



FSD

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
Faculty of Social Work

Book of abstracts

**Social Work International Scientific Symposium,
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work, Topniška 31, Ljubljana
November 7–8 2025**

The Resisting Force of Social Work: Current Reflections in Critical and Historical Perspective



The Resisting Force of Social Work and Current Reflections in Critical and Historical Perspective: Book of Abstracts

Editors: Darja Zaviršek and Hana Turšič

Reviewers: Mojca Urek, Vera Grebenc and Ana M. Sobočan

Foreword author: Darja Zaviršek

Published by: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work

Funding: Partially co-funded by EUTOPIA and the University of Ljubljana's stable funding provided by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

Cover photograph: Students of social work at the statue of national hero Tone Tomšič around 1959, behind which is the College of Social Workers in Ljubljana. Kept by: Rezka Rešek. Reference to the photo: Zaviršek & Pistotnik eds. (2025). Social Work Communities in Slovenia, 1955-2025: Selected Topics. <https://doi.org/10.51741/9789612975623>

Back cover photograph: Women's work in the Women's Antifascist Front. Women gathered at a Slovenian Women's Antifascist Front reading circle in the Barje area. Ljubljana, 14 May 1948. Photo: Zvone Mahovič, inv. no.: FS4358/1. Held by: Museum of Recent and Contemporary History of Slovenia.

Ljubljana, November 2025

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

[COBISS.SI](https://cobiss.si)-ID [255906307](https://cobiss.si)

ISBN 978-961-6569-84-2 (PDF)



EUTOPIA



CONTENTS

Committees	3
Introduction: Darja Zaviršek: It didn't last just a few years! Celebration of the 70th anniversary of social work education in Slovenia	4
List of speakers	7
Abstracts	8
Notes	47

COMMITTEES

Conference scientific committee

Professor Darja Zaviršek, chair

Associate Professor Mojca Urek, dean

Associate Professor Ana M. Sobočan, vice dean of studies

Assistant Professor Vera Grebenc, vice-dean for quality assurance, international cooperation and development

Conference organisation committee

Hana Turšič, teaching assistant, chair

Anže Jurček, teaching assistant

Klara Mestek, teaching assistant

Assistant professor Sara Pistotnik

INTRODUCTION

Darja Zaviršek

It didn't last just a few years! Celebrating the 70th anniversary of social work education in Slovenia

The School of Social Work was established on 7 November 1955, in what was then the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, as part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, on the anniversary of the October Revolution — could this have been mere happenstance? — with a humble tribute in Ljubljana. Nevertheless, four daily newspapers wrote about it. At the time, it was believed that social work education would only be necessary for a few years, until the socialist state had compensated for and solved pre-war inequalities, poverty, and war suffering, as well as post-war changes such as large-scale migration from rural areas to cities, and other problems associated with societal modernisation.

Between 1952 and 1958, five schools of social work were established in socialist Yugoslavia, first in Zagreb, then in Ljubljana, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Skopje. There is no evidence that new schools of social work were established in other post-socialist countries until the early 1990s; rather, existing schools were closed down. In Yugoslavia, there was a prevailing belief that the value orientation of Western social work pioneers was not entirely compatible with socialism, and doubts about social work did not completely disappear, even when the schools were established. The spread-out belief said that the international pioneers were upper-class women and therefore could say little about the country, where the main idea was the Marxist “dictatorship of the proletariat”.

Today we may be surprised, discontented, or amused by the erasure of these women's struggles for social reform, feminism, and social justice, evident in the texts of Yugoslav social policy and social work writers back in the 1950s. But how did this happen? One answer can be found in the recollections of Yugoslav social work pioneers, who recalled that the Yugoslav communists always sought to be the primary political agents of social justice compared with Western countries in a framework of Cold War thinking. They believed they were the first to influence workers' and women's rights in line with the principle, »From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs«, as did the Western counterparts, who thought that only capitalism was the way to develop a democratic society. The Yugoslav designers of the socialist social work believed that socialism itself would bring prosperity to the people and would be achieved through universal employment, health care, social and disability insurance, and the right to a pension.

After 1955, social work began to develop rapidly in Slovenia and other parts of Yugoslavia. A network of social work centres – the major welfare institutions which exist to this day across the countries of former Yugoslavia - was established, and social workers' associations and social work conferences brought together people from across the whole country. Large social welfare institutions for children and adults with various disabilities, homes for the elderly, and institutions for young people with “deviant behaviour”, some of them from the pre-socialism

period, were opened and expanded, and perceived as part of societal modernization and social protection for those who were “unable to work”. Socialist social work was not only a means of social redistribution to alleviate people's economic hardship, but also a realisation of the promise to educate women, relieve them of unpaid care work, and employ them in a variety of welfare institutions. Some impressive small-scale innovations in social work were developed, but they rarely influenced the mainstream of socialist social work.¹

After 1989, social work education expanded into areas that had been burdened by prejudices and normative expectations during socialism. These included formal gender equality, the denial of ethnic conflicts under the ideology of brotherhood, and the eugenic atmosphere toward people with disabilities. Feminist and anti-racist social work emerged, and the deinstitutionalization movement, advocating for the human rights of people with disabilities and the elderly, marked a rebellion against the past practice of asylumisation. The first NGOs were formed, and the enthusiasm shown through volunteer work and solidarity was reminiscent of the post-World War II spirit. Meanwhile, since 1991, social workers also responded to the rising unemployment caused by the rapid closure of factories and enterprises, the influx of refugees from war-torn parts of the former Yugoslavia, numerous evictions from social housing, and the increasing bureaucratization and adoption of new public management in the social sector. The public perception of social work worsened.² Nevertheless, social work continues to be a vital practice and discipline, playing key roles in addressing social inequalities, promoting social justice, providing psychosocial support, and standing by those in need.

The International Symposium marks 70 years of education, professionalisation, and academisation of social work in socialist Yugoslavia and the Republic of Slovenia. The Faculty of Social Work remains the only educational and academic institution for social work studies in the country. With this symposium, we aimed to invite friends, colleagues, and the academic community to celebrate this important anniversary together with us and to highlight the wide range of social work topics that are currently particularly relevant, especially from a critical and historical perspective.

At a time of multiplying economic crises, ecological disasters, wars and genocide, the militarization of Europe and the world and the securitization of everyday life, we seem to be in the midst of an era very similar to the historical period that gave rise to social work over a century ago. The accelerated poverty, impoverishment of communities, the erosion of the common good, the increase of structural and interpersonal violence, the emergence of scapegoating ideologies, and the mushrooming of migration, asks for social work and its resisting force.

¹ More on the historical development: Darja Zaviršek (2025). *Social Work: Always Needed and Always Sidetracked*. *Social Work in Socialist Yugoslavia and the Republic of Slovenia 1952-2025*. National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia. Ljubljana.

Zaviršek, D. (2015). *Social work in Eastern Europe*. V J. D. Wright, (ur.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (str. 795–800). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Zaviršek, D. (2012). *Women and social work in central and Eastern Europe*. V J. Regulska, & B.G. Smith (ur.), *Women and gender in postwar Europe: from Cold War to European Union* (str.52–70). London, New York: Routledge.

Zaviršek, D. (2005). „You will teach them some, socialism will do the rest!”: history of social work education in Slovenia during the period 1940–1960. V K. Schilde, & D. Schulte (ur.), *Need and care: glimpses into the beginnings of Eastern Europe's professional welfare* (str. 237–272). Opladen, Bloomfield Hills: Barbara Budrich Publishers.

² More on that recent development: Darja Zaviršek (2026). *Social Work in Slovenia and Yugoslavia: The Human Face of Socialism*. Policy press. (in press).

We are well aware that in such a world, social work itself is not embraced with open arms by predatory and bureaucratic neoliberal ideologies, practices, policies, and populists. As social problems increase, so do the discourses that emphasize the inefficiency of the public sector and the claims that it has to become smaller or even to disappear, the discourse that social work is a 'cost' and a 'burden', and the individualization and pathologization of people's economic and social problems. Systematically marginalized, social workers are also perceived, at least in Slovenia, as incapable of solving people's complex problems. Economic fundamentalism – meaning that the market will solve all other spheres of social life – and the privatizing of welfare and psychosocial services, as well as relying on private donations, are everything that, I assume, would be despised, refused, and fought against by social work pioneers. In such a difficult context, we are interested in social work's resilience, critical reflection on these current processes, and the ability to understand phenomena from a historical perspective. We look for continuities and discontinuities in what we have learned from past events, practices, and pioneers in all areas of social work as we zoom in on structures, interpersonal relationships, and identities. We do know that in each society, people are interconnected and can only exist in mutual interdependence and awareness of global interconnectedness.

The International Symposium aims to be a platform for a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches in social work, intertwined with social policy, ethics, including situational ethics, disability studies, mental health, anti-racist social work, postcolonial theory, feminist studies, empowerment perspectives, and human rights. And even more.

