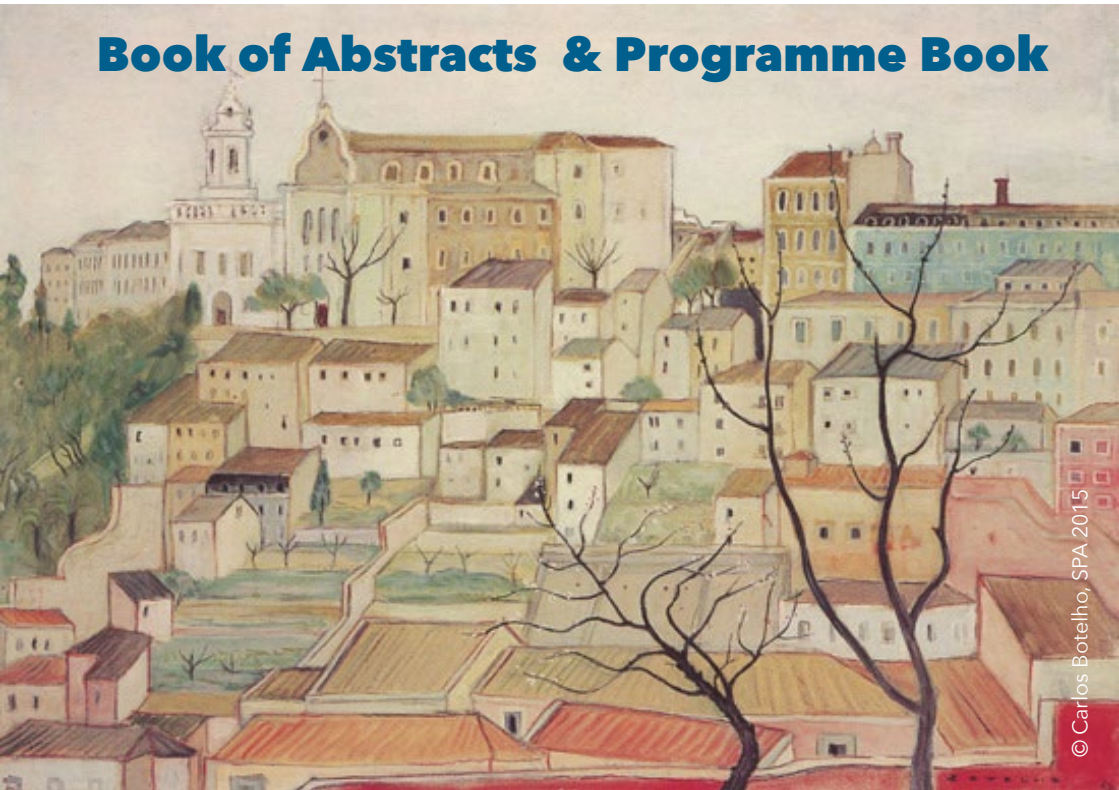


6th European Conference for Social Work Research

Reflective social work practices in contemporary societies:
dialogues and new pathways between praxis and research

Book of Abstracts & Programme Book



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FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS HUMANAS

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6th EUROPEAN CONFERENCE FOR SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH

Reflective social work practices in contemporary societies: dialogues and new pathways between praxis and research

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OPENING SESSION

OPENING WELCOME

Vice-Rector of Catholic University of Portugal, Professor Isabel Gil

Dear special guests

Dear conference participants and colleagues

Welcome to the 6th European Conference for Social Work Research of the European Social Work Research Association. This year, the conference is held at the initiative of the Catholic University of Portugal by School of Human Sciences and the Research Centre for Human Development and organized by a host committee including members of the academic staff of our university but also by colleagues from the ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon and University of Coimbra. I am very grateful and honoured to have served as the chair of the local committee. In my own name and on behalf of the organising committee we would like to express our satisfaction at hosting this conference which has a programme that condenses, unequivocally, the dynamic, challenges and relevant contribution of social work research in the broader context of Human and Social Sciences in Europe.

Our conference is taking place in a country in which the institutionalisation of social work as academic training and a profession, took place in the socio-political context of the Estado Novo, a system of corporatist and authoritarian nature, which was averse to public intervention in the social sphere and, therefore, contradicted the notion of a welfare state, in institutionalisation across Europe and other world regions.

