**Report from The Albertine Symposium -**

**University of Roskilde November 2015**

**Prostitution: A changing situated market of commodified estranged sex.**

Kirsten Grønbæk Hansen, Inge Henningsen, Bodil Maria Pedersen. EDGE, University of Roskilde

The following summary and discussion of knowledge presented at the Albertine Symposium is based on power points and other presentations from the symposium, summaries written during the symposium, and a subsequent discussion by the research group EDGE.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Albertine Symposium**  **On the purchase and sale of sexualised** **performances in Denmark and on diverse kinds of regulation, on the background of experience from Norway, Sweden and Germany.**  ***Albertine was an unmarried seamstress, forced into public prostitution, and therefore had to meet up for regular inspections for venereal diseases at the police doctor. The painting “Albertine at the Police Doctor’s Waiting Room” was painted by the Norwegian artist Christian Krogh in 1887. Krogh also wrote the novel “Albertine” and the debate following expedited the abolition of public prostitution in Norway.*** | **Christian_Krogh-Albertine_i_politilægens_venteværelse.jpg** |

**Thursday, November 26th. 2015. 14.00 - 21.00.**

**University of Roskilde, building 30.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Program:*** | |
| *13.30-14.00* | *Arrival* |
| *14.00-14.15* | *Some Background for the Symposium. Kirsten Grønbæk Hansen, Department of People and Technology, RUC* |
| *14.15-14.30* | *Presentations of participants* |
| *14.30-14.45* | *Grundspørgsmål til prostitutionsfeltet (Basic Questions concerning the Field of Prostitution). Bodil Maria Pedersen, Department of People and Technology* |
| *14.45-15.45* | *Against prostitution – the case of Sweden. Sven-Axel Månsson, Hälsa och Samhälle, Malmö Högskola* |
| *15.45-16.00* | *Refreshments* |
| *16.00-17.00* | *The debate on prostitution in a historical and contemporary perspective. Agnete Strøm, Women´s Front Norway/ Kvinnefronten.* |
| *17.00-18.00* | *The German model of legalized prostitution. Development and consequences. Inge Kleine, Kommunikationszentrum für Frauen zur Arbeits- und Lebenssituation.* |
| *18.00-19.00* | *Dinner* |
| *19.00-21.00* | *Short presentations and continued discussion* |

We want to thank Rector, Hanne Leth Andersen, and Rector’s Development Fund for the financial support, that made the symposium possible. We also want to thank the Research group EDGE for financial as well as practical support

**Summary and discussion**

**Summary**

It is estimated that globally 40-42 million people are involved in prostitution (Fondation Scelles, 2012), and that 70% of the women engaged in prostitution in Western Countries are migrants.

As involved criminal groups earn around 3 billion USD a year, prostitution is assumed to be one of the most lucrative illegal businesses in Europe (UNOCD, 2010). Thus there are many global economic interests in the field, and authorities wish to intervene. The question is how?

In Denmark the discussion is ongoing as well as parallel to an international debate, and questions are raised in international organisations such as the UN and the EU. On the one hand it is argued that a general decriminalisation of all practices concerning prostitution should be legalised and normalised, including *procuring*. Lately, Amnesty International advocated full decriminalisation/legalisation of all aspects of prostitution, including procuring.

On the other hand, this has been publically criticised by organisations like Equality Now, anti-trafficking organisations and networks of researchers from over 30 countries including Denmark, where the criminalisation of costumers has also been advocated.

**Presentation 1.**

**Bodil M. Pedersen[[1]](#footnote-1) : *On commodified sexualized activities – Between research and politics.***

Main points are: 1) That how the selling and buying of sexualized activities are situated (who, what, where, when and how questions) must always be considered in researching the phenomena. 2) Specific and more common aspects hereof must be critically related to an analysis. 3) But also how the researcher is situated and what her preconceptions are. This is especially important in a highly ideologically influenced field of research like this one. 4) On what levels (individual, local, national, international) prostitution is being researched must be taken into account, as well as how they relate to other levels. 5) What potentials for generalizations that result from the empirical material must thus be critically considered and situated.