LIST OF SPEAKERS

Baláž, Roman
Banks, Sarah J.
Bašić, Sanela
Baum, Nehami
Berc, Gordana
Branica, Vanja
Boyko, Oksana
Buljevac, Marko
Bwire, Jackline Achan
Copperman, Jeanette
Dimitrova, Ina
Gössl, Martin
Goncharova, Galina
Harrikari, Timo
Heyman, Shaheeda
Iarskaia Smirnova, Elena
Ioakimidis, Vasilios
Kabachenko, Nadiya
Kasap, Jelena
Kasprzak, Tomasz
Kessl, Fabian
Krasniqi, Vjollca
Lachner, Višnja
Lekganyane, Mmasetjana
Lembuka, Meinrad Haule
Maurer, Susanne
Messinger, Irene
Mozzone, Carlotta
Muchiri, Susan
Ólafsdóttir, Sólveig
Pawlas, Sabina
Rasell, Michael
Rathnayake, Anula
Rehklau, Christine
Ryke, Elma
Rešetar, Branka
Seibel, Friedrich
Sichling, Florian
Strom, Kimberly
Šumskienė, Eglė
Urbanc, Kristina
Urek, Mojca
Van der Meulen, Nadine
Zaslavsky, Boris
Zaviršek, Darja
Zimmerman, Susan
Zorn, Jelka
Zughool, Samar
Žiha, Nikol

ABSTRACTS

Beyond Heroes and Villains: The Hidden Forces Shaping Social Work History

Roman Baláž, balrom@mail.muni.cz

This paper examines the interplay between two underexplored forces shaping the history of social work: individual interests and human stupidity. The study critiques the compliance-resistance narrative in social work history by drawing on Cipolla's concept of human stupidity as a pervasive and impactful phenomenon and a relational concept of individual interests as context-sensitive drivers of human action. The compliance-resistance narrative simplifies the thinking about social work history into dichotomies of heroes and villains, compliance and defiance. In contrast, this paper offers an alternative lens that emphasizes the micro-economy of everyday individual and group functioning within their specific contexts. By moving beyond moralized storytelling, the paper highlights how the confluence of interests, reflective processes, and seemingly irrational behaviours shape social work policy and practice. It underscores the importance of embracing complexity to understand social work's historical trajectory as a mosaic of contextual interactions rather than a conflict-driven evolution. This perspective reframes the social work field's historical understanding and provides a richer framework for analysing present-day policy engagements and professional identities.

Keywords: Social work history, individual interests, human stupidity, policy engagement, micro-economy of daily functioning

Roman Baláž, PhD is an Assistant Professor at Masaryk University, Czechia, and a Fulbright Alumni at Boston University. His research focuses on policy practice in social work and marginalized groups in transition democracies, exploring the intersection of power, policymaking, and practice. He strives to develop theory usage in social work.

Social work ethics as a resisting force: A conversation

Sarah Banks and Kimberly Strom, s.j.banks@durham.ac.uk, ksq@unc.edu

'Remember professional ethics' is the fifth lesson in Timothy Snyder's (2017) book, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. It may seem a somewhat surprising imperative in amongst 'Beware the one-party state' and 'Listen for dangerous words'. However, it is a timely reminder of the role of professional ethics in resisting or colluding with unjust regimes, institutions and practices and the potential for a commitment to professional ethics to make a difference. This session will critically examine conceptions of social work ethics across time, place and culture, including the advantages and limitations of encapsulating ethics and values in professional codes, the colonising influence of North American and European constructions of ethics globally and the push-back based on Indigenous, local and culturally specific perspectives. While it is important to remember professional ethics in times of uncertainty, crisis and tyranny, it is also crucial to locate professional ethics in the times, places and institutions of which it is a part. In this session Sarah Banks and Kim Strom will each present briefly their reflections on the theme of 'social work ethics as a resisting force' and then engage in conversation together to explore lessons from the past, the state of the present and prospects for the future. We will discuss the nature of ethical resistance and the role of social workers' courage and integrity in countering specific and systemic violations of rights, injustice and harms, while also charting the 'horrible histories' of social work complicity in such harms and considering the everyday and often hidden resistances and collusions embedded in social work practice.

Key words: social work ethics, resistance, collusion, historical perspectives, future prospects

Sarah Banks is Professor of Applied Social Sciences in the Department of Sociology and co-founder of the Centre for Social Justice and Community Action at Durham University, UK. She has a long-standing interest in practical ethics in social work, community development and participatory action research. She co-convenes the Social Work Ethics Research Group of the European Social Work Research Association and coordinates the Ethics Working Group of the International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research. Her popular textbook, 'Ethics and Values in Social Work' (Bloomsbury 2021) is now in its fifth edition.

Kimberly Strom, PhD, is the Smith P. Theimann Jr. Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Professional Practice at the University of North Carolina (USA) School of Social Work Dr Strom has been an educator for over 35 years and has authored over 90 books, articles, and chapters on ethics and practice. She is an internationally recognized scholar on moral courage, ethics, leadership, and social work education. She represents North America on the Ethics Commission of the International Federation of Social Work.

From State Control to Social Advocacy: The Historical Trajectory of Social Work in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sanela Bašić, sanela1975@yahoo.com

This presentation offers a comprehensive exploration of the historical trajectory of social work in Bosnia and Herzegovina, highlighting its evolution in response to shifting political regimes, social crises, and global influences. Beginning with its early roots in religious charity and philanthropic activities, the profession was later institutionalized under the socialist state as a centrally regulated mechanism of welfare and social control. In this period, social work often reinforced dominant ideological values, emphasizing conformity and collectivism while marginalizing critical or rights-based approaches. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of war in the 1990s marked a critical turning point. Social workers became frontline responders in a humanitarian catastrophe, managing displacement, trauma, and ethnic fragmentation. In the post-war period, they were further challenged by political decentralization, institutional fragmentation, and the pressures of neoliberal reform. The increasing presence of international organizations brought both support and tension, often sidelining local expertise in favour of externally driven agendas. Today, the profession continues to grapple with the legacies of war, ongoing social inequalities, and fragmented welfare systems. Yet it also demonstrates resilience and adaptability. Social workers are increasingly oriented toward human rights, social justice, and advocacy—especially in response to the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations. Education has played a key role in this shift, embedding critical reflection and ethical awareness into the training of new professionals. By examining these transformations, the presentation argues for the essential role of historical consciousness in shaping a socially responsive and ethically grounded social work practice. In contexts marked by conflict, transition, and contested statehood, history not only helps to understand the present but also equips practitioners to challenge structural injustices and imagine alternative futures for the profession.

Key words: social work history, Bosnia and Herzegovina, professional identity, historical consciousness

Dr. Sanela Bašić is a Professor and Head of the Department of Social Work at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. Her research focuses on welfare policy, the history of social work, poverty, and gender-based violence. She has published five books and over 40 academic articles. Dr. Bašić has been a visiting professor in Switzerland and Germany and serves on several international editorial boards. She has held leadership roles in the European Association of Schools of Social Work and is involved in regional networks promoting academic leadership and research in social work.

Social Worker's Experiences and Dilemmas in Shared Traumatic Reality of Wartime: The Case of Social Workers in Israel

Nehami Baum, nehamibaum@gmail.com

Shared traumatic reality refers to those situations in which social workers help survivors cope with the same traumas that they themselves have been threatened by and exposed to, given the reality that they live and work in the same community. This paper is an initial attempt to present the knowledge gathered to date about providing treatment in shared traumatic realities of war. In this talk, I will discuss the findings of interviews I conducted on the double exposure of Israeli social workers who worked and lived in a stricken area of Israel during the Wars. More specifically, I will try to convey some of the personal and professional dilemmas that arise from conflicts between our obligations to our jobs and our responsibilities and concern for our families and ourselves.

Key Words: Shared traumatic reality, War, Social Worker, personal and professional dilemmas

Nehami Baum is Professor at Bar-Ilan University's School of Social Work. She is a clinical social worker and a psychotherapist with experience in both public and private practice. Her research and publications focus nowadays on non-death losses and a variety of situations that social workers confront in their practice including social workers experiences and dilemmas in times of war.

Reflection on continuities and discontinuities of social work development in Croatia

Vanja Branica and Gordana Berc, vbranica@pravo.hr, gordana.berc@gmail.com

Social work development in Croatia has had clear continuity in education since 1952, when the first program in Yugoslavia was established. Presentation aims to analyse continuities and discontinuities in social work practice through four periods: a) end of 19 century until the II World War when the social policy and social welfare started to develop and organize through forerunner activities connected with social work; b) Socialism time, after II World war (1945 – 1990) when social policy becomes public policy with a strong state paternalism and state running social institution with professional social work establishment through formal education; c) State independency time (1990 – 2012) marked with the war and post war, post socialism transition in context of globalization, neoliberal influences on the development of social policy and social work and d) The membership in the European Union (2013 - till today) as a period still much influenced with neoliberalism, privatization, individualization, marked with reforms as a response to more and more complex society social problems. Development of the social work in Croatian context reflects political, economic and social realm and also interwind of educational, scientific and professional development.

Key words: history, social work, reforms, professional development

Vanja Branica, MA social work, associate professor at the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. Areas of teaching and research: theory of social work, history of social work, social work in healthcare, family mediation, gender and social work.

Gordana Berc, MA social work, Professor and head of Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. Areas of teaching and research: counselling and psychotherapy in social work, youth and family, school social work.

Does Croatian Social Welfare System promote users' human rights?

Marko Buljevac, marko.buljevac@pravo.unizg.hr

Social work as profession is based on promotion and protection of human rights such as equality, freedom, and rights to adequate housing, quality of life, living conditions etc. Different groups of users of Croatian social welfare system should have the right to realize different legal rights on an equal basis with others in all aspects of their life. Also, they should be able to live independently and to participate fully in all aspects of life. The last two years there have been some significant changes in the Croatian social welfare system. The formal support system has been changed based on some new legal documents and laws. Although different employees and experts from social welfare system state that most social welfare users live their lives a way better than earlier, there is a small number of studies that provide insight into users' perspectives. The aim of this presentation is to analyse, problematize and discuss different aspects of Croatian social welfare system and its impact of promotion and protection of human rights of some specific groups of social welfare system users. It can be concluded that the Croatian social welfare system is still extremely needing orientated, while there is a lack of users' rights affirmation. Social workers must mediate between the State and their users, especially if there are problems and challenges with different kinds of discrimination users face or their inability to gain certain human rights.