The first attempts to develop social work education in Portugal took place in 1928. It was not, however, until the first congress of the National Union (single-party state) in 1934, that proposals for the establishment of the Institute of Social Work were adopted. Following this, the first school was created in 1935, in Lisbon, at the initiative of the Catholic Church and under the franco-phone social work influence.

The 1960s represent a turning point in social work education in Portugal. Following the 1956 revision of public regulation of education in social work, with the introduction of a four-year curriculum, social work was recognised as higher education (1961) and a gradual reorientation of training was adopted, with a progressive introduction of curricular courses in social sciences and the classic methods in social work.

With the institutional, cultural and ideological transformations following the Carnation Revolution on April 25, 1974, a new phase of social work in Portugal was opened. Between the several dynamics of this period it is important to underline the academic and professional movement towards the integration of the social work education in the public university and the recognition of the university degree in social work. This movement, the most relevant academic and professional of social work in Portugal until today, achieving the recognition of the university degree in 1989, and is a major milestone of the academic and professional development of social work in our country. After that, in the last twenty five years the development of social work education in Portugal is characterised by its 'academisation' process, following a late and complex process, as evidenced by the history of the recognition of university level (1989), the very late introduction of the social work programmes in public education system (2000), the contradictory signals of the higher education policy with the creation of social work study cycles in polytechnic institutions in 2003, and the difficulty of establishing social work research as a field recognised and supported by the Portuguese scientific policy.

Our conference call was answered by around 700 abstracts authored by one or more persons. The review panel was integrated by 105 experts in Social Work research, from 26 different nationalities. Each abstract submitted had at least a double peer-blinded review. Moreover, almost all submissions were reviewed by peers from different nationalities and from other countries than the ones of the proposals. This complex and exigent process gives us confidence in the high scientific standard of the 250 oral presentations, 31 symposia & workshops and 25 posters accepted.

The Conference will have 525 participants from 41 countries across Europe and other regions of the world: a majority come from European Union countries (80% of the participants, including 40 participants from Portugal and other countries of Southern Europe), but also from the North America (39 researchers from United States and Canada), the Middle East and Asia (46 researchers), and Australia, which represents the highest number of researchers involved in ESWRA conferences and, for the first time, the conference programme formally includes pre-conference activities promoted for some ESWRA Special Interest Groups. All of this, and the expertise and of the keynote speakers composes, I'm confident, an interesting and stimulating programme.

Our 6th European Conference for Social Work Research is taking place on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of Social Work Programme at Catholic University, the first Portuguese university which created the social work programme (1996), the first PhD programme in Social Work (2003) and the first research centre in Social Work hosted by a university (2003). Therefore, naturally, hosting this conference has a special meaning for us, but this event has, clearly, a strong relevance for social work in Portugal. First of all because it is a demonstration of the dimension, widespread nature, dynamics and quality of social work as academic discipline across Europe, a refutation of the parochialism that, often characterised and still characterises the vision and arguments of the Portuguese authorities at educational and scientific level. Secondly, because it contributes to put the Portuguese and Southern European Social Work on the map of social work research. And last, but not least, because it challenges the Portuguese social work to adopt an adequate strategy to consolidate its 'academisation' process and to contribute to the Portuguese society social development.

The organisation of one conference like this is only possible with the engagement and contribution of lot of people. Please let me dedicate a couple of minutes to thanking of all of them.

The entire organisational work on the conference was done by the team that I would like to thank for their invaluable contribution. My wonderful colleagues Isabel Santos, Ana Oliveira e Inês Guerra, from Catholic University; Inês Amaro from the ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon, that from the start shared with me the enthusiasm of this adventure, and Cristina Albuquerque from the University of Coimbra. They must be credited with our deep recognition.

Thirty-two undergraduate, master and PhD students are volunteers at the conference. On behalf of all of us on the organising committee I would like to direct a warm thanks, as well as to the secretary Rosario Lopes all the other members of the staff of the School of Human Sciences and of the Catholic University.

I would like to say a special thanks to Mhairi Snowden, the ESWRA Administrator, her competence and dedication have been exceptional and a decisive contribution to the management of the conference.

I should also like to thank the unconditional support that the hosting committee received from the Vice-Rector of the University and the former Dean of the School of Human Sciences.

