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On the cover: 'The Almoner of the Great Northern Hospital at work'. The Hospital and health review, 1921. (Wellcome Collection). In this issue, Mike Burt discusses 'Almoners' departments: From the monastery to the NHS'.

About the Social Work History Network

The Social Work History Network (SWHN) exists to explore the nature and growth of social work in order to inform contemporary policy and practice. Founded in 2000, it is an informal network of social workers, historians, archivists, researchers, educators, students, and social work policymakers. The Network meets three or four times a year in the United Kingdom to discuss papers given by invited speakers. Meetings are open to all. The *Bulletin of the Social Work History Network* is an e-journal: it is available on the Network website and via email to those on the mailing list.

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Transfer of knowledge: A case study of two Viennese social workers in British exile

Irene Messinger



The history of knowledge concerns itself with practices, institutions and places of knowledge production as well as the circulation of knowledge and how it is transformed by these processes. By placing knowledge – and not science – into the centre of historical research, and thereby not limiting itself to academic knowledge, new perspectives for research open up taking a broad spectrum of forms of knowledge into account. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the history of knowledge has developed into a distinct scientific approach. Although not an entirely new concept, it is due to

the prolific work being done in the field, especially by historians, that conferences were organised, institutional bodies emerged, and a whole range of studies and journals appeared (see for an overview on the history of knowledge: Westermann & Erdur 2020, Östling et al 2018, Lässig 2016, Burke 2016).

The concept of migrating knowledge merges two major trends in modern history: the history of knowledge and the history of exile (Korbel and Strobl 2021: 6). Exile studies in Austria deal with refugees who were persecuted and expelled by the Nazi regime in Austria from 1938 onwards. Findings show that the reception of the refugees coming from the fields of arts and science (among others) has not only enriched professional and intellectual discourses in the UK. It has also led to a mutual stimulation that brought about lasting changes beyond merely adding new concepts to already existing debates. It is crucial to keep in mind that, in general, the history of exile is rarely a history of success stories. Quite often, the attempt to infuse knowledge into an already existing field failed, and many concepts, along with the memory of those who thought about them, “subsequently vanished from the stage of history” (Strobl 2019).

In the social professions, the radical rupture caused by the Nazi regime was analysed in studies on expelled Austrian sociologists and other social scientists (cf. Fleck 2011, Fleck 2015). Especially for the few young female students and graduates from universities in Austria, new opportunities opened up in exile. They were able to develop careers in English-speaking countries, for example in psychology, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, which would never have been possible in Austria (Keintzel and Korotin 2002). There are still a few professions for whom the consequences of expulsion have not yet been studied, such as social workers. This research gap has yet to be closed. I am working on a publication of 50 short biographies on persecuted social workers from Vienna, which will be published in 2023.

In this essay, I will discuss two case studies of social workers who were expelled from Vienna as Jews and found refuge in England in 1939. Their names are Marianne Prager and Elsa Donath, later

Martínez.¹ For the topic of 'migrating knowledge', biographies gained importance as they are seen "as a prism for explaining transnational knowledge transfers" (Strobl 2019). This article takes an approach that is actor-centred and stands in a tradition of writing "history-from-below". Therefore, I do not aim to show the – by all accounts – great influence exiles as a whole had on British social work history. Staying with the two cases presented, this essay will explore the preconditions under which Marianne Prager and Elsa Donath acquired their skills in professional social work in Vienna and how their knowledge was eventually discarded by the authorities. Another focus is on how those skills were accepted (or not) in the UK and how the transformation and adaptation of knowledge and experience took place.

Like many other disciplines, the social sciences have also been concerned with conceptions of knowledge. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986), for example, had important insights with his key concepts of forms of capital, i.e. economic, social, symbolical and cultural capital. Bourdieu maintains that cultural capital forms the foundation of social life and dictated one's position within the social order. He distinguishes between three types of cultural capital: the objective (e.g. cultural goods, books), the embodied (such as culture, tradition and language, including one's accent or dialect), and the institutionalised capital (like qualifications, education credentials, university degrees) (Bourdieu 1986). In contrast to economic capital with a relatively stable exchange value, the value of cultural capital has to be renegotiated after migrants leave their countries of origin (Korbel and Strobl 2021, Lässig 2016) Bourdieu's basic assumptions on the cultural capital therefore seem suitable for understanding the changes in knowledge, the migrant knowledge and on migrants as agents of knowledge.