Keywords: social work, human rights of users, formal support system, discrimination, equality

Marko Buljevac is a social worker, works at the Department of social work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb as an associate professor. His research interests are: social work with persons with disabilities, primary with persons with intellectual disabilities, social and legal basis of education and rehabilitation of persons with visual impairments.

The Role of Social Work in Supporting Child Protection in Uganda: Lessons from History and Current Practices

Jackline Bwire Achan, jacklinebwire87@gmail.com

Social work plays a pivotal role in child protection in Uganda, addressing challenges such as violence against children, child labour, early marriages, and neglect. This paper examines the evolution of social work's involvement in child protection, highlighting its historical foundations, achievements, and ongoing challenges in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment. Drawing from Uganda's legacy of community-based welfare systems, the paper traces the formalization of social work, catalysed by legislation such as the Children Act (1997) and its amendments. These frameworks have positioned social workers as key actors in implementing child protection services, from case management to advocacy for children's rights. Current practices emphasize the integration of social work into multidisciplinary teams, community-based child protection structures, and partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Notable initiatives include child protection committees, digital tools for abuse reporting, and programs targeting vulnerable populations like refugee children and those living in poverty. Despite progress, challenges persist, including underfunded systems, cultural barriers, and limited professional capacity. This paper advocates for investment in social work education, strengthened intersectoral collaboration, and culturally sensitive approaches tailored to Uganda's diverse contexts. By reflecting on historical lessons and contemporary practices, this analysis offers actionable recommendations to enhance the role of social work in building a sustainable, robust child protection system in Uganda.

Keywords: social work, child protection, Uganda, multidisciplinary teams, Children Act

Dr. Jackline Bwire Achan is a Social Work researcher and lecturer with expertise in child protection, community development and social welfare systems. She has a strong academic and practical background in exploring the role of social work in addressing systemic challenges affecting children in Uganda. Currently affiliated with Uganda Christian University in the department of social work, Jackline has contributed to research and advocacy initiatives that promote the rights and welfare of children. Her research interests include violence prevention, children's rights, the integration of cultural competence in social work practice and participatory approaches.

“Warm and gentle support for women who want to be heard”: voices of Bristol Crisis Service for Women.

Jeanette Copperman, jeanette.copperman@open.ac.uk

This presentation outlines the contribution that feminist approaches and survivor led organisations can make to developing alternative mental health narratives in social work. It will discuss the relevance of researching historical feminist narratives in mental health including historic social work narratives to current social work practice, research and education. A documentary and exploratory research project is in progress to document women’s mental health activism across the UK from the 1970s to 2010 and create a publicly available digital archive at Bishopsgate Institute. The presentation outlines results from the first funded community history project ‘Women Listening to Women’ which captures the 30-year history of Bristol Crisis Service for Women (BCSW) through oral history interviews and archive material. BCSW started life as a feminist collective that offered peer support to women struggling with mental ill health, trauma and distress. The founders of BCSW had experience of self-injury and knew how little help and support there was for women like them, so they took action – opening a telephone helpline in January 1988. Twenty-two oral history interviews were carried out. Belonging and listening, feeling heard, safe and held were central themes discussed by women interviewed and also the ‘gold standard’ of support offered to volunteers on the helpline (available at [Women Listening To Women - Home](#)). The telephone helpline, still going today under the name of Self Injury Support is a space where women using self-injury can talk confidentially about their lives to other women. It offers a home for feelings and experiences that are still largely misunderstood elsewhere. Women activists in reclaiming agency around mental health issues pose challenges to traditional models of mental health practice and a re-conceptualisation of women’s mental health. In the context of adult mental social work health services, there is often resistance to thinking about the specificity of women’s lives. In the context of shrinking resources, uncertain funding for alternative organisations and a focus on individual risk, feminist critiques and capacity building approaches that social workers historically contributed to are needed.

Keywords: historical feminist narratives, mental health, self-injury, oral history, telephone helpline

Jeanette Copperman trained as a community development and worked as an advice and community worker in the voluntary sector. She campaigned and currently writes about women’s mental health issues including sexual assault within psychiatric settings. Jeanette was a founder member of the National Women’s Mental Health Network in the 1990s and as a research advisor to ‘Women listening to Women’ <https://www.womenlisteningtowomen.org.uk/> an oral history of Bristol Crisis Service for Women. She is currently working on an open access digital archive of women’s mental health activism and is a social work educator at the Open University UK, co-chairing the Social Work Law Module.

Psychiatric social work in socialist Bulgaria: a project that never happened

Ina Dimitrova, ina.d.dimitrova@gmail.com

The presentation traces the process in which “social psychiatry” was asserted and promoted by the Bulgarian psychiatric elite under state socialism. In other contexts, social psychiatry is exactly the paradigm towards mental distress that brings closer psychiatry and social work, since it stresses the fact that social conditions are important both as affecting the aetiology and, more importantly, the alleviation of mental suffering, rehabilitation, social integration and so on. In socialist Bulgaria, however, “social psychiatry” was reformulated for the clinical psychiatry’s practical needs. This resulted in a convenient inversion: it was not the social that penetrated the psychiatric system so as to subvert it from within; it was the psychiatric system – as a medical undertaking – which was to penetrate into the whole social body. This was a case of appropriation of an emancipatory, in its essence, project, which was reworked for local purposes and reduced to an adjunct of the medicalized paternalistic model. Drawing on publications and archival documents, the presentation shows how one of the great failures of the local social psychiatry endeavour took place, namely the utter inability of the system to develop this branch of social work, although the ideological environment stressing that “socialist psychiatry is social psychiatry” looked like the perfect soil for it.

Keywords: social psychiatry, state socialism, psychiatric social work, paternalism, medicalisation

Ina Dimitrova received her PhD in social and political philosophy from Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology. Currently she is associate professor in social philosophy and bioethics at the Department of Philosophy and History, University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Her current research is focused on disability activism and disability history.

Academic Peer Counselling. The attempt to improve the educational situation of people with disabilities.

Martin J. Gössl, martin.goessler@fh-joanneum.at

The alarming number of missing students with disabilities on campuses across the country has dramatised concerns about the failure of universities to create learning and social environments conducive to the successful academic careers of minority students. Even with well-intentioned efforts (such as disability services), some of the problems minority students face are not easily addressed by programmes. In October 2018, a programme called „Academic Peer Counselling“ was established at the Institute of Social Work to empower people with disabilities to provide counselling to their own community and peers. This is - so far - the first programme in Europe that is entirely designed by professionals from the Institute of Social Work, together with members of the Independent Living Movement for people with chronic diseases and disabilities at an academic institution. „Academic Peer Counselling“ includes a concept of peer group understanding. In addition to formal skills, affective empathy has been shown in several studies to be a very important key factor in dealing individually and successfully with people. Being disabled may not change one's perspective on life, but it could affect one's understanding of the world. This different way of experiencing everyday life changes a lot; firstly, how you are perceived by society and secondly how you can (or cannot) interact with people. Peer counselling is strongly based on this concept of experience. This presentation of the concepts and experiences of the programme after the successful completion of two cohorts.

Keywords: disabilities, peer counselling, history, higher education

Prof. (FH) Dr. Martin J. Gössl, born in 1983, studied historical anthropology with a focus on gender/queer studies at the Karl-Franzens University Graz. Since 2017 he is Professor (FH) for Gender and Sexuality and former director of the "Academic Peer Counselling Programme" at the Institute of Social Work at FH JOANNEUM - University of Applied Sciences Graz. His research focuses on sexual and gender diversity in postmodern, digitally interconnected societies from an applied anthropological perspective. Since 2024 psychotherapist (in training under supervision). Upcoming in English: "Sex and Social Work" published by tectum publishing house Germany, details: <https://martinjoessler.jimdofree.com>

Postsocialism, Ageing and Generations of Care: Bulgarian social workers' narratives on social transformations and policy changes

Galina Goncharova, goncharova.galina@gmail.com

In response to a clear trend of population aging and in the context of dismantling state socialism and implementing EU social policies after 1989, a process of deinstitutionalization and reconstruction of care settings and services for older people has been ongoing in Bulgaria for the last decades. Respectively both providers and users were prompted to reflect and rethink certain life trajectories and (non)professional identities as well to deal with new or changing imaginaries and normativities of ageing and social/institutional/community support. How does this reformative process look from the perspective of experienced social workers? How did it affect their publicly acknowledged job perceptions and attitudes on one hand and their personal notions and values of (care for) older people on the other? How do they recollect and reconfigure the past and the present of (working in) social care in Bulgaria? In attempt for answer to these questions I rely on biographical interviews with staff members of social home patronage, of state homes for older people and pensioners clubs, conducted in four Bulgarian cities in 2023-2024 under the SEEAGE project, funded by Volkswagen Stiftung (2023–2027). I will try to show how the everyday confrontation with postsocialist social policies and institutional routines triggered specific critical responses to established and yet to be established models of care for older people, revealing silenced issues, ambiguous cultural legacies and development of inter- and intra-generational gaps.

Key words: postsocialism, social care, policy changes, life trajectories, professional identities

Galina Goncharova is an Associate Professor of Contemporary Social and Cultural History of Bulgaria at Sofia University “St. Kl.Ohridski”. She has published on generational discourses, death and dying and care for people with disabilities in Eastern Europe. Recently, she has been doing research on ageing and care in Southeastern Europe.