Our gratitude should also be expressed to all institutional stakeholders of

the conference: Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT), Municipality of Lisbon, School of Sociology and Public Policy - ISCTE / IUL, School of Psychology and Education Sciences - University of Coimbra.

I would like also to thank the young people of the Violinhos Orquest, from the Music Academy of Lisbon, the Coral and Ethnographic Group "Friends of Alentejo", Feijó - Almada and the Fado players. Their performances will enrich our opening ceremony and cultural programme.

I would also to thank to all members of the International Review Panel and to all our esteemed keynote speakers.

Finally, I would to say a special thanks to Professor Ian Shaw. For me and for my colleagues of the Hosting Committee it has been a privilege to work with you, sharing all your wisdom and determination. Unfortunately, you miss this yours Conference and, here, from Lisbon to York, we all wish your fast and safe recovery. The ESWRA still needs your engagement!

I and my colleagues are finishing a long and hard year. We did our job I think. Now this is your time. I hope this conference is a pleasant experience, abundant with knowledge sharing and opening avenues for the future for social work research.

Prof. Francisco Branco,
Chair of the Host Conference Committee



OPENING WELCOME

A warm welcome from ESWRA to everybody here at the conference and heartfelt thanks to the organizers of the conference who have poured such effort and competence and abilities into making it a success; a success which we see as important because of the relevance we ascribe to social work research and the role it can play in the struggle to address the current difficult circumstances. Nowadays our societies and Europe as a whole are facing new questions and issues, new inequalities, new and old phenomena which are perceived by the majority as threats. Certainly today we cannot avoid talking about terrorist attacks, the fear they engender and the climate they create, but also the phenomena connected to them. The flow of people moving and risking their lives to find safety from war or unlivable circumstances, the growing poverty which particularly affects families and children, the growing inequality, the struggle of young people to find their place / a role in society. And we have to consider the impact of these problems, the sense of hopelessness and helplessness which is gaining ground across whole segments of our societies.

Social services have an important part to play: At the end of the last century, in a debate in the journal social service review which focused on themes such as the social work profession, altruism and social control, Wakefield stated that:

A society that observes the ideal of justice is one in which people tend to feel satisfied and the social order tends to be maintained, whereas feelings of injustice lead to envy, anger, and, potentially, action that may not stay within the bounds of social civility. The sense of justice is thus a potent social control mechanism. This kind of social control is neither nefarious nor exploitative; the "control" is simply an effect of reducing injustice. In this sense social work and social interventions have a role to play; they need new knowledge to enable them to do so.

And here I would like to come back to social work research: I was recently at a conference organized by the general EC Directorate General on migration, and looking at the funded projects I saw how currently funds are clustered around projects studying macro social phenomena as well as public policies. Conversely, more in depth studies appear to be

less considered: those dealing with the micro processes and the concrete ways in which interventions not only enact, but also create those policies and transform them, and may render them effective or expose their limits. And this is exactly the space occupied by social work research: it provides systematic knowledge on how services are delivered, on the new approaches / strategies practitioners create / adopt to face their challenges, on the emergence of critical issues, and on the experiences and needs of those who are or might be users of those services.

The perspective offered by social work research looks at the processes and micro-processes thorough which social policies are implemented/created, putting at the forefront the knowledge and experiences of people who directly experience social issues, but also critically valuing the knowledge and experiences of frontline workers. In a sense / In fact, I think this is a major point: the connection of social work research to the level of delivery of services and its attention to an inside perspective, both involving people to whom services are directed and practitioners who put their efforts and energies and feelings to address people's concrete needs.

The passion that many of us have put into creating and/or adhering to Eswra, in affirming the importance of a specific organization for social work research has to do with the importance that we ascribe to developing social work research. We think that there is room to develop quality and innovative methods, as well as to better think their connection to front line practice, which is certainly a two-way connection. On the other hand we have to work on the funding institutions, we need to work on SWR so as to gain wider recognition and better funding.

Eswra was created two years ago and I would like to describe briefly what we have already done both in supporting social work research and in planning this conference. We certainly cannot underestimate the importance of creating an infrastructure for the organization which has to be in tune with the goals of the association. For this we are indebted to Elaine Sharland, who will be stepping down this year from her role as secretary, and who has drawn on her deep competences as a social work scholar in translating the ideas which animate Eswra into a structure / an organisation. But what we are developing at the moment are the special interest groups whose work has been visible in the pre-conference events and will be again during the conference, as well as the new projects the association is working on; we are also certainly working on dissemination. The special issue and the project of

a social work series illustrate this point.

