

Neighborhood and Community – Emerging Problems and Recollecting Solutions in the National Conferences of Charities and Corrections (US) from 1880 to 1935

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Community organization is regarded as one of the foundational methods and theoretical strands in social work. Roots of community organization are typically searched and found in the settlement house movement which emerged in the 1880s in the industrial capitals of the Western world. A detailed analysis of the settlement house approach and the contributions of the National Conferences of Charity and Corrections (NCCC) reveal a different picture. Before the establishment of the classic four pillars of U.S. social work (social case work, social group work, community organization and social action) within the NCCC in 1935, an analysis of the organization of panels and of talks displays the interconnection of several discourses and approaches that discuss the meaning of neighborhood and community for social work. Our analyses of appearances of key terms and topics in focal papers are able to show why communities and neighborhoods appear both as emerging problems in big cities of the industrialized world, but also as centers of the solutions. Against the background of these results this presentation makes a case for a non-linear perspective on historical developments in social work that is able to illuminate interconnections and interferences of seemingly disparate strands in social work. This results in new perspectives on today's community and neighborhood work and opens up discussions about future developments in this field.

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