

## Social Work in Chile: A century of trajectory

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*“The past is everywhere. [...] Relics, stories and memories cover the human experience. In the long run all the particular traces of the past eventually perish; however, if we consider them together they are immortal.”*  
Lowenthal.

Close to a century since the emergence of Social Work in Chile and Latin America, the book “Social Work in Chile a century of trajectory”, is an invitation to reread Social Work in Chile from memory. It immerses us in a disciplinary historical journey, from a plural framework.

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When we wish to approach the exploration of a text, as we do with the phenomena in the social sciences, we must first look into its meaning. That is to say, we must ask ourselves about its foundational elements, or rather, we must answer the question of what gave rise to its emergence. In this sense, the book was born at the time of the re-foundation of the Social Work career at the University of Chile, and it is through it -as a symbol- that we seek to materialize the trajectory and meaning of the discipline through time.

The resurgence of the discipline of Social Work at the University of Chile in 2014 is undoubtedly a milestone for the profession in our country. We could well say that it marks the end of the dictatorship for the discipline, since despite the years of “recovery of democracy in Chile” in the nineties, only fourteen years later the career was reopened in the emblematic state university. In this sense, this reopening symbolizes the end of a dark period for the discipline. With the advent of the dictatorial regime, the closure, imprisonment, exoneration and disappearance of students, academics and professionals

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of the university, together with the termination - by decree - of our life as a university profession, helped to exterminate social work.

Thus, the reopening of the career at the University of Chile, in 2014, is a symbol of disciplinary rebirth. However, the challenge of the protagonists of this event was not only to return to “being”, but also to unearth the history, to situate it and from it, to rebuild.

In this sense, the text coordinated and edited by Paula Vidal Molina, academic and researcher at the University of Chile, seeks to collect our disciplinary memory. It is a book that anchors us, so as not to forget who we social workers have been in Chile. An unknown past fills knowledge with uncertainty; on the other hand, trajectories order and give meaning and identities. In this way, the authors of the different chapters of the book collect the comings and goings, pluralities and dissidences, in which we have lived as a discipline for more than ninety years.

I visualize two central elements that articulate the book. Context and memory, from both of which the discipline is reviewed and revisited. On the other hand, context always emerges for Social Work as an element that challenges us. The social, political and economic frameworks that cross-cut our societies through time, have summoned us again and again to “rethink” our discipline. On the other hand, situated memory allows us to revisit the past, reread it and sometimes even rewrite it. Forgetting, on the other hand, fills us with uncertainty. Memory sifts the present as a mantle of meaning on which it is possible to continue the path, so the book “Social Work in Chile: a century of trajectory” is an invitation to continue writing our history, inscribed in a past that identifies us and from which it is always possible to rebuild ourselves.