6) Historical and situated aspects like those of violence, victimization/agency, criminality, power and empowerment, intimacy and sexuality/sexualization are inherent to the field.

7) All these, and many other aspects of the commodification of sexualized services point to the need for critical interdisciplinary studies, in order to uncover conflicts in goals in societal strategies, as well as to inform politics of their advantages and disadvantages.

**Presentation 2.**

**Sven-Axel Månsson[[2]](#footnote-2):** ***Against Prostitution: The Case of Sweden***

Sweden has a comprehensive policy model in which the Swedish law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services is embedded in changes of legal and social welfare measures over more than 30 years. The policy is a policy *against* prostitution *but for* people in prostitution. It is against stigmatisation of persons in prostitution because of a sexuality which is not their own. The aim is a comprehensive effort, in which the consequences of the law against sex purchase is to be understood as connected to many other laws developed over 30 years.

Prostitution is seen as the expression of traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society. Therefore, prostitution is not acceptable in a gender equal society. The law underlines the fact that sexuality is socially constructed and has to be regulated in relation to specific cultural and historical circumstances. There are two important connections: 1) between violence and prostitution and

2 power relations between men and women.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Swedish law has a deterrent effect on third parties such as traffickers and organised crime.

The evaluation from 2010 shows no overall increase in prostitution in Sweden. Furthermore comparing with demand in Denmark, laws in Norway and Sweden seem to decrease demand.

Polls in Sweden show growth of public support for the law and that the proportion of men buying sex is decreasing.

Some critique of statistics, is put forward and claims of added insecurity for persons in prostitution, increase of market on internet (has not been adequately substantiated, since many advertisers are recurrent). The critique of the social consequences of the law is a. o. more violence, infringement on rights to one’s own choices, increase in stigmatisation, problems concerning non-Swedish nationals, and heterosexism (meaning that the law creates problems for LGBT persons who are assumed to have specific reasons for being in prostitution (a claim that is not supported by all LGBT persons)

If the law is to be applied in other countries, it must be accompanied by work of social outreach character, psychosocial counselling and health services with a combination of strategies: prevention, exit strategies and harm reduction. Criminalization of users must be considered in relation to other laws that relate to the field. How do they balance and counterbalance the effects of the law? Do they support the new law?

Evaluations of existing forms of interventions are contradictory. In some of these, users in prostitution seem satisfied. In others they experience help as conditioned by acceptances of the dominating view of prostitution.

Furthermore, it is necessary to research prostitution in gay and lesbian communities and the development of attitudes in diverse segment of society.

In Sweden there are repatriation possibilities, for example for women from Nigeria. However, the women disappear out of the programs, probably because they fear that the police and other agents are involved in the home country.

Finally, research may be problematic. As an academic you are expected to think in complex ways. This is our profession, but it may remove us from the practicalities and problems of persons in prostitution, as well as from the problems of the field as such.

**Presentation 3.**

**Agnete Strøm**[[4]](#footnote-4): ***The debate on prostitution in a historical and contemporary perspective***.

The speaker underscored, that it is a feminist goal to limit supply and demand in prostitution, another to prevent entry into prostitution, and a third to help people already in prostitution.

The feminist fight to abolish prostitution started in England in 1870. In 1864 England had passed the Contagious Disease Acts. From Josephine Butler’s[[5]](#footnote-5) perspective this step formalized and legalized the sexual enslavement of women, and a double-standard morality, whereas she demanded personal liberty for all women. She criticised those who profited from the practice: Slaveholders, procurers and the state.

The CD acts transformed casual prostitution of working class women into a specially identified exploitable class. Thus the prostituted women were isolated and separated from their neighbourhoods into distinct red light districts and brothels and into in effect “industrialized” prostitution, thus making their exit more difficult. This social and geographical isolation facilitated the criminal organisation of prostitution complete with pimps, procurers, and organized brothels.