This essay reflects on four biographical phases in the two life stories studied: the first deals with the acquisition of knowledge during Prager and Donath's vocational training in Vienna; the second phase examines the devaluation of knowledge through persecution, dismissal, expulsion and flight; the third phase describes arrival and reorientation; and, finally, the fourth focuses on long-term consequences of exile, namely the question of citizenship and the struggle of finding a job in the skilled profession of social worker in England.

Phase 1: Acquisition of knowledge

In Austria, social work began to develop as a profession in the 1920s, after the troubled founding of the Republic of Austria in 1918 and during the interwar period. The so-called "Red Vienna" was key in the formation of welfare work, building on international developments.

Indeed, Vienna was something like the birthplace for social work in Austria. The two welfare workers portrayed in this article were both born in Vienna, as most of the welfare workers who would later work here. Especially in Red Vienna (Schwarz et al 2019), a lot of (new) fields of activity opened up. In addition, the largest Jewish community in Austria was also located in Vienna and maintained numerous charitable associations (Malleier 2003).

Both welfare workers investigated in this article were female. The women's movement at the beginning of the last century sought professional opportunities for women who wanted to or had to pursue paid work. Welfare work was regarded as being the right kind of occupation for middle-class

¹ Biographical research is so much richer thanks to the documents carefully kept by relatives in private archives. I would like to thank Libertad Navarro, Elsa Martínez's daughter and David Prager, Marianne Prager's nephew, for the documents and photos they provided me with and for their permission to publish them.

women. It was a young and emerging profession. With the institutionalisation of the welfare system came the need for professional training.

The founding of schools to create and impart knowledge was necessary for the self-image of the young profession. The curricula of every social work school included medical, legal and social, psychological and educational, as well as general subjects. Both in theory and practice, the focus was on youth and family work, especially infant care (Wolfgruber 1997). In the 1920s and 30s several schools for social work existed next to each other (for an overview: Steinhauser 1993). The monarchy's first welfare school was initiated in Vienna in 1912 by Ilse Arlt, the Austrian pioneer of poverty and welfare research based social work theory (Maiss 2013). In 1916, the catholic social school for women was founded. The third school to open its doors was the Municipal Academy for Social Administration by the City of Vienna, founded in 1918. In addition, there were four more courses in other Austrian cities. Two schools in Vienna, Ilse Arlt's and the Catholic one, required a Matura (equivalent to the UK A level) for admission which was usually obtained after the 12th year in school. Therefore, these courses were primarily attended by daughters from middle-class families.

The first of the two welfare workers, Marianne Prager, was born in 1902 in Vienna. She was the daughter of an imperial and royal police doctor and lived with her parents and her brother in Vienna. After graduating, she attended the newly founded Ilse Arlt School.² The main account of Prager's life used in my research is the manuscript of a lecture she gave in 1975 (cited as "Prager 1982"). Here she talks, among other things, about her vocational training in Vienna, London, and Manchester.

The welfare department of the City of Vienna offered women without a Matura certificate the opportunity to attend training as social workers while already working in the field as an assistant social worker. The trained seamstress Elsa Donath, born in 1906 as the daughter of a tailor, lived with her parents and two brothers. She completed courses in stenography and typing. From 1927 she worked for the City of Vienna as an assistant welfare worker and completed her training as a welfare worker while working. In 1932, Elsa Donath was employed as a permanent civil servant. The City of Vienna usually offered these permanent positions after five years of service, the precondition being a certificate from one of the recognized schools for social work. An exceptional achievement in Donath's educational biography is the Matura certificate she took externally in 1934. This qualification made a promotion possible. She became a chief social worker and earned a salary raise. The certificate increased her institutionalised cultural capital and offered her a career.



Elsa Donath (third from the left) with three female colleagues in a district youth welfare office in Vienna, summer 1930.

² Ilse Arlt is not mentioned by name, but Prager describes the director of the first social work school as a charismatic person who was well-networked internationally, especially with England, and who followed practice there, which clearly points to Ilse Arlt's school. She wrote about the training: "It was in its pioneering stages and we students cooperated eagerly in widening the scope and function of the new profession" (Prager 1982: 5).

