

## [Interdisciplinary workshop “The police and sex work: then and now”](#)

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Call for Papers

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Location:

Germany

Subject Fields:

Anthropology, Contemporary History, Sociology, Political Science, Women's & Gender History / Studies

Sex work seems to be inextricably tied to the police. Across space and time, the lived realities and experiences of sex workers, the organization of sexual labor as well as political and social debates on sex work can hardly be studied without reference to the ways in which the police and police officers approached and engaged with the sex economy.

‘The police and sex work - then and now’ is a two-day event to be held at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin on August 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> 2019. The workshop aims to be a platform of knowledge-exchange for researchers, particularly early career scholars. In addition to the presenters, we invite academics, students, activists, and practitioners to be part of the active audience to build interdisciplinary connections.

This workshop aims at bringing together researchers from various fields who work on topics where sex work and the police intersect. Most recently, studies have focused on the policing of sex work and its negative impact on sex workers, especially where sex work is criminalized and therefore policed through control and repression. Human rights approaches stress how law-and-order approaches to the sex economy harm sex workers as well as victims of human trafficking. Less attention has been directed towards the ways in which the police and individual (former) police officers actively engage in public and political debates on sex work in order to strengthen the resources and thus the grip of the police on sex workers. Similarly, a number of anti-sex work and some anti-trafficking initiatives continue to demand more rather than less police action in relation to sexual labor.

The current focus on the negative impact of criminalization and the policing of sex work is not new. Historically, police oversight and control of sex workers had been

institutionalized in “regulationist” countries. Not just the practices, but the existence of the “morals police” itself has historically been criticized by the “abolitionist” movement - a movement which, at least in the first half of the 20th century, aimed at eradicating state and police oversight over sex workers as well as special laws targeting sex work rather than at abolishing sex work itself. However, the history of the critical engagement of feminists and activists with the policing of sex work has been largely forgotten in contemporary debates on sex work. Similarly, many histories of the policing of sex work in the past have yet to be written, including the ways in which the sex workers’ rights movement re-conceptualized the role of the police in legal approaches to sex work.

Our workshop builds on existing scholarship, but also aims at exploring new perspectives based on an engagement with scholars working in different disciplines and employing different methodologies. Possible fields of inquiry both in the past and present and set across the globe include:

- Legal frameworks and the role of the police in regulating sex work
- The relationship between legal frameworks, policing practices and the lived realities of sex workers
- The perception and construction of sex work, prostitution and human trafficking by the police
- The perception and construction of the police by sex workers
- Interactions between the police and sex workers
- Discourses and media representations of the police and sex work(ers)
- Media and the visual economy of the policing of sex work
- Activist engagements with the police and sex work
- Theory, methods, and conceptual issues

The workshop explicitly aims at bridging the divide between past and presents and invites both historians and other social scientists to join the conversation. The objective is to create a space for participants from a diverse range of disciplines in order to exchange and discuss recent findings as well as work in progress with an interested audience and connect and arrange potential collaborations with other interested researchers and activists.

We welcome abstracts for individual papers only. Abstracts of proposed papers (300 words) should be sent with a short bio via email to both organizers of the workshop: Sonja Dolinsek (sonja.dolinsek [at] uni-erfurt.de) and Mira Fey (mira.fey [at] graduateinstitute.ch).

Please send your proposal by **April 15th 2019**. Accepted speakers will be notified by April 30th 2019.

The workshop will be free to attend, but there are no travel grants or bursaries available for presenters and attendees.

Contact Info:

Sonja Dolinsek (sonja.dolinsek [at] uni-erfurt.de)

Mira Fey (mira.fey [at] graduateinstitute.ch)