A century later, blame was shifted from persons in prostitution to the customers: With no demand there will be no prostitution. The shift has demanded much political work. For background see the following UN-declarations:

* UN-Charter 1948
* Convention 49, 1949
* CEDAW convention 1979 (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)
* Palermo Protocol 2000

In the Nordic Model, 1999 in Sweden, 2009 in Iceland and in Norway, prostitution is recognized as violence against women, whether trafficked or not.

The proposal to criminalize buyers was first raised in Norway in 1980 by researcher Cecilie Højgaard on the background of her yearlong fieldwork among women in prostitution.

A review ofarticles and reports on prostitution written in Norway during the last 10 years, by Tydlum, Brunowski, Jahnsen, Tveit, Skilbrei, Bjørndahl shows a turn in academia.

Their research and articles are highly critical of the existing knowledge and concepts and the debate behind the Norwegian ban on buying of sex. And they are critical of the methods used in evaluating the effect of the ban (2014). They all say that there is a need for more empirical knowledge, use of secondary data has to be limited because of problems with representability and bias when using data from law enforcement or rehabilitation organizations. They question the way the Palermo protocol is commonly operationalized and ask for clarifications of “exploitation of the prostitution of others” and of “exploitation of a position of vulnerability”. It is questioned whether persons in prostitution are really trafficked, or only debt-burdened immigrants paying off their debts.

PS: The same articles are heavily quoted by Amnesty International in its country report on Norway (May 2016), to show that with the ban on the buying of sex, the Norwegian state is actually breaking sex workers’ rights.

(See also articles by Agnete Strøm in the reference list)

**Presentation 4.**

**Inge Kleine[[6]](#footnote-6): *Legal does not make it safe –Prostitution in Germany.***

The German law: Prostitution selling and buying sex, is considered as work, and is legal in Germany. So is pimping and brothel-keeping. But there are some restrictions f. ex. ‘Restricting the independence of another person by professionally facilitating the exercise of prostitution.’ Concepts like restriction and independence are not clearly defined.

Some legal and normative consequences.

The (new) law doesn’t help protect persons in prostitution although exploitative pimping is criminalized, as well as facilitating prostitution of/ or bringing 18 to 21 year olds into prostitution.

There is a pervasive lack of solidarity throughout society. Examples are that very few cases get to court, and the sentences are very low or non-existing. And there is an absence of empathy in media. Work in the sex-industry has on occasions been used as official job offers. Venereal diseases and HIV are seen as normal job hazards. Trafficking is being rephrased, and there is a lack of protection for migrant women. Rights to insurance have been obtained, but insurances become more expensive.

Some consequences in society at large:

Lack of public awareness of violence involved in known cases, lack of understanding and knowledge of coercive and ethnically/ racially/ class discriminatory aspects of entry into - and performance of - prostitution, even in publicly known cases. Rules regarding brothel owners function like a ‘dress code’ rather than as consequent legal regulation.

Most counselling groups in Germany are pro sex-industry and lobby for it. Their information material is often formulated in ways that dissimulate that it is about a sex-industry.

Some consequences for persons in prostitution:

Prices drop, advertising of unsafe practices, demeaning language in brothel ads where prices and practices are presented as menus, escort services and ‘noble brothels’ are losing business. Women are increasingly younger and foreign.

Examples of consequences:

Advertisement: Picture of a brothel with a ‘models’ in a cage presented as a ‘girls collective’.

Descriptions by users such as this one: “I pulled her arse open a bit and slowly inserted my prick, which she answered with a low yelp (what a sound). When I approached the end and fucked her increasingly hard, she wanted me to stop and rather fuck her in her pussy. Under normal circumstances I would have done so, but I just didn’t feel like this now …. Sorry, Vanessa. After a few more thrusts I shot my load into the bag and pushed it into her once more, full tilt in order to have it jerk off until it was quiet in circling movements.” This customer got oral without a condom and anal (with condom) for € 50.-

In the government evaluations[[7]](#footnote-7) there were no specific questions concerning the question of prostitution as such. Topics were: legal situation of the women regarding their work status, their access to health insurance, pension plans and the like. The physical and emotional health of the women was not an issue, nor was dependence on pimps.

