

This project aims at researching social mobilization for the rights of women providing sexual services in Poland in the context of European mobilization in this field. I intend to investigate what kind of social actors undertake actions in this area and what is the scope of their actions. I will also inquire how different epistemological views on prostitution shape the actions of activists and the steps they undertake in order to improve the situation of women engaged in commercial sexual exchanges. On the transnational, level the mobilization for the rights of women selling sexual services will be investigated by tracing the transnational networks, organizations and founding institutions which support the mobilization for the rights of women selling sexual services at the national level in Poland.

Analysis of the mobilisation for the women providing sexual services will be grounded in the in-depth exploration of the opportunity structures in which mobilisation is emerging and realized. The political and discursive opportunity structures create the context for the social mobilization, they may enable or hinder the development of specific forms and trajectories of mobilization for the rights of women in the sex industry. I will put special emphasis on the socio-legal inquiry into the Polish law concerning prostitution and the activity of state institutions determining sex work policies. The discursive opportunity structure will be investigated through the analysis of the discussions on sex work in Polish women's and feminist movement and the academic works concerning prostitution. I chose these two fields since they are crucial in shaping knowledge and discourses on prostitution.

This project is located in the sex work research. While bringing into the fore the situation of women selling sexual services, this research aims specifically on inquiring the dynamic and complex sex industry nexus. In contemporary sociological works on sex work the stress is put on the multilayered analysis of this issue and the inquiry into a variety of actors, processes, places and contexts: not only sex workers – both male, female and transgender, but also clients, managers and organizers; police and law enforcements institutions who control prostitution, local communities where sex is sold; institutions and their actors engaged in support of sex workers, activists fighting for the rights of persons selling sexual services.

This project will apply the qualitative research methodology. I will use both sociological and anthropological research methods, grounded in the social movement studies. I will study social movement organization, informal activist networks and other social agents engaged in actions for the rights of women in the sex industry. The research will encompass case studies in the organizations, interviews with activists, focus group interviews and participant observation. Crucial is also the inclusion in the research the voice of women providing sexual services who are beneficiaries of the researched organizations.

The reason to carry on this research is the fact that the studies concerning the recognition of sex workers right in Poland are still vestigial. The existing data indicates that the marginalization of women selling sexual services is multidimensional and manifests in the language, everyday situations, treatment by the police and economic and social exclusion, legal discrimination. Still a critical analysis of the politics of prostitution in Poland is lacking. Hence a vital input of this study will be the development of knowledge based on the recent achievements in the sociology of sex work which adopts a wide perspective to study prostitution in social, cultural and economic context using feminist and critical approach.