Long-term historical research methodologies: opportunities, constraints, and applications

Timo Harrikari, timo.harrikari@helsinki.fi

Historical research has gained renewed momentum in recent years, including within social work studies. Yet most inquiries remain situated in the modern era, with empirical analyses usually covering only a few decades. This presentation examines the potential and limitations of exploring long-term historical trajectories. By long-term research I refer to investigations spanning several centuries or even extending beyond them. I first consider, why such extended chronologies are both significant and worthwhile. I then discuss the methodological opportunities afforded by long-term perspectives, alongside the constraints and limitations that must be recognised. Finally, I introduce a methodological framework I have developed for such inquiry, inspired by the History of the Present approach, which has also been applied in historical studies of social work. At the heart of this framework lies an analysis of continuities and ruptures, situated within enduring communal practices and relatively stable institutional environments. The presentation draws on my study of the history of child protection in Finland, tracing developments from the Middle Ages to the present (*Lastensuojelun historia*, Vastapaino 2019, 448 pp.). An international edition of this work will be published by Routledge in 2026.

Key words: methodology, long-term research, child protection, Finland, history of the present

Dr. Timo Harrikari is Professor of Social Work at the University of Helsinki. His research covers child welfare, juvenile crime, probation, and disaster social work. His recent international books include *Towards Glocal Social Work in the Era of Compressed Modernity* (Routledge 2019) and *Social Work during COVID-19* (Routledge 2023).

Informal Alternative Care: Historical Perspectives and Future Directions in Social Work Practice

Shaheeda Heyman and Elma Ryke, shaheedaheyman1@gmail.com, elma.ryke@nwu.ac.za

Informal Alternative Care (IAC), rooted in kinship solidarity and customary trust, has long been a feature of traditional communities. Families in need often entrust children to non-biological caregivers, forming private agreements about their care. This practice preserves family autonomy and minimises government involvement, making it a vital, cost-effective option in many low-resource countries, where institutional care and IAC remain the primary alternatives. Historically, as welfare systems evolved, alternative care options expanded to include voluntary care mediated by welfare organisations and mandated forms like foster care. However, IAC continues to play a critical role in child welfare, especially where formal systems are underdeveloped. Despite its benefits, IAC poses challenges. Families may resist public scrutiny, viewing IAC as maintaining cohesion, but a lack of structured policies can leave families overburdened and children at risk. Economic strain and compromised nutritional and educational outcomes for children underscore the need for support. This tension highlights the balance between respecting families' autonomy and society's duty to protect children from neglect and abuse. Mediated IAC offers a way to bridge this divide, providing support while honouring family independence. To ensure its effectiveness, there is an urgent need for evidence-based policies and practices that strengthen family- and community-based care. Future efforts must focus on adequate support systems and infrastructure development, particularly in low-resource settings, to promote the safety and well-being of vulnerable children while preserving cultural and family integrity.

Keywords: informal alternative care, child welfare, family independence.

Shaheeda Heyman is a social worker with 15 years of practice experience providing services to children and families from all social backgrounds. She holds a master's degree in social work, specialising in Child Protection. Currently pursuing a PhD degree and is dedicated to advancing knowledge and practice in social work.

Elma Ryke, a professor at NWU's School of Psychosocial Health, holds a PhD in Social Work and a Postgraduate Diploma in Philosophy. With over 30 years of teaching and postgraduate supervision experience, she has published more than 30 articles in national and international academic journals.

Visual Politics of Disability Then and Now: Lessons from the Soviet and Recent History

Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova, eiarskaia@hse.ru

Visual representations not only strongly influence our interpretation of history but are also important for understanding key aspects of disability policy and social work. A socio-historic study of visual images is also important to contextualize and develop our understanding of today's visual politics. This paper explores the visual imagery of disability to reveal the shifting and contested meanings associated with the visual representation of disabled bodies as metaphors and in a close association with the ideologies of social policy and social work. In the Soviet Union, such ideological work included the attempts of the state to govern the population, to shape good citizens according to the cultural norms of socialist society.

The official images of Soviet society were challenged during perestroika and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when disabled people became one of the 'problematic' social groups that questioned the prevailing social situation. The representation of disability became symptomatic of society's changing self-perception by encompassing metaphors of protest, resistance and human rights that heralded the end of top-down control in relation to society, disabled people and visual imagery. By investigating the visibility politics implemented by disability CSOs in the post-socialist Russia to pursue social justice, it becomes possible to better understand the agency of these actors in authoritarian contexts. It emerges that the reconfiguration of civil society results in civil society organizations implementing mainly affirmative changes although transformative visibility politics challenging ableist assumptions also occurred even in the restricted political environment.

Keywords: Visual politics, disability, ideology, Russia

Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova is PhD in Social Work, Candidate in Philosophy, Dr. in Sociology, Head of the International Laboratory for Social Integration Research, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia. Her research interests include disability, gender, aging, social policy, social work, visual studies, qualitative research.

Social Work Histories of Complicity and Resistance; A Tale of Two Professions

Vasilios Ioakimidis, ioakimidis@uniwa.gr

Social work historically exists in a complex space of complicity and resistance, often navigating pressures from neoliberal agendas and structural violence while advocating for social justice and human dignity. Drawing on historical and critical analysis, this presentation reflects on the duality of social work: its complicity in perpetuating oppressive structures and its potential as a resisting force against systemic injustice. Through case studies and historical narratives, particularly examining contexts marked by colonialism, war, and neoliberal restructuring, the presentation explores how social workers have both enabled and resisted harmful practices. Emphasis will be placed on how contemporary social work can reclaim its radical roots, challenging individualisation and pathologisation of social issues by advocating for collective responsibility, mutual interdependence, and global interconnectedness. The discussion will highlight historical continuities and discontinuities, underscoring lessons learned from past pioneers and practices, and proposing pathways for social work's critical and resilient future.

Keywords: resistance, social justice, critical social work, neoliberalism, colonialism

Vasilios Ioakimidis is Professor of Historical and Comparative Social Work and Head of Department at the University of West Attica, Greece. He is also the Global Education Commissioner of IFSW and co-editor-in-chief of the British Journal of Social Work.

Grandparent family: case of Ukraine

Nadiya Kabachenko and Oksana Boyko, kabachenko@ukma.edu.ua, boykoo@ukr.net

In Ukraine, the number of grandparent families has grown significantly in recent years and will continue to grow due to the war. Most labor migrants have not returned to Ukraine. In addition, many fathers and mothers defending Ukraine are forced to leave their children with their own parents. According to the data of the National Social Service of Ukraine, during the war, 13,000 children have been left without parental care due to a variety of reasons. Meanwhile, a new group of grandparents has also appeared. It is those who have become internally displaced or moved to another country seeking temporary protection. Quite often, parents decide to stay in their home country or another part of Ukraine to continue working or to defend the country, but children's grandparents are encouraged to go abroad or move to Western Ukraine due to safety concerns, together with the children. The grandparent families are vulnerable and struggle to adapt to the new place of living. Often, they feel isolated because they do not know the language of their new country of residence. Many of them are exhausted since they are the sole caretakers of those children, and it might be difficult for them to support children who could have post-traumatic disorders or struggle with adaptation. Thus, it can be argued that the number of grandparent families in Ukraine is growing. This requires studying the peculiarities of the functioning of such families, their problems and needs, and the creation of the necessary support network.

Keywords: Ukraine, children without parental care, grandparent families

Nadiya Kabachenko is an Associate Professor at the School of Social Work, the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. She has over 26 years of experience in teaching and researching and teaches Social Work Research Methods, Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Programs and Projects, Qualitative Research Methods and worked for many international projects led by UNDP, UNPF, MATRA, Deloitte, Holt International, etc. as the national expert and researcher. Her research focuses on social work education development and development of social services, including community needs assessment and services for elderly people, their housing and the issues of homelessness. She is the author of more than 60 publications including a monograph "Homeless Policy: Theory and Practice" (Kyiv, 2015). From 2022 to 2024, she was the Visiting Research Fellow at the Social Research Institute University College London, supported by the Council for At-Risk Academics.

Oksana Boyko is an Associate Professor, has a Ph.D. in Social Work, is the Chair of the Department, School of Social Work at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Kyiv, Ukraine. Her academic interests are in social work education, mental health and psychosocial support, strengthening community resilience, community crisis management, and international social work. Oksana Boyko has been developing and delivering training courses on social work, MHPSS, and resilience for social work practitioners, educators, policymakers, and community leaders. She has over 23 years of experience of working as a coordinator, an expert, a trainer, a researcher in national and international projects. Her research focuses on social work education, social work and mental health issues, and international social work. She has over 50 publications on the above issues. Since February 2022, Oksana Boiko took an active lead from the Ukrainian side within the Solidarity and Support Network with Social Work Educators from Ukraine.

Deafblind studies and social work in Poland: past, present and future

Tomasz Kasprzak, naukowy.kasprzak@gmail.com

Deafblind studies is a new interdisciplinary academic field that has developed over the past two decades. In Poland the dominant discourse on deafblindness in social work has been that of an individual model, which largely relegates the „problem” of deafblindness to a deficit within the individual. Throughout history, individuals with deafblindness have struggled to live full and productive lives as independently as possible in a society laden with stigma, discrimination, and attitudinal and environmental barriers. This presentation surveys the potential for deafblind studies to enhance social work and practice in the past and present in Poland. For deafblind people social work can be a contradictory experience. Social workers are part of a „disabling” as well as an ‘enabling’ profession and are increasingly coming under the critical gaze of disabled scholars and activists within the deafblind movement. As a result of a long association with medicalised paradigms of intervention, social work has either failed to take on board new ways of examining the disability experience or simply left deafblind as a marginal practice concern. The presentation I will present (mainly from a historical perspective) the practices of medicalizing deafblindness and deafblind people in polish social work (and social support). It will show the impact of these practices on the lives of these people today.

Keywords: deafblind, deafblindness, disability, social work, support

Tomasz Kasprzak is a sociologist of disability, assistant professor in the Institute of Sociology of the University of Silesia in Katowice. His main areas of interest are the sociology of disability and deafblind studies. Collaborates with the Section of Sociology of Disability of the Polish Sociological Association. Deputy manager in the international project "Structures of uncertainty: inclusive education in Central and Eastern European countries" financed by the Visegrad Group funds. Author of 30 scientific publications on disability and deafblind studies.

Voices from the margins: Social assistance and institutional support in Osijek's welfare system (19th–20th century)

Jelena Kasap, Višnja Lachner and Nikol Žiha, jkasap@pravos.hr, vlachner@pravos.hr, nikolz@pravos.hr

Social justice, as one of the fundamental pillars of social progress, is achieved through the promotion of equality and the fight against poverty, grounded in the respect for human rights and freedoms. In accordance with the Constitution, the Republic of Croatia is defined as a social state, with social justice and solidarity as core societal values. The presentation focuses on the development of the social welfare system in the city of Osijek during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing on the formation of social assistance, institutional care, and social policy. Special attention is given to the care of vulnerable groups, particularly children and the elderly, within the context of declining family-based support and the emergence of public welfare initiatives. Drawing on primary sources from the State Archives in Osijek and (limited) literature, the study examines the establishment and functioning of key institutions, such as the Town Poorhouse; it also shows the role of philanthropic foundations and religious organizations, most notably the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. The presentation also addresses the financial challenges within the system and highlights the involvement of local government in the development of social welfare services. The overarching aim of the research is to broaden scholarly understanding of the history of social care in Croatia by uncovering underexplored archival sources and illuminating the lived experiences of marginalized individuals who were compelled by age, illness, or poverty to seek institutional assistance.

Key words: guardianship and tutorship, town poorhouse, local government, elderly social care, welfare foundations

Jelena Kasap is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law Osijek where she teaches General History of Law and the State, Legal and Social Position of Women throughout history and History of social work. Her areas of research and professional interests are the history of the legal position of women, European history and the history of social work.

Višnja Lachner is a legal historian and an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law Osijek. Her areas of scientific and professional interest are the history of local administration and self-government, the history of the legal position of women, and the history of social work.

Nikol Žiha is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law Osijek where she teaches Roman private law, History of social work and social status of the elderly throughout history. Her areas of research and professional interests are Roman private law, European history and methodology of legal education.

‘Links to Collectivity’: Critical Social Work & Social Pedagogy in 21st Century

Fabian Kessl, fabian.kessl@uni-wuppertal.de

Critical thinking in theory, research and practice of social work and social pedagogy has been characterised by two dynamics in recent decades: on the one hand, the assumption that the critical impulse has already been determined with the ‘Global Definition’ of international associations (like the IFSW), and on the other hand, positions like the poststructuralist / post-fundamentalist ones that are sceptical of unambiguous definitional possibilities per se. In view of the planetary crisis and the diverse national and regional crises, both perspectives prove to be inadequate, without their potential and their offer of enlightenment being discarded. But in the 21st century, new points of reference are needed in view of the political and factual disruptions of critical social work theory and practice. The presentation will argue that a reminder of the historical traditions in the fields of social work and social pedagogy should be critically linked to thinking about ‘collectivity’ and struggling for ‘collectivity’. However, collectivity must also be understood in terms of current social conditions – along the modes of building communities, solidarity and social movements.

Keywords: critical thinking, social pedagogy, collectivity, global crises, solidarity

Fabian Kessl is Professor of social pedagogy & social policy at the University of Wuppertal, Germany. His research interests are primarily in the transformation of education and care in the context of welfare states, especially due to its institutional change (de/institutionalisation) and the dimensions of scale (spatial aspects).

Gendering Remembrance The Women's Antifascist Front of Kosovo in History and Memory

Vjollca Krasniqi, vjollca.krasniqi@uni-pr.edu

The paper explores the history and contested memory of the Women's Antifascist Front of Kosovo (*Fronti Antifashist i Grave in Albanian and Antifašistički Front Žena in Serbo-Croatian*) as a pivotal—if marginalised—chapter in the socialist and feminist history of Yugoslavia. Emerging from the World War II partisan struggle, the Front was actively involved in postwar reconstruction, with social work at its core. It advanced the socialist ideal of the “new woman” through advocacy campaigns, literacy courses, and grassroots mobilization. Despite functioning as a state-affiliated body, the Front provided a crucial platform for women's activism and leadership. Its dissolution, in the early 1950s, marked a retreat from institutionalized women's engagement under Yugoslav state-socialism. It will be shown that the memory of *Fronti Antifashist i Grave* was largely erased from cultural narratives, national historiography, and public consciousness during late socialism and the post-socialist period. This erasure reflects broader gendered patterns of forgetting that have marginalized women's roles in political and social transformation. By drawing on a multiscalar approach, the paper traces the intersections of gender, social work, and state power as they operated in lived historical experiences and cultural remembrance. It focuses on what it means to remember women's antifascist and socialist organising in the present and on how post-socialist memory regimes have continued to silence gendered forms of care. It also deals with the consequences of this silence for feminist historical consciousness and cultural memory. By engaging with these questions, the research contributes to broader debates in memory studies about visibility, erasure, and the gendered politics of historical narratives in post-socialist societies.

Key words: Women's Antifascist Front; gender; social care; state socialism; history and memory; Kosovo

Vjollca Krasniqi is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Social Work, and the Faculty of Arts, University of Prishtina, Kosovo. She holds a PhD in social work from the University of Ljubljana; an MSc degree in gender, development, and globalization from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE); and a bachelor's degree in philosophy and sociology from the University of Prishtina. Her research interests are gender, human rights, nation-building, and social policy. She has led and participated in numerous international research projects and published widely on these topics. She is member of the Executive Board of the East European Sub-Regional Association of Schools of Social Work. She has actively engaged on gender equality and dealing with the past issues in Kosovo and the wider Balkan region. She has served on the boards of directors of several civil society organizations in Kosovo.

Exploring Social Work Curriculum in the Context of Social Entrepreneurship

Glory M. Lekganyane, Mmasetjana.Lekganyane@nwu.ac.za

In the 21st century, social work faces an altered landscape in which the social work curriculum is challenged by global socio-political transitions, which require new ways of teaching and learning to create positive opportunities for graduates. Social work curricula can adopt an entrepreneurial approach to address the social work unemployment dilemma, particularly in South Africa. Social workers have acted entrepreneurially throughout the profession, starting new ventures through government programmes, charitable organisations, and progressive social movements. However, the profession has been politically disadvantaged by the socio-political transition of the country in South Africa, resulting in skewed resources. Historically Social work education in South Africa has been shaped by hegemonic colonial apartheid, which led to criticism due to its failure to respond appropriately to the local conditions and cultures. Based on that entrepreneurship courses need to be factored in as part of the social work curricula to ease graduate absorbability in the workplace. Social entrepreneurship aligns with the principles of justice outlined in Education White Paper 3, which states that a socially just society should operate based on economic reward, need, and equality. A question arises whether learners and students are engaged early to identify social needs in their families and communities. This paper will explore social work curricula focusing on teaching and learning methods in the context of social entrepreneurship. Secondary sources will be employed to capture the information. The findings will assist in crafting policies and addressing gaps in designing curriculums that respond to the needs of the communities and graduates.

Key Words: Social work curriculum, social entrepreneurship, unemployment, absorbability, cultures

Dr. Glory Mmasetjana Lekganyane is a senior lecturer at North-West University, South Africa, where she has been serving since 2024. She previously held a senior lecturer position at the University of Venda from 2006 to 2023. Her professional journey includes leadership and social work roles, having served as Director at Age-in-Action (1997–2005) and as a Senior Social Worker in the Department of Social Development (1986–1996). Dr. Lekganyane holds a PhD in Sciences from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The Evolution of Developmental Social Work in Tanzania on the African Ubuntu Capacity

Meinrad Haule Lembuka, meinradlembuka@gmail.com

The qualitative study guided by the Ujamaa Intersections Model assesses the evolution of developmental social work practice in Tanzania and its impact on Ubuntu's capacity. The Ujamaa Policy framework of post-colonial Tanzania from 1961 restored various social work indigenous models including the Ujamaa Intersections Model to address the socio-economic and political problems in the country's developmental social work. Ujamaa intersections model (UIM) entails micro, mezzo, and macro approach that were necessary for the realization of social developmental, decolonization and restoration of integrated rural development relevant to the African context. Over time, guided by Ubuntu values of human dignity, communality, democracy, care, life expectancy, freedom, equal shared resources, unity, cooperation, universality, and self-independent, the UIM succeeded in promoting adult education, early child development, rural development, poverty reduction, primary health care, cultural diversity, inclusion of vulnerable populations, gender balance, voluntary and self-managed community projects. UIM was challenged by structural adjustment policies in the 1990s and the impacts of globalization, etc. Despite various challenges, UIM succeeded in achieving human and community development through a collective and holistic approach where families, local leadership, and kinships were part of community participation. Sustainable Development Goals and other global agendas call for the indigenization of developmental approaches to achieve their goals, the relevance of Ubuntu and social work practice is essential in addressing contemporary social injustice, universal human rights, social cohesion, poverty, Inequality, etc. Therefore, UIM is a relevant tool for upholding the environment, socio-economic development, and people empowerment.

Keywords: African Ubuntu, indigenization, Tanzania, Ujamaa Policy, Ujamaa Intersections Model

Meinrad Haule Lembuka is a social worker and researcher with over 15 years of experience and over time he has transformed himself to be a multidisciplinary expert in research and consultancy in the areas of Ubuntu, social work, HIV and AIDS continuum of care. He has worked with several local and international organizations and accumulated a wealth of experience in the above areas that are relevant to be shared on global platforms. Presently, he is an academician at The Open University of Tanzania where he has published various articles and books. Most of these works have been informed by an indigenous approach of African Ubuntu, which focuses on holistic and collective principles toward health and social welfare development, such as the Ujamaa Intersection models. Based on his works, he advocates and upholds Ubuntu values and principles toward social, economic, and health agendas that are relevant to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and beyond.

Re-Constructing and Re-Imagining Resisting Forces of Social Work

Susanne Maurer, maurer@staff.uni-marburg.de

(How) Could social work function as a resisting force, and what would it need to strengthen its resistance? This is the underlying question of the paper. Histories of social work have never been simple (or single) stories – no matter what societal context there has been. Its mandates have always been multiple and contradictory; they often have been dilemmatic and full of tension. At the same time, stories of social work have also been stories of hope. As if there could be social justice, as if there could be solidarity – also among strangers. Just imagine ... The talk will refer to examples from Germany, bringing into view social work that has been especially influenced by social movements. One example will be the 100-year-old organization „Gilde Soziale Arbeit“, founded in 1925 by protagonists of the youth movement(s) („Jugendbewegung(en)“) in the early 20th century. As a second example, feminist perspectives in and approaches to social work will be addressed. The paper discusses both examples also against the backdrop of East/West-German conditions. It explores the interrelatedness of breaking up old structures and building new ones, in the attempt to democratize and re-vitalize institutions and practices of social work. How do social movements and (democratic) institutions interrelate and interact? Can social work function as a specific field of memory that reminds us of the necessity – and possibility - of a lively social and democratic infrastructure? Just imagine ...

Key Words: social movement, democratic institution, field of memory, feminism, commons

Prof. em. Dr. Susanne Maurer, University of Marburg, Germany, (former) Chair for Educational Science/Social Pedagogy, member of the „Gilde Soziale Arbeit“, feminist scholar and researcher; co-founder of projects and networks related to historical research and education for democracy.

Social Work and Resistance: Historical Insights and Lessons from 1930s Vienna

Irene Messinger, irene.messinger@fh-campuswien.ac.at

This paper examines the role of social work within authoritarian regimes, focusing on the experiences of Viennese social workers during the Austrofascist and National Socialist periods. While most social workers, particularly civil servants by the City of Vienna, complied with these regimes, a minority actively resisted, offering valuable insights into the potential of defiance. By employing a minority approach at both institutional and personal levels, my study highlights organizations, friendships, and networks that supported resistance efforts. Social work in this context included leftist care groups supporting political prisoners, Catholic initiatives aiding Jews, and others. The presentation will also present cases of individual resistance, such as hiding Jewish colleagues. Personal relationships and strong political or religious beliefs were key to sustaining resistance. The historical narrative of mainstream social work illustrates how, under National Socialist rule, the profession was often co-opted to serve oppressive purposes, undermining its core values. This analysis underscores social work's susceptibility to political instrumentalization and the imperative for a critically reflective, ethically grounded practice. Ethical principles remain essential for navigating contemporary dilemmas, ensuring that the profession remains committed to social justice and human rights. Given the current rise of authoritarian and far-right tendencies in Europe, these historical insights remain particularly relevant, offering guidance not only for protecting ethical standards in challenging political contexts but also for reflecting on resistance strategies from 90 years ago.

Key-words: Social Workers, Resistance, Vienna, Authoritarian Regimes, Ethical Principles

Irene Messinger, Professor of Social Work at the University for Applied Sciences, FH Campus Wien, since 2017, holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Vienna. Research topics include migration and exile, social inequalities, and historical biographical studies. Recent project: Persecution and Resistance of Vienna's Social Workers 1934-1945.

The IASSW and the Evolution of Its Commitment: An Analysis from the Historical Welfare Archives

Carlotta Mozzone, carlotta.mozzone@unito.it

The goals that, in 1928, led to the founding of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) can be identified in its commitment to fostering the exchange of ideas and experiences among social work schools worldwide, promoting their cooperation—also through opportunities for teacher and student exchanges—and supporting international study programs. The desire to ensure, on a global level, training aligned with the values of social work resulted in the development of the Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training, issued in 2004 and updated in 2020, in collaboration with the International Federation of Social Workers. This contribution aims to analyse, using a diachronic approach, the role and actions of the IASSW concerning the development of social work education pathways at both the international and local levels, with particular attention to its interaction with regional organizations present in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and the Caribbean, including efforts to value indigenous experiences. To accurately reconstruct how the IASSW's commitment has materialized in the described context, the first phase of the research is conducted at the IASSW's Social Welfare History Archives, housed at the Elmer Andersen Library in Minneapolis. This phase involves the consultation and digitization of documents, which serve as the primary sources for the study. During the second phase, the material collected undergoes observation and taxonomic evaluation, along with an analysis of literature contemporaneous with the periods under consideration. Analytical summaries are also produced and presented, providing material that may serve future research. Reconstructing the history of the IASSW can enhance understanding of this organization's nearly century-long commitment to promoting the quality of social work education and the value system underpinning social work on a global scale.

Keywords: IASSW (International Association of Schools of Social Work), Social Work Education, History social work, Archival Research, International Cooperation.

Carlotta Mozzone, has a PhD in Sociology and Social Work from the Roma Tre University. She is also a social worker, MSW in Social Policies and Services, Research fellow at the Department of Cultures, Politics, and Society at the University of Turin and lecturer in the BSW Program at the same university. Her main research includes the history of social work, particularly professionalism, education, and professional supervision, social policies and interventions in migration processes.

The Resisting Force of Social Work: Current Reflections in Critical and Historical Perspective

Susan Muchiri, muchirwanjee13@gmail.com

Burundi is a small developing East African country in the heart of Africa. Gaining independence in 1962, the history of Burundi is fraught with war, civil unrest and poverty which through the years has had its toll on the local population made up of only three ethnic groups. In between years of turmoil, social work has had its place in Burundian society at first only at secondary school level but by the year 2004 after another period of turmoil social work was introduced at higher institutional level at Hope Africa University. To-date Hope Africa University continues to be the only university offering Social Work and Community Development 20 years later. Grappling with decades of unrest, poverty, and trauma social work has a large role to play in addressing the power imbalances and ethnic tension inherited from the colonial era and which persist to-date.

Key words: Post-colonial, social work, poverty, trauma

Susan Muchiri a lecturer, Head of Department of Social Work and Community Development at Hope Africa University, currently pursuing her PhD in Social Work. A member of ASSWA and the Women's Interest Group in IASSW. A collaborative CATE award winner on Anti-racism in Social Work and has published works in Social Work.

“To Build Something Beautiful”: Reassessing the Legacy of Sólheimar in the Era of Deinstitutionalisation

Sólveig Ólafsdóttir, solveig@hi.is

“I want to build something beautiful,” wrote Sesselja Hreindís Sigmundsdóttir in 1928, two years before founding Sólheimar, a rural community in Iceland for children with and without disabilities. Influenced by anthroposophy, ecological self-sufficiency, and alternative pedagogy, Sesselja imagined a holistic society where daily life, work, and care were shared. Today, Sólheimar is remembered as a utopian experiment and a model of “inclusive” care long before mainstream policies addressed such ideas. Yet this paper examines the community’s complex afterlife, especially in light of shifting disability rights discourse and deinstitutionalisation movements in the late 20th century. After Sesselja’s death in 1974, Sólheimar gradually assumed characteristics of a residential institution. Critics questioned whether ideals of “shared life” masked persistent power imbalances, dependency, and restricted autonomy. Drawing on archival records, oral histories, and disability studies theory, the paper traces how Sólheimar became both a symbol of pioneering care and a site of contestation. Particular focus is placed on the 1980s–1990s, when Iceland’s disability rights movement challenged communal care settings, demanding access to independent living, social security entitlements, and political voice. Sesselja’s vision—grounded in compassion and innovation—remains powerful. Yet her legacy also reminds us that well-intended alternatives can, over time, reproduce the very exclusions they sought to transcend. The story of Sólheimar invites critical reflection on how care is structured, who defines inclusion, and what it means to live with dignity—questions as vital in post-socialist and Nordic contexts as they are globally.

Key words: Sólheimar, deinstitutionalisation, disability rights, community

Sólveig Ólafsdóttir is a Research Fellow at the Institute of History, University of Iceland. Her work focuses on disability history, microhistory, and ethics of care in the Nordic region. She is co-author of *Disability Studies Meets Microhistory: The Secret Life of Bibi in Berlin* (Routledge, 2024) and currently leads the research project *Sheltered from the Storm* (2025–2028), funded by the Icelandic Research Fund. Sólveig is a member of the Social History of Learning Disability group at the Open University (UK) and collaborates with scholars in Slovenia on the history of care systems in former Yugoslavia. Her approach combines archival research, narrative reconstruction, and critical disability studies to explore the lives of marginalized individuals in Icelandic history.

Historical Perspectives and Present Challenges of Social Work in the Field of Oncology

Sabina Pawlas, sabina.pawlas@us.edu.pl

Oncological illness often represents a biographical disruption for the individual and a biographical challenge for the carer and family members. It creates many tasks and burdens, and self-management of the disease is often beyond the capacity of patients and their families. The consequences of the disease and the treatment process affect all areas of functioning, so holistic patient care cannot be limited to physical health but must also include psychosocial support. Oncology social work combines social work theory and methods with knowledge of the psychosocial aspects of cancer. In this way, it can respond to the needs of the individual throughout the disease, from the peri-diagnostic period, through the treatment phase to recovery, or at the end of life in the case of unsuccessful cancer treatment. The review of theoretical positions and the research and methodologies used in them, from a historical perspective, should be extended to describe the challenges that will arise in the field of oncology social work. These are the result of socio-demographic trends. Firstly, according to demographic projections, the incidence of cancer will continue to increase. Secondly, the number of cancer survivors will increase thanks to medical advances. Oncology social work can play an essential role in coping with the disease, which can determine the health and adaptation of successfully cured people who will return to the labour market. Thirdly, the incidence and cure rates will affect people over 60, requiring the support system to act accordingly. The analysis of oncological social work from a historical perspective allows us to see important threads integrating medicine and social sciences in caring for people with cancer. It is, among others, the growing awareness of the psychosocial aspects of the disease, developed, among others in the sociology of experiencing chronic diseases, that revealed the need to develop specialized support for people undergoing anticancer treatment. The development of oncological social work is rooted in the biopsychosocial paradigm, as opposed to the reductionist approach to the disease as an exclusively medical phenomenon. A historical perspective allows us to indicate the factors and processes that shape its current form. It is not only a specialized aid practice, an area of research and education but it is also seen as an instrument for critical analysis of health care systems. Today, oncological social work functions as a key element of holistic care for oncological patients, especially in the United States, where its development has been particularly dynamic over several decades.

Key words: Oncology social work, illness trajectory, psychosocial support, cancer survivors

Sabina Pawlas, PhD - sociologist, professor at the University of Silesia in Katowice, long-term researcher and teacher at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Silesia, psychologist providing support in situations of mental crisis. Her scientific publications focus on oncological social work and the sociology of health and illness.

Addressing the lack of democracy inside social work and social services

Michael Rasell, michael.rasell@uibk.ac.at

This paper is a call to reflect on the state of democracy inside social services and the social work profession. I start with the provocation that social work today often discusses its role in protecting democracy from populism and extremism, but is less active in critically reflecting on transparency and democratic decision-making inside social work. Despite declarations about 'participation, 'voice' and 'self-determination', practitioners, managers and other actors in the social welfare system retain control and final say in direct practice and the operations of social services. Looking historically, the struggle to build the social sector and institutionalise the social work profession created a rift between 'professionals' and people using social services that distracted from a possible focus on democratic practice. The upshot is that people using social services have little influence on decisions and support that can be crucial to their wellbeing. A focus on democracy requires a fundamental rethink of many processes in social work, including what it means to be a profession. This starts with clear recognition that voice and influence are democratic rights of all people as well as an ethical obligation for the social work profession. Drawing on findings from a multi-country research and practice project on social services conducted with IFSW Europe, I contend that social services need to open their governance to people using services and be more transparent and collaborative in how they operate. Offering support that fully aligns with the lived realities of people is crucial – rather than following narrow service logics. Ultimately, overcoming the practitioner/user division can break with tradition and build democracy inside social work by ensuring that practice is truly responsive to the input, ideas and experiences of people using social services.

Keywords: democracy, social work profession, responsiveness, participation, collaborative approaches.

Michael Rasell is based in the Disability Studies research team at University of Innsbruck, Austria. He researches independent living, community-based disability services and participatory approaches within social services in different European contexts. He leads the Horizon Europe RESPONSIVE project (2023-26) that aims to increase the capacity of social services to utilise participatory input. Staff profile: <https://www.uibk.ac.at/iezw/mitarbeiterinnen/persoeliche-seiten-mitarbeiterinnen/rasell/info/>

Evolution of Social Work in Mental Health in Sri Lanka

Anula Rathnayake, anularathnayake@gmail.com

Social work in healthcare has evolved significantly over the past century, becoming a prominent field in developed countries and extending its reach into diverse sectors, including mental health. In Sri Lanka, the development of social work in mental health mirrors global trends, adapting to local socio-cultural contexts. This paper identifies key milestones in the evolution of social work in mental health in Sri Lanka, drawing from secondary data. The introduction of social work in 1952 marked the beginning, with an initial focus on child welfare and building human capacity for social welfare services. A significant shift occurred in 1966, with a report emphasizing the need for community-oriented mental health services and recommending the inclusion of social workers in psychiatric care. The National Mental Health Policy (2005–2015) further advanced the field by decentralizing services and promoting community-based mental health systems. Additionally, 2005 saw the introduction of Psychiatric Social Work Training, supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), which trained 42 graduates to enhance community mental health services. Another critical milestone was the integration of mental health services into primary care in 2012, advocating a holistic and accessible approach to mental health care. The evolution of social work in mental health in Sri Lanka highlights a progressive shift toward community-oriented care and systemic integration. These milestones underscore the vital role of social work in strengthening mental health systems, aligning with global standards while addressing local needs. The continued development of this field is essential for fostering a comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable mental health framework in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: social work, mental health, community mental health, primary care, systemic integration

Dr. Anula Rathnayake is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. She holds a BA and MA in Sociology from the University of Colombo and a PhD in Social Work from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Defending diversity against right-wing extremists and populists – recommendations for social work action

Rehklau Christine, christine.rehklau@fh-erfurt.de

Organizations and projects in the field of social work are particularly affected by right-wing extremist and right-wing populist hostility because their daily commitment to an open, democratic and diverse society embodies values that right-wing extremists and right-wing populists see as a threat. The defamation of democratic civil society is a nationwide strategy that now extends far beyond the parliamentary sphere (Der Paritätische Gesamtverband 2020, p. 13). The short-term goal is to unsettle the actors concerned in their commitment and to persuade them to retract clear positions or avoid them from the outset. The aim is to intimidate political opponents and push back offensive supporters of a democratic, open and diverse society. In the long term, right-wing populist attacks on civil society are also about influencing social discourse that goes far beyond the circle of those directly affected and their environment. The strategies of the anti-diversity stakeholders will be shown to understand the mechanism behind it. Social work in Germany has seen and been part of major forms of exclusion in the 1930s and 1940s. The resistance against the political forces back then was not strong enough. Therefore, it is needed to take steps in solidarity with those who are affected by the current hostility. Recommendations for action of social work organisations and activists will be discussed.

Keywords: diversity, democratic civil society, right-wing populists, social work action

Christine Rehklau is Professor for Diversity and Intercultural Social Work at Erfurt University of Applied Sciences. She holds a PhD from Ruhr-University Bochum and a diploma in social work. Her current projects are on diversity in kindergarten and a student project on social inclusion in a European perspective together with the University of Sarajevo.

Family protection in the Croatian legal and social system in the second half of the 20th century

Branka Rešetar, bresetar@pravos.hr

This paper focuses on the family that is central to the well-being of family members, communities, and larger societies throughout history. With changing social and economic circumstances throughout history most of the previous functions of family such as educating for children, caring for sick and elderly family members under the one roof were taken over by the State. After II. WW family and family life are protected as a fundamental human right in almost all relevant human rights instruments. Despite the global understanding of the family as the fundamental group unit, family law that regulates family relationships is often a closed system based on historical, social, political, and religious influences. Contemporary scholars increasingly emphasize that the multiple challenges families face today cannot be resolved privately within the family and without the help of the state, both through changes in family laws and family policies. As someone who was born in the 1960s in the former Yugoslavia in the latest debates, I clearly recognize elements of family law and family policies that existed in socialist Croatia from the mid-20th century. This reflects more than 50 and 70 years of tradition in gender equality, equality of children born within and outside of marriage, equalization of marriage and cohabitations, early forms of mediation and protection of the family home. The aim of this paper is to present the Croatian family law in the second half of the second half of the 20th century, as well as the role of the social work system in the protection of the family.

Keywords: family, family law, social work, Croatia, socialism

Branka Rešetar, Ph.D., is a full professor at the Department of Family Law at the Faculty of Law Osijek. She was the head of the working group for the drafting of the Family Law Act in 2014/2015. She is the author of the lifelong learning program "Interdisciplinary Program - the Procedural Rights of the Child and Communication with the Child", as well as the one of the authors of the bachelor and master program of Social Work of the Faculty of Law Osijek.

Radical repertoires: The history and role of street-level organizations in the making of asylum policy in Austria

Florian Sichling, sichlingf@umsl.edu

This paper traces the history of immigration and asylum policies in Austria and the role of a network of NGOs that emerged from anti-racist and human-rights movements in Vienna. While much of Austrian policy since the end of WWII has been characterized by attempts to curb the in-flow of asylum seekers by limiting their ability to apply for protection, local organizations have offered resistance by blending direct services with political and legal advocacy. The analysis in this paper draws on publicly available data to highlight key moments in the legislative evolution of Austrian asylum policy and in-depth qualitative interviews with current and former activists and workers from a network of NGOs in Vienna to explore the dynamic interaction between national policy, local action and organizational practice. While there is considerable variation in the organizational characteristics of these NGOs (funding, staff composition and backgrounds, service menu, etc.) the analysis seeks to illuminate the policy conditions that facilitate revolutionary practices within the field of counselling asylum seekers. Although many workers in these organizations would not necessarily consider themselves to be social workers, the findings offer important implications for how to pursue systemic and structural change in the context of professional social work practice with asylum seekers and refugees. The recent refugee crises suggest that these types of lessons are becoming even more important for the profession moving forward.

Key words: Asylum policy; Austria; NGOs; social work practice; advocacy

Florian Sichling is a social worker from Germany and currently an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. Recently he was a visiting professor at the University of Vienna. He holds a PhD from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago.

History of Advocacy for Children with Intellectual Disabilities: The Case of the Baltic States

Eglė Šumskienė, egle.sumskiene@fsf.vu.lt

This presentation will explore the development and impact of social work advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities in the post-Soviet Baltic states Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, social movements emerged as parents of children with intellectual disabilities mobilized to advocate for inclusion, support services, and equal rights for their children. This shift from state-dominated, institutional care to family and community-centred support led to the formation of non-governmental organizations that became pivotal in redefining disability policy. The presentation will examine key theoretical frameworks—resource mobilization, political process, and new social movement theories — to understand how these parental organizations evolved, gained political influence, and shaped policy reforms in a turbulent post-Soviet environment. By analysing these movements' achievements and obstacles they faced, this study contributes to the historical discourse on social work's role in advancing disability rights, demonstrating the transformative power of grassroots advocacy in shifting from a medical to a rights-based approach to disability.

Keywords: social work advocacy, intellectual disability, Baltic states, family-centred support

Dr. Eglė Šumskienė is Professor at the Institute of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University, and an expert in disability, mental health, and human rights issues. She has been actively involved in academia and the NGO sector since 2002, contributing to national and international projects focused on social integration, policy, and human rights.

Lessons learned: The previous reforms of the social welfare system in Croatia, human rights approach, and the identity of social work profession

Kristina Urbanc, kristina.urbanc@pravo.unizg.hr

From 2009 to 2023, two reforms of the social welfare system were implemented in Croatia. None of them were implemented or planned in cooperation with the service users, or the professional or academic community; numerous remarks expressed by experts while preparing new laws were not considered. Changes in the structure of the social welfare system took place in the direction of reducing the professional resources and competences of social work and in the direction of a dichotomous division between care and control. Social work as a profession is based on promotion and protection of human rights such as equality, freedom, and rights to adequate housing, quality of life, living conditions etc. Although different employees and experts from social welfare system state that most social welfare users live their lives a way better than earlier, there is a small number of studies that provide insight into users' perspectives. Some of them also state that such changes are in favor of a more uniform approach, whereby the social worker has less time to establish a relationship of trust and cooperation, sensitized to diversity and thinking about an individualized approach in accordance with the needs of the user. In the presentation, the authors will problematize the current challenges of the social work practice under the guise of preserving professional identity, practice standards, professional values and theoretical paradigms of contemporary social work. It is also going to be problematized and discussed different aspects of Croatian social welfare system and its impact of promotion and protection of human rights of some specific groups of social welfare system users.

Keywords: social welfare reform, Croatia, professional identity, contemporary social work

Kristina Urbanc is a social worker, licensed supervisor, and psychotherapist, works at the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb as a tenured Professor. Her research interests are creative approaches in social work, the involvement of users, ethics, supervision, competences for social work with different groups of users.

Either You Get Sick or You Leave!? Stressors and Relief Factors of Digitalization in Social Work

Nadine van der Meulen, nadinevdm@gmx.de

The presentation investigates how digital transformation reshapes professional practice and wellbeing in social work from the perspectives of practitioners and provider representatives. Responding to the growing tension between promises of technological efficiency and psychosocial health, it conceives digitalization not as a technical add-on but as a socio-technical reconfiguration of organizations, ethics, and relationships. The guiding question is: Which stressors and relief factors of digitalization are reported by social workers and organizational stakeholders, and how are they negotiated within professional standards, ethics, and relationship-based practice? A sequential mixed-methods design combines 45 in-depth interviews with a theory-guided survey. Analysis follows Reflexive Grounded Theory, complemented by thematic analysis; the quantitative phase operationalizes constructs such as technostress, digital self-efficacy, recovery, and organizational support to test hypotheses across larger samples. Preliminary interview insights reveal a field marked by exhaustion and empowerment, shifting professional identities, rising technical demands, and perceived loss of control. Anchored in the transactional stress model (Lazarus & Folkman) and enriched by technostress research, professionalism studies, and actor-network theory, the project fills a German-language research gap by integrating subjective experience with systematic theory. Expected outcomes include empirically grounded recommendations for socially just, participatory, and health-promoting digital transformation—especially for vulnerable professional groups—and contributions to debates on epistemic justice, power relations, and professional autonomy in digitally mediated social work.

Keywords: digital transformation; social work; technostress; professional autonomy; participatory design

Nadine Dominique van der Meulen is a doctoral researcher at OTH Regensburg and a Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation fellow. With practice in addiction prevention, street outreach, digitalization, and inclusion, she serves as Vice Chair of DBSH NRW and on Aachen's Social Committee. An autistic scholar, she advances accessible, AI-informed, participatory higher education.

The role of gender and culture in ethical decision making of social workers and their experience of moral distress – the case study of Slovenia

Boris Zaslavsky, bz84375@student.uni-lj.si

Ethical decision making is an important component of social work practice, over the years great emphasis was placed on defining common professional values and developing codes of ethics and practice guidelines. Despite evidence suggesting that social work education has minimal influence on practitioners' values and that social workers rarely utilize the code of ethics as a decision-making tool. Moreover, most of the scholarly work remains theoretical and there is a relatively few empirical research exploring the real-life ethical world of social workers. Social demographic factor such a gender and cultural influence are recognized as have a major influence on ethical behaviour and decision. Unfortunately, in the field of social work those factors have mostly been ignored, and only a few have recognized there importances. A privet case of ethical decision making in social work is the concept of moral distress was developed by Jameton (1984) and describe as a moral situation when the practitioner knows what the right ethical course of action is but unable to act because of external constraints. With the rise of neoliberalism and its devastating influence on the welfare state model and social services across the West and Slovenia. There is an increasing interest among social work scholars in the concept of moral distress within the field's research. Despite significant efforts to describe, explain, and measure this phenomenon, certain gaps remain. The existing literature on moral distress in the context of social work has primarily focused on ethical education and organizational constraints, while important underlying factors such as gender and cultural influences have remained largely unexplored. The presentation aims to improve the understating of the role that gender and culture play in the way social workers in the field construct, experience, and coup with ethical situations in general and moral distress in particular. I use the case of Slovenia as a relative culturally homogeneous ground for the study.

keywords: Ethics, Decision making, Moral distress, Gender, Cultural values, Neo-liberalism

Boris Zaslavsky, doctoral candidate and a practicing social worker and social activist. For the past 15 years he worked in various public, private and NGO organizations in Israel as a community social worker and case manager. His main points of interest are ethics in social work and community practice.

The development of LGBTQ+ perspectives in social work education

Jelka Zorn and Mojca Urek, jelka.zorn@fsd.uni-lj.si, mojca.urek@fsd.uni-lj.si

This presentation focuses on the development of education on LGBTQ+ issues at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana. The authors reflect on the current course "LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Social Work" at the master's level and its earlier versions in the past, as well as on how the issues of non-normative sexualities and identities are interwoven in social work curricula with other courses in the faculty's study programmes. The evaluation of the experiences of the last three generations of students on the MA course "LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Social Work" is presented in terms of knowledge and skills that the students have acquired in the course. The students have rated the course highly, particularly the teaching approaches, which involved the participation of LGBTI+ activists, attending events, working in small groups on social work cases, and a dialogic approach alongside the usual teaching methods. The participants with low prior knowledge have been more likely to notice changes in their perceptions, such as a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people and a breakdown of their own prejudices. They also equipped themselves with arguments to challenge prejudice in their own personal and professional contexts. The knowledge and skills developed in the course are essential tools for working with LGBTQ+ people in practice. The teachers / authors, who also reflected on their own position as members of the LGBTQ+ community during the course, see their involvement on a spectrum ranging from activism to pedagogical and scientific engagement.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ perspectives, curriculum, course evaluation, prejudice breakdown

Jelka Zorn is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Work, where she has been employed since 1999. She lectures on various courses and has researched migration/refugees/borders, social movements, global inequalities, LGBTQI+ perspectives in social work.

Mojca Urek is an Associate Professor and the Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Ljubljana, where she has worked since 1992. She has conducted research on narrative approaches in social work, mental health, gender-based violence, and LGBTQI+. She has been the national lead of two European projects on LGBTI+ inclusive social care, overcoming cis-heteronormative practices in the care of LGBTI+ older people through training and combating violence against gender non-conforming children.

Migration as a Gender and Sexual Revolution: Arabic-Speaking Queer Community Arts and Activism in the EU Diaspora

Samar Zughool, samar@povod.si

In Arabic-speaking countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) face intersectional discrimination and violence, causing many to seek refuge abroad, including in the EU. Mainstream research often confines them to narratives of victimhood. However, the Arabic-speaking diaspora with diverse SOGIESC in the EU plays a crucial role in sustaining sexual and gender-diverse freedoms. This occurs through their queer activism and community arts as a form of political social work—a role frequently overlooked or undocumented. Navigating between homonationalism and anti-gender movements, they uphold sexual freedom and democratic values in the EU. Simultaneously, they mobilize for sexual and gender-diverse liberation in the countries they left. Arabic-speaking queer community artists in the EU maintain a non-binary existence that challenges polarization by defying binary narratives within homonationalism, which are based on essentialist segregations of West vs. East. The presenter is a self-identified queer feminist. She holds Jordanian citizenship and resides in Slovenia. As a community artist and activist, she conducted focus groups over one year as action research, culminating in two queer Arabic-speaking community art projects: '1834: Al Ghawazi and Khawalat' and 'NOT Your Scheherazade and Om Badawi'. This research brought together queer community artists and activists who left Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, and are now living in Slovenia and the Netherlands. By defining queer Arabic-speaking community arts and activism as political social work, this study provides concrete examples of migration as a sexual and gender-diverse revolution. Additionally, it contributes to migration research by employing post-structural feminist approaches to emphasize self-agency.

keywords: migration, SOGIESC, Arab-speaking countries, queer community, activism

Samar Zughool is the director of Reka Si, a research and arts institute in Slovenia. In 2019, she received the Prešeren Award for Students from the Faculty of Social Sciences for her master's thesis on the role of women's rights movements in reforming public policies after the Arab Spring. Currently, she is in her second year of doctoral studies at the Faculty of Social Work. She is also a member of the gender group at CONCORD, a confederation of NGOs at the EU level, where she researches gender mainstreaming in EU external actions and international relations.