Yet, to convert the knowledge gained during training into a permanent job and a secure future seemed difficult at best, especially after graduation. Marianne Prager's fear which she shared with her colleagues was "that the various organisations who were willing to employ us did not have the means to pay salaries" (Prager 1982:7). She was unable to find a suitable half-time job as a welfare worker so she, eventually, switched fields and started working as an office assistant. Starting 1924,



Marianne Prager's Lele Bondi Home with three girls in front of the name plate, 1930.

she organized holiday camps and, later, was in charge of the whole project. From 1928 Marianne Prager ran the Lele Bondi Home – she even took residence there herself. It was the home of 25 Jewish girls from the age of ten to fourteen, all of them had no parents to take care of them (Prager 1982: 9-11).

The Viennese Jewish community maintained a highly developed social welfare system. Jewish charity has had a long tradition in which especially middle-class Jewish women played an important role (Malleier 2003). The *Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien* (IKG Vienna) itself had a welfare office that offered support for poor Jewish people: it ran 13 children's homes, seven day-care centres for children etc. Additionally, there were hundreds of private organisations. In 1938, approximately 560 to 600 Jewish welfare associations were registered in Austria. Out of the 53 welfare associations for women, 48 were headed by Jewish women (Duizend-Jensen, 2002: 28). It, therefore, was

not unusual for a woman to head an institution, especially a home for girls. Also, the welfare department of the IKG Vienna was mainly run by women in the 1930s (Hecht, Lappin-Eppel, Raggam-Blesch 2017).

Still, gender inequality was always an issue in the field of social work, especially when it came to leading positions within the administration of the City of Vienna. While women with lower salaries were working in the field, the important decisions were made by much better paid male superiors in the offices. The female welfare workers of the City of Vienna mainly worked in hands-on roles. It was they who were in contact with young mothers, families, schools, and health institutions. Based on their interviews, written observations, and documentation, it is safe to say that it was male senior officials who then decided on the cases as well as on broader social policies, including the allocation and distribution of resources.

By looking at individual biographies and archival material we can catch a glimpse of the working conditions of social workers during the interwar period. For example, Marianne Prager documented the everyday life in her home for Jewish girls in a private photo album. Here we find pictures taken during the Purim celebrations, documenting extended hikes, or ski trips. As there were only a few staff members working in the *Lele-Bondi Heim*, she adapted her socio-educational concept accordingly. Girls were expected to take on a lot of responsibility in the home: everyone worked together, the older girls guided the younger ones.

In summary, Marianne Prager and Elsa Donath both had training as welfare workers, and by spring 1938, both had leading positions in their respective institutions with more than ten years' experience as social workers in Vienna.

Phase 2: Persecution, expulsion and devaluation of knowledge

The increased attention directed towards the social question in Vienna was ended or at least altered following the events of the Austrian civil war in February 1934 and, later, by National-Socialism which came to power in March 1938.

Shortly after the conflict in 1934, the socialist party was declared illegal, all institutions associated with it were closed down indefinitely and everyone working in them were dismissed instantly. Because of the rise of anti-Semitism some Jewish welfare workers even emigrated to Palestine. Later, during the Nazi rule in 1938, nearly all Jewish welfare institutions were destroyed by the Nazis and all employees were dismissed (Duizend-Jensen 2002). Those working for the City of Vienna – even if only one grandparent was born Jewish – lost their jobs. However, some of them who had been in service for a longer period of time could not be dismissed so easily. They were forced into early retirement with extremely low pensions.

This was also the case with Elsa Donath who was dismissed at the end of March 1938, at the age of 31. Her training as a welfare worker and her experience of eleven years in the field became worthless overnight. On a personal level, she was robbed of her professional identity, which was not easy to digest. Her daughter told the author of this article, that recalling those memories caused her much pain also later in life, so she chose not to speak about it.

Leaving social work was also painful for Marianne Prager. Giving up the home she had run for ten years and “to leave dear relatives and friends behind” was “terrible” for her. When she knew she would not be able to keep her job, she wrote a letter to her employers, stating that she was leaving “with great regret” because she had performed in her job for “so long and with pleasure”.³ Later the same year, friends organised a visa to England (Prager 1982: 14). She never learned about what happened to the Jewish girls she had to leave behind.