I think it is important to remark here that ESWRA is also working in the direction of developing recognition and funding for social work research. The presence of Mr. Philippe Keraudren of the EC at the closing ceremony is just an example of how we are trying to connect with relevant bodies with whom to negotiate for social work research. And as Mr. Keraudren has reminded us, negotiating and gaining visibility at a European level, or failing to do so, may have a huge impact at the level of individual countries, and on how in each country social work research is valued.

And here I want to take this opportunity also to tell you all how much eswra needs the contributions of its members and of social work scholars, and to thank all of you who have already participated and are active in the organization, its website and committees, and in the special interest groups. And at the same time I extend a warm invitation to all of you who are not yet members, to consider becoming part of the association, on the one hand to enjoy the resulting benefits / advantages, and on the other to contribute to its growth.

Ian Shaw (in his last book, aptly and inspiringly titled *Social Work Science*, published by Chicago University Press) devotes an entire chapter to the Social work science community. He opens up questions such as: What are we talking about when we speak of collaboration or of a social work science community? Who belongs in this community? Is its membership based on who you are or what you do, your sense of identity, or where you work? How do we know if specific social work program faculty, social work practitioners, contract researchers, or service users are part of such a community? Those are questions have certainly yet to be answered: but what we can see here at this conference is an effort to concretely address the issue. Ian Shaw is now stepping down from the ESWRA board and this is the right time to acknowledge that the conference as well as the association would not have happened if not for the ideas, projects, determination and generosity that Ian Shaw contributed over the years.

Well, I wish everybody a very interesting and stimulating time here in Lisbon at the conference.

Prof. Silvia Fargion,
Chair European Social Work research Association

VALUING THE WORK OF SSH TODAY: THE EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF ESWRA

How can we "value" the work of Social sciences and the Humanities (SSH) in Europe today? On the one hand, there are obvious examples in front of our eyes and in our newspapers: terrorism of course, but also migration, unemployment, tax evasion, wars and crises at the door of Europe, growth models, the future of Europe, and so on. On the other hand, there are less "fashionable" items that SSH can address because SSH alone can analyse all the various forms of organised and non-so organised violence, exploitation and indifference.

Isn't "social work" in this latter category? As ESWRA defines itself, "ESWRA's vision is to take forward the development, practice and utilization of social work research to enhance knowledge about individual and social problems, and to promote just and equitable societies". Is that an objective that we should abandon? Certainly not if we continue to live in democratic societies whose foundation is still, at least until it may become democratically contested, to be as just and as equitable as possible. If we want to live by democratic standards, it is thus obvious that the works of ESWRA is necessary and, given the current difficulties of our social policies, even more and more necessary.

I have been struck by the fact that ESWRA was founded in 2014 only and that it already has over 250 members from 21 countries. The existence of ESWRA is important because it says to the public, to the policy makers that there are serious people thinking serious things and that these people represent the SSH communities. The voice of specialists like you must be heard, your analyses must reach the public domain at large. There is actually now an excellent opportunity for ESWRA to respond to the current public consultation on the social pillar of the EU which will form the basis for the social policy of the EU for the next few years. By contributing, ESWRA will signal to EU policy makers that SSH scientists are involved in the world they live in and not only neutral observers.

Some may rightly ask: are you trying to push SSH academics you on the slippery road of engagement which sometimes had obscured the vigilance and the objectivity of SSH and of other sciences? The argument is rather to say that science should not be separate from public discourses, or else

that democratic debates should not develop without organised exchanges and take up of SSH, even if we know that, eventually, the necessary political arrangements of our democracies may discard the conclusions of science. Organising the exchanges between science and policy is therefore essential and this is a new and delicate task for most of the SSH scholars.

Of course, the critical dimension of SSH and its active stance towards complexity and nuances may have difficulties to be accepted by all in our changing democracies. Nevertheless, rather than leave the battlefield of public ideas, the SSH, which by far are still publicly funded, have to enter this field with courage and the intelligence of what a democratic debate means, and make their claims for rationality and evidence based debates in democracies.

This is what ESWRA was set up for and this is the task that will grow for ESWRA in the near and distant future.

Philippe Keraudren
E. Commission - DG Research & Innovation

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME