaced in the public sphere. They tackled many issues, such as the improper operation of the signaling and identification system, the existing abuses in professional service provisioning, and the fight for leading positions in child protection system, among others.¹ All these show to the public sphere the lack of professional operation and the urgent need for standardized and accountable practices.

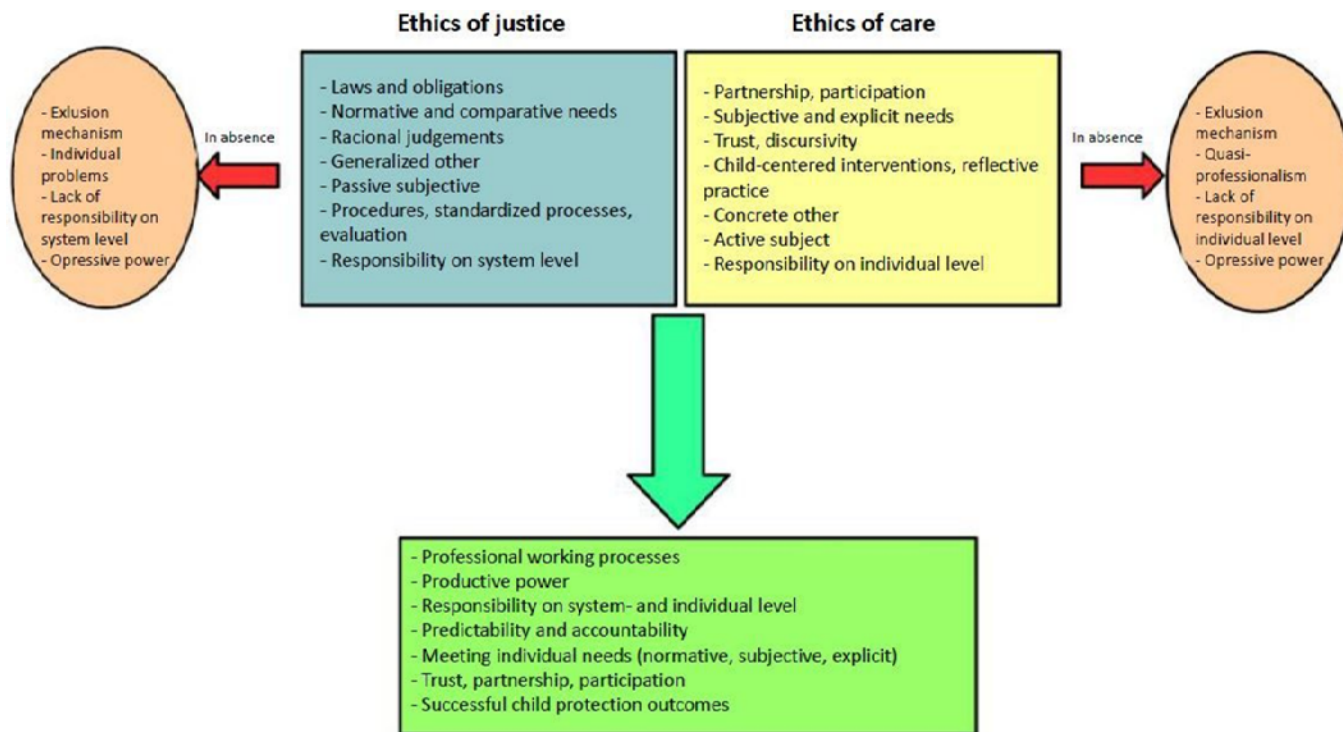
The ethics of justice and the ethics of care together are able to form a complex system in the child protection system, where children appear as active actors. It means that they use Rawls' (1997) so-called "generalized other" in Foucault's sense on the organizational level of government, while Benhabib's (1992)² notion of "concrete other" appears also in Foucault's sense in government interventions that affect personal life management.³ In other words, the ethics of justice and the system of children's rights combined with the formal rules of the child protection system form a framework. On the other hand, the ethics of care represents the totality of professional content created as response to individual needs. Using the notion of concrete other alongside the notion of generalized other can help in treating children's welfare, well-being, and protection together. In other words, responsibility on individual and systemic level, normative, subjective, and explicit needs, formal and informal relation together are forming practices that affect both the system and the individual life and serve the best interest of the children.

¹ Mentioning some of them: child abuse in Szigetszentmiklós (http://index.hu/belfold/2013/11/26/szigetszentmiklos_gyermekbantalmazas/), the story of "light-eater" family (http://index.hu/belfold/2013/04/18/magas_falak_moge_zarva_halt_meg_agardon_a_1_5_eves_fiu/), abuse in children's homes (<http://www.ajbh.hu/kozlemenyek-archiv/-/content/10180/25/megint-a-cseppko-utcai-gyermekotthonrol-%E2%80%93-szervezesi-jogertelmezesi-problema-is-allhattak-egy-bantalmazas-hattereben>) or more on abuse in institutions see (http://www.atv.hu/belfold/20110608_molnar_laszlo), struggle for management positions in the capital city (http://nol.hu/lap/mo/20130712-elhaborodott_a_szakma_a_miniszterium_hallgat?ref=sso).

² Cited work: Benhabib, S. (1992) *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

³ „Generalized other” means that all humans are moral beings and each of is entitled to the same moral rights. On the other hand, „concrete other” means that each moral individual has a unique life story and individual needs, and it derives its meaning from interaction with others (Cockburn 2009: 8).

Figure 4: Systemic approach to child protection



Source: Figure that visually represents my synthesis of theories I have referred to in this work.

Figure 4. summarizes and illustrates how the ethics of justice and the ethics of care form a system and how the approach can lead to desirable outcomes in a child protection system resting on the ideas of good corporate parenting. The rules, duties, standards on one side (in frame) and the relations, emotions, individual thoughts on the other side (as content/method/treatment) complete each other in a helping approach and attitude; they serve professional operation and workings in which predictability is the mean in creating mutual thrust and discourse is the mean of problem-solving based on consensus.

Needs-based approach to the rights of the child carries several dangers. Ignoring subjective and explicit needs is not a promoted child protection practice because, as Woodhead aptly shows, parents, professionals, and service providers/financial supporters are those who define the field of forces in which decisions about the right or proper needs occur. Therefore, children can easily be overlooked in the process (cited in: Cockburn 2009: 15). In Hungarian practice, usually the accessible services create problems in child protection. This means that developments do not appear in inverted logic.

In my opinion, fragmentation in child protection as social institution appears because child protection chooses the second alternative from the available ones in trying to address late modern challenges. In other words, it goes astray when choosing new ways of exercising power, attributes all responsibility to individuals, blames families, and in many cases excludes children and young adults from the exact services they should receive. In trying to transform inner structures, it ignores individual needs' satisfaction and an existing frame of professional operation. On systemic level, it does not reflect on performing well-defined system functions, using various types of accountability, measuring output in order to ensure the protection and enforcement of the rights of child. It does not even recognize that all these are required for good operation.

The challenge is to find a balance in the future. To transform the system of child protection care in a strengthening one, in the sense of the term Fox⁴

⁴ Fox coined the concept of care for other domains, not for the area of child protection interventions.

attributes to caring. In this view, enabling is dominant, but there is also control, which is required in every organized operation, but serves productive exercise of power (cited in: Cockburn 2009: 13).⁵ The distinct but nevertheless connected phases of care show the possibilities for using the two types of ethics. The first is the *phase of care*, which acknowledges the need for care, while the second phase represents the dimension of *assuming responsibility for satisfying the need for care*. The third one aims at mobilizing adequate resources for *providing competent caring work*, while the fourth phase comprise the *acceptance of care* based on trust and in hope of good results⁶ (Tronto 1993; Vida 2007). All these presuppose that the pragmatic discourse and ethical discourse complete each other because freeing up individual life stories and particular forms of life are a mean to legitimize the idea that all humans are entitled to equal respect and all members of society are equally entitled to universal solidarity (Habermas 2001: 228). On the level of the institutional system, it means that child protection promotes emancipated actors, and democratic control and transparency form the desired base for operating the system. Thus, emancipation turns child protection as fragmented social institutions into reflexive institution. In the absence of all these, power is repressive, the operation of the system quasi-professional, and we witness the domination of exclusionary mechanisms.

⁵ This approach came out in the *IX European Forum on the Rights of the Child*. The developments Mária Herczog suggests contain among others early prevention, support for positive parenting, social educational activities regarding the rights of the child, data collection, surveys (European Commission 2015: 21-22).

⁶ However, we should note that the asymmetrical dependency relation and repressive relation between caretaker and beneficiary is a relevant topic in the public child protection system too. This type of relation is contrary to professional work in child protection (see for example Cockburn 2009; Rácz 2012).

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I am interested in the nature and objectives of child protection, as a social institution as well as in the ways of implementation of these objectives. The aim of the research entitled *Is the State a Good Parent?* is to examine principles and professional conceptions determining practical work in the field of corporate parenting and responsibility undertaking. On the basis of the quantitative and qualitative results of the research, I will treat issues of development needs in child protection system which would ensure professionalism on long term. A multidimensional framework for interpreting interventions focused on the functioning of the family and targeting children will also be presented. I argue that child protection system should be developed within the conceptual framework of productive power, along the simultaneous application of the ethics of justice and ethics of care. The notions of the ethics of justice and ethics of care are able to form together a complex system within child protection system, in which children would be regarded as active players.



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