Elsa Donath and Marianne Prager came from Jewish families that were not very religious. Both were persecuted because they were classified as Jews by the Nazi regime. They were, therefore, driven into exile like some 130,000 other Austrians, most of them also Jewish. Both women survived and found refuge in England, thereby avoiding becoming one of the approximately 64,500 Austrian victims of the Shoah. As elsewhere, so in the field of social work, racist classifications were not the only reasons for persecution; among those expelled were women who had engaged in political resistance against the regime. Some were even persecuted for both reasons: they had been defined as Jews *and* political enemies (e.g., as members of the Communist or Socialist Party). The knowledge of those female social workers who were murdered by the Nazi regime is lost forever. The survivors not only had to make do without a job but were also robbed of part of their cultural capital. They lost their institutionalised cultural capital in Vienna when their formal education was devalued, and they had to leave behind their objective (physical) cultural capital, i.e. books. Additionally, the Nazi state took over most of the refugees’ private assets when they were finally forced to emigrate (Anderl, Rupnow, Wenck, 2004).

Those who wanted to emigrate faced several problems at the same time: they had to find a host country willing to accept them and they had to fund and organise the journey. After the USA and Palestine, Great Britain became the most important country of exile for refugees from Austria. In April 1938, the British government introduced a visa system to control the number of refugees. Only

³ This letter from Marianne Prager to the Board of Trustees of the L.D. Königsberg Foundation Lele Bondi Home dated 23.7.1938 can be found in the archives of the IKG Vienna.

those determined to be “worthy” under Britain’s policy, e.g. academics, scientists, and entrepreneurs, could secure themselves one of the precious slots allowing entry (London 2000).

In Vienna, starting in the early summer of 1938, Jews could fill out a questionnaire for emigration at the Office for Jewish Emigration. In those questionnaires, the head of the household had to provide information about himself and his family members, including (previous) occupations. This information could be decisive in determining whether a possible country of exile would accept a person or not.

The emigration questionnaire of Elsa Donath’s younger sister, Irma Donath, from May 1938 shows that she was aware of the value of knowledge and what kind of professions were relevant and in demand. In this emigration questionnaire, Elsa Donath was presented as a “caregiver and cook”. Irma Donath described herself – although she was a paralegal – as a “shop assistant and cook”. The biography of the two sisters was quite craftily modified in order to increase their chances of emigration. Qualifications which were in high demand in the most promising host countries had to be learned rather quickly. Consequently, Elsa Donath did a one-month internship in a vegetarian cooking school in 1938.

Before Elsa Donath fled to the UK, she found a job in Leipzig in June 1938 as a welfare worker for the Leipzig Jewish community and as the head of their children’s nursery. In her service certificate, it was positively emphasised that she “has experience in public welfare”. In this job in social work, her professional experience from Austria – at that time already within the German Reich – was highlighted and recognised, and probably the reason why she was offered this job in the first place. Here, her institutionalised cultural capital and her experience had not yet lost its value.

Phase 3: Arrival, reorientation

Most refugees who had experienced loss and expulsion had difficulties establishing themselves in British society. Both Marianne Prager and Elsa Donath arrived in London in the spring of 1939, in February and May respectively. This was only a few months before leaving the Third Reich was no longer an option, at least not legally. However, both had to start anew in a foreign place, and with the devaluation of their cultural capital. Working in the field of social work again was difficult for Elsa Donath and Marianne Prager: generally, refugees were officially not allowed to work, although it was legal for some specific professions. The majority of female refugees who immigrated to Britain during this period came as domestic servants and had to stick to that profession. There was also a demand for other care work, such as child care or midwifery.

In the process of arriving, the value of cultural capital and knowledge had to be renegotiated in the new host society (Strobl 2019). British social work education was university-based. Therefore, the Viennese programmes were not regarded as equivalent. Donath’s and Prager’s practical experience was extensive without doubt; still, they could not get credit or nostrification for their training in social work and they were not recognized as full social workers initially.

With the support of a Jewish refugee aid organisation, Elsa Donath began training as a midwife just one month after her arrival. She started working in the maternity hospital in Hull and in Gainsborough. However, she was quite unhappy with her occupation and with living in a very rural

area.⁴ Elsa Donath unsuccessfully applied for a transfer to London several times and moved to London on her own in the summer of 1940. But she was unable to find work in the field of social work, despite her many years of experience. After her marriage in 1941,⁵ Elsa Donath, now Elsa Martínez, considered how she could further develop professionally and in social work more specifically. Numerous documents in her estate bear witness to this, for example the collected syllabi of the Social Work courses at the London School of Economics and Political Science and for Social Studies at Bedford College. She was unable to subscribe to any of them to gain new formal knowledge and institutional cultural capital in exile. Instead, she intensively learned English and Spanish as an autodidact.



Elsa Martínez in front of her house in London, 1957.

Similarly, Marianne Prager had to rely on support provided by refugee aid organizations in securing a job as the head of a refugee shelter in Stockport, starting in April 1939. The home offered room to nine refugee boys who had fled from the Nazi regime. Marianne Prager looked forward to looking after the school children; however, they turned out to be young men, 16 to 17 years old, who wanted to work. So she made friends with people in the area who helped her find jobs for the boys (Prager 1982: 15-18). She quickly had to adapt to working with a different group of clients and changing to a more outgoing community-focused work. After more than a year, in the summer of 1940, the home was closed because the young men were incarcerated as ‘enemy aliens’.⁶ When working with these young people, speaking German and being familiar with the cultural context of her clients was highly valuable. This embodied cultural capital she made use of in working with refugees improved her chances of entering the sphere of social work again.



Marianne Prager (second from left, looking down) hiking in the Peak District near Stockport, ca. 1940.

For the next two years, Marianne Prager ran a home in Manchester. According to her, she was looking for opportunities for further training: “I went to classes and lectures and began to review my position. Now that I was here in the country from which social work as a profession originated, I thought to do something to improve my standard of work” (Prager 1982: 18). Having heard a lot about the British tradition of social work at Ilse Arlt’s school, she obviously saw her exile in the UK as an opportunity to deepen her

4 Elsa Donath discussed this in various letters in 1939. Her mother, in a letter from August, referred to her complaints and recommended her the new training, as it could offer her more opportunities in exile than social work.

5 Elsa Donath married a fugitive from the Spanish Civil War, Antonio Martínez, a butcher eight years her junior, in Hampstead, London.

6 The vast majority of those interned in Britain were (mainly male) refugees up to 60 years of age, who then lived behind barbed wire for months and years: see Pistol 2017.

education. But since the two-year training in social work was financially out of reach, she decided to take a three-month course as a youth club leader in London (Prager 1982: 18-20). By 1942, several courses for working with the youth were offered in England. They existed at five universities and several independent youth institutions and had been formally recognised by the state. The degrees thus represented the beginning of the professionalisation of youth work, which until then had been primarily based on voluntary work (Bradford 2007). Prager realized that she could not simply transfer her knowledge and cultural capital, and therefore wanted to 'institutionalise' it. "It was lovely to be a student again," Marianne Prager stated in retrospect.

For a few months she was a youth worker in Marylebone in London, before taking on a different job in Manchester, this time as a social worker at the Refugee Children's Movement. She describes her home visits to foster families in the countryside and her work in a team of social workers as very educational; still, after two years the position was terminated (Prager 1982, 20). The start of her career was marked by precarious working conditions. Through her formal training in the social sector, she was able to work in social work again. However, despite her knowledge, she was far from a leadership position that she had held in her home country.

Elsa Donath, now Martínez, started working in a children's home, the Hampstead Nurseries, in August 1942. Although she had to labour in the laundry at first, she was still happy to have found a job. She worked there until May 1944 and could not use her social work skills directly. She quit the job because of her pregnancy and then devoted herself to her daughter.

Both women had to leave beloved family members behind. Very few countries of exile accepted elderly people. In May 1946, Elsa Martínez learned of the fate of her parents and brothers. She kept numerous letters from them sent in the period from 1939 to 1942, during which time they had sought refuge in Belgium. From there they were deported to the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1942 and killed. In 1940, Marianne Prager's widowed mother had died in Vienna of an untreated illness; obviously, Marianne Prager could not take part in the funeral ceremony. It can be assumed that both women were mourning their family and their time in Vienna during the phase of reorientation in the country of exile. With no family roots left in their hometown of Vienna, their decision to stay in England came almost naturally. They broke with their country of origin, Austria, and had hardly any ties with Vienna even after the war.

Phase 4: Becoming British social workers

Many refugees became British citizens as soon as they were allowed to (which was no earlier than 1946). Marianne Prager obtained British citizenship in 1947. When she was looking for a job, she made use of her network in the field of psychiatric social work. Some of her friends were involved in the aftercare of war returnees with mental health problems. They offered her a job and she accepted. In the summer of 1948, she attended a Mental Health Course, recommended to her by her mentor. After a year and a half in London, she returned to Manchester where she worked at the Springfield Hospital until her retirement in 1971 (Prager 1982: 20-22).

Elsa Martínez (Donath) remained in England as well and became a British citizen in 1950, together with her daughter Libertad. When her daughter was grown up Elsa Martínez started working again in 1962. She worked in a home for orphans; after a few years she worked the night shifts there. She worked in this institution until she retired. She died in London in 1986. She hardly spoke about her murdered family and never visited Vienna after the war.

Marianne Prager made a one-week visit to Vienna in 1964, accompanied by her nephew David Prager. She died in Manchester in 1982 at the age of 80. Marianne Prager was quite aware of the knowledge and skills she had acquired in the early phase of her career as a professional social worker in Vienna. At some point, she gave a talk about her time as a social worker at the Springfield Hospital. Unfortunately, the manuscript has been lost. However, another lecture Marianne Prager gave at the Manchester Women's Group on the 4th July 1957, was archived. Clearly, Prager took great interest in passing on her memories regarding the history of social work and, more specifically, her own role in it.

Concluding remarks

The goal of this article was to use two case studies of social workers from Vienna in order to discuss the changing value of their cultural capital. Both Jewish female social workers had been educated in Vienna and, after their expulsion, engaged in British social work. Of course, two case studies of refugees are not representative of the thousands of women working in the care profession who were displaced from Vienna in the 1930s. But one may observe from these life stories how knowledge transfer took place and, perhaps, there are even lessons to be learned concerning present-day refugee experiences.

This essay has shown that both women had attained high positions in social work in Vienna, partly thanks to their professional training. Both of them were in their thirties when they were dismissed in 1938. They had no choice but to be robbed of their economic and objective cultural capital by the Nazi regime, but as successful social work professionals of many years' standing, they still retained their embodied and institutionalised cultural capital. In trying to find a safe country of exile one has to know about the professional needs there and to meet them, e.g. by changing one's CV as a survival strategy. In the end, both succeeded in coming to England.

There they had to convince their new host society of the importance and the value of their cultural capital and knowledge. Both women got their first jobs in the social sector through the help of refugee aid organisations. This shows the significance of support services helping new arrivals to establish themselves and, where possible, getting their previous experiences acknowledged. As mentioned by Prager, mentoring provision in institutions was also instrumental in encouraging individuals to go into further education.

After successfully arriving in exile, the language barrier posed a significant problem in re-establishing oneself as a social worker. Translation became an "existential question" in the "in-between space", as only those who could adequately translate and contribute their ideas and knowledge were given a voice (Korbel and Strobl 2021: 12). The work with German-speaking clients who fled to the UK was a good opportunity to make up for this lack of language proficiency. The embodied cultural capital of language was an advantage here. Quite often, refugees have been employed as "cultural brokers" – they were hired because of their language and "cultural" skills while other qualifications were simply ignored. The experience as a social worker they had was not appreciated and recognised.

The history of knowledge is interested "in knowledge that has been communicated in writing, orally, and through objects" (Lässig 2016: 40). All three types of sources can be found in the legacies of the two social workers, be it letters, family memories or photos. With the biographical approach and especially with the help of relatives who preserved their estate, new sources for tracing the knowledge and education can be found. Both Prager and Donath were looking for new educational opportunities. The collection of syllabi of different training programs offer insight into strategies

refugees applied to find ways of further education. Both decided, based on financial limitations and personal responsibilities, not to enrol in another social work programme. A support programme for refugee students would have enabled them to study in their new home country properly instead of merely attending short courses in related fields. This would have allowed them to update their knowledge and to have it institutionally recognised by way of a diploma.

Still, they could apply previously acquired skills in their host countries, albeit with difficulties. Both women found access to social work again. Age probably played a role in this. Prager, who remained childless and entered social work very quickly, was able to successfully establish herself professionally in the field of psychiatric social work. Elsa Martínez was in her late fifties when she returned to social work and was able to find a job working the night shift at an orphanage. The material found in her estate clearly shows how she did try to re-establish herself as a social worker in the UK. However, she could not pursue this plan any further. Finding the way back to one's original profession and gaining knowledge in social work may take different paths. What we can learn for today is that it is necessary to make re-entry easier for refugees who have worked in that field.

The understanding of what constitutes migrant knowledge and how it is valued, depends on the socio-cultural environment in the host countries. Welcoming conditions are needed for the transfer of knowledge and its translation to take place (Korbel and Strobl 2021). Historical cases may help us understand how refugees can make use of their knowledge and cultural capital, by adapting it when necessary and connecting it to their experiences in exile, but also what has prevented them from transforming their knowledge. It is fair to say that insights gained from studying the history of knowledge of displaced and exiled persons during this specific historic period also holds value today.

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