

Ute Straub

Biographical Sketch

Born into an “average” German family without any migration background, my most exiting experience abroad was a three-week language course in England. This changed dramatically after I had finished my Master of Educational Sciences in 1977: Searching for adventure I volunteered in West Africa for two years. I was confronted with neo-colonial experiences of all kinds which had an immense impact on my self-concept - till today.



Back in Germany I worked in several fields of SW, for example, with young immigrants from Turkey, with youth who had disabilities, in media pedagogy (open access TV for communities) and in Public Relations. Engaged in a feminist group, I built up a women’s shelter in the early 1980’s to which I am still committed. Concurrently I started my dissertation on “Institutionalisation in NGOs/ women’s projects” (PhD in 1987). My two children were the reason that I started applying for an academic career with the intention of being able to better facilitate family-career-compatibility. In 1997 I obtained tenure at the University of Applied Sciences in Frankfurt a.M. My teaching topics are, among others, theories and methods of Social Work, gender issues, international Social Work. I am the international coordinator of our department, at least twice a year I lecture at our partner universities abroad and right now I am implementing a Section for International SW within the German Association of Social Work.

IASSW Vision Statement

The IASSW’s socio-political engagement meets my total approval. Ever since I started teaching Social Work, I have attempted to motivate my students to stand up for their profession, to make their expertise noticeable in public and to understand Social Work as a profession that should contribute substantially to current urgent social questions. The fact that the international umbrella organisations offer framework and support helps in convincing students. To me it is a logical consequence, now that my personal circumstances allow me to do so, to undertake a commitment in the IASSW’s activities. It would also be a worthy sequel to my political engagement in Germany, especially in the women’s and ecological movements.

As an incoming person not yet familiar in detail with all the on-going discussions in the various committees, I have more questions than answers.

Regarding the four foci of efforts named in the global agenda for the period of 2012-2016, I think it essential that global economic developments come to the fore, since these are most influential in terms of permitting equality, dignity and worth of peoples and because they create the backdrop for fighting for environmental sustainability as well as the recognition of the importance of human relationships. Currently negotiated free-trade agreements lack transparency as well as social perspectives (see TTIP, and TPPA) but will affect consumers and farmers, environment and intellectual property. How can the IASSW’s contacts to WTO and other global economic institutions be strengthened?

Another issue I would like to stress concerns education and training. How can we transfer into teaching practice what has been added to the latest draft of the New International Definition of SW? How can we support fruitful exchange and mutual inspiration of Northern and Southern/ indigenous/ locally-specific approaches in Social Work?

A third topic I would commit myself to is supporting a better balance in terms of the schools’ representation within the IASSW. I know there have been efforts to include countries of the Global South but I still see the necessity to mend the gap especially with South American and African countries. These are the issues I would be more than happy to work on should I be elected a member at large of the IASSW board.