

FROM FRAGMENTED TO UNITED:

The Power of Alliances in the Political Self-Organization of Social Work in Germany

Abstract

Social Work in Germany grapples with the harsh reality of poor working conditions, excessive overtime, and a lack of societal recognition, leading to disillusionment and frustration among practitioners. Amidst socio-political upheavals including environmental crises and the upsurge of far-right ideologies, the pivotal role of Social Work in society becomes increasingly evident. Political Self-Organization in Social Work (PSO-SW) offers a promising avenue for addressing these challenges while upholding professional ethics and advocating for systemic change. However, the fragmented nature of PSO-SW and the lack of cohesive movements underscores the need for alliance building. Alliances in PSO-SW harbor great potential precisely because they can bridge divides, bundle forces and mobilize collective action. This thesis investigates alliances within PSO-SW, aiming to uncover supportive factors for their formation and success drivers. Drawing on network theory and a Grounded Theory approach, supportive factors for alliances are elucidated. An inner support circle, the development of a suitable organizational structure, a mindset focusing on networking, solidarity and a critical/radical Social Work understanding and skills like persistence revealed as supportive factors. Success factors like building up an external support networks, as well as leveraging existing structures, emerged. Despite methodological limitations, this research lays the groundwork for further exploration and active engagement in alliance-building efforts to drive meaningful change within the field of Social Work in Germany.

Keywords:

Political Self-Organization, alliances, networking, advocacy, critical/radical Social Work