

Abstract

This thesis explores mutual aid and self-organized support structures among Polish homeless people living in Berlin. While social work services provide substantial aid in navigating a challenging reality, these services can reflect paternalistic and insufficient practices. For EU citizens, this is further exacerbated by limited legal options for obtaining sustainable support. Abolitionist social work provides the theoretical framework, emphasizing the importance of centering marginalized people's voices and practices, and addressing a significant gap in both academia and practice. Through informal conversations and employing Grounded Theory, this study identifies four key themes shared by homeless Poles in Berlin regarding their day-to-day lives, mutual aid, and social work. The study highlights the role of self-organized support structures and their potential to inform abolitionist social work practices. The findings suggest that participants utilize a wide range of informal support structures, both complementary to and contrasting with social work provisions, and that a transformation of social work toward solidarity and allyship is necessary in response to adverse sociopolitical circumstances.

Key words:

homelessness, EU citizens, abolitionist social work, mutual aid, self-organized support structures, grounded theory