Yet the study finds that: ‘although the legal framework for fully insured employment has been created, this option has hardly been used. As a result, the Prostitution Act has not been able to create a measurable real improvement in the social security situation of prostitutes.

With regards to the working conditions in prostitution, hardly any measurable positive effects could be identified in practice. At best there are some slight first changes that direction. However, especially in this area positive changes in favour of the women in prostitution are not to be expected within the immediate future.

Exit possibilities have not been improved.

There are no viable indicators of the Prostitution Act having had any crime-minimalizing effect.

Persons in prostitution evaluate the impact of the Prostitution Act in diverse ways. The greatest effect was seen as improvement of the legal position. Brothel operators generally see the improvement as greater than persons selling sexualised activities.

*The three presentations above were followed by several shorter presentations by persons in practice and researchers.*

**Malene Spanger[[8]](#footnote-8)**

Spanger is the author of the PhD Thesis ‘Destabilising Sex work and Intimacy?’: Gender Performances of Female Thai Migrants Selling Sex in Denmark (Roskilde University, 2010) and of several other articles on the selling of sexualised activities.

To question dichotomies concerning conceptions of the field, Spanger investigates everyday lives of Thai women in massage parlours. She sees their narratives as situated. In their narratives the women present themselves and their lives as questions of romance, motherhood and the like. They neither see themselves as happy prostitutes, nor simply as victims. One perspective was: “I would rather do this than cleaning. It is not so lonely”. They wanted help, but not exit.

Being a foreigner in DK as well as citizenship was an issue of concern. They had difficulties related to leaving their social context, as well as with network in Denmark. Some have serious social problems, some don’t.

Many have problems with the borders between work and spare time. They play cards in the parlours.

Some buyers know about their problems, some do not. Some are seen as a help in the massage parlour.

(See also the above mentioned PhD)

**Dorit Otzen**[[9]](#footnote-9)

***The development of foreign prostitution in Denmark – An Industry in change***

Otzen has worked with foreign women in prostitution and victims of trafficking since 1991.

Prostitution has the same structure in the 11 different countries she has visited.

The first immigrants were seen in the streets in 1997, most of them were Russian speaking minorities in Baltic countries.

In 1999 when ‘Reden’ in Copenhagen (counselling place and shelter for women in street prostitution) mapped street prostitution they saw 42 diverse nationalities. Simultaneously they saw that the percentage of women of other nationalities than Danish in brothels had risen remarkably.

The first that were advertising by ethnicity in a newspaper were women from Thailand (1983). They were not many. But in 1999, 106 brothels were counted with 28 diverse nationalities.

The law from 2004 against trafficking is rarely used, and the sentences are low although Denmark has followed the EU and heightened possible sentences with up to 9 years of imprisonment.

During the past 15 years, street-prostitution has changed remarkably. Danish women are almost absent from the area. The last Danish women, who had the possibility, the ones not using drugs, disappeared from the streets when the prostitution area of the city was renovated, and the police was fining many unwanted persons. Even the drug users, who dominated the picture in the 80ties and 90ties, now use mobile phones and other electronic media

Today, prostitution is subjected to a more extensive control by criminals than earlier. Foreign criminals dominate to an extent not seen before. They control prices and where sale may take place. Gangs of thugs as professional chargers of payment are an element such as we know it from the drug trade.

Since 1997 pimps and traffickers have become invisible on the streets. Very few are being sentenced. It seems to be easier to go for women in prostitution, than for men behind the crimes. But prostitution is, according to the UN, the only kind of criminality in which women are dominant (51 %). Many owners of brothels outside of Copenhagen are foreign women earning their living through prostitution, pimping and trafficking – often supported by Danish husbands or friends.

Most foreign women work indoors - also in strip bars. Their real earnings, when their expenses are paid, are ca 20 DKr an hour. So prostitution is not an obvious possibility for earning a real living and money to send home.

The number of non-Danish women is also dominant in brothels. Often Thai or African women are alone during all 24 opening hours. The police in Middle and Western Jutland report, that of the around 100 brothels of the area, only 5 are dominated by Danish women.

In some brothels women, as a kind of hirelings, rent their rooms for between 1000 and 1800 crowns per day. With the economic crisis many Danish women started using their homes instead. Now many foreign women do the same.

In 2014 Socialstyrelsen estimated that 1547 women (of the estimated 2900 in prostitution) were advertised without addresses. The prostitution field seems to be closing itself off, making it more inaccessible.

There seems to have been a greater popular understanding for the difficult lives of women in prostitution, but this does not seem to encompass foreign women on the streets. In Oslo, a study from Pro Sentret shows that violence in prostitution has decreased. But this is not the case for verbal violence against African women.

**Tanja Rahm[[10]](#footnote-10)**

Rahm is a co-founder of a network group for women who have exited from prostitution and activist.

Violence in the field is being ignored in public debates. But we have been in it - and know it is there.

38 women are members of a new network group for women, who have been in all forms of prostitution. Only two suffered from substance abuse before prostitution, all did so at exit.

In prostitution perspective on the women was demeaning. Women’s perspectives on themselves were: We are the strong ones - we are in control. We saw our prostitution as a free choice. Many described themselves as happy whores. We were in opposition to mainstream society because we felt excluded from it.

All our members have dysfunctional families.

Support groups are good but many problems still trouble the women’s lives. They still feel very insecure and have problems with questions of limits and setting limits to what they want to participate in.

Many try to take part in public debate and write, but find it burdensome to deal with the past. We try to avoid being to openly public as some of us have experienced stalking from former customers.

SIU (the union for women in prostitution) doesn’t have any members anymore. Its affiliated researchers do not wish to cooperate with our network group.

**Flora Gosh[[11]](#footnote-11)**

Gosh is Centre Manager and Founder of Liva Rehab, supporting persons with damages caused by prostitution.

For the work of LivaRehab see http:www.livarehab.dk

**Inge Henningsen[[12]](#footnote-12)**

***Prostitution as an international business[[13]](#footnote-13)***

Historically, prostitution and sexual exploitation have been discussed widely and with different focus in politics, by civil society organisations, and by academics. This is also the case in Denmark. However, selling of sex cannot be sensibly discussed without taking the national and international economic and organizational circumstances into account.

Today the sex market is highly internationalized. A report from 2012[[14]](#footnote-14) estimates that prostitution worldwide involves 40-42 million people of which 90% are dependent on a procurer. TAMPEP[[15]](#footnote-15) finds that approximately 70% of persons in prostitution in Western Europe are migrants. Estimates for number of persons trafficked into prostitution varies a great deal but human trafficking for sexual exploitation is considered one of the most lucrative illicit business in Europa, with criminal groups earning about $3 billions a year [[16]](#footnote-16). In line with the rest af Western Europe prostitution in the Scandinavian countries is rapidly changing to a sector dominated by migrants and this development is still ongoing. (Estimates vary from 50 % to 80 %). The market is also international in the sense that many migrants in prostitution, both trafficked and on their own, regularly move between countries seeking the best business conditions. Regardless of the laws governing the sex market, migrants in prostitution cannot function legally in the EU, since it is not possible to enter a Member State legally to work in the prostitution business.

Internationally the prevention of trafficking has a high priority and it plays a significant role in the national discussions on the regulation of prostitution. Here, however, the border crossing nature of prostitution is not given due consideration. Traffickers tend to move their business to countries with the most favorable conditions and the lowest risk[[17]](#footnote-17). Consequently, research shows that where prostitution and related activities are legal, there are higher inflows of trafficked persons into the sex market[[18]](#footnote-18). Another pull factor is the generally lax law enforcement in the sex market. To quote Liz Kelly[[19]](#footnote-19), who examined prostitution regimes in 9 countries: “Regulation is invariably under-enforced and under-resourced, with a lack of clarity in law and policy as to who is responsible. This has led, in many regimes, to unchecked growth in illegal sectors and/or a failure to police the exploitations of prostitution offences. Both create disincentives for the licensed sector to comply with policy goals.” In the same vein, the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in persons stated[[20]](#footnote-20): "For the most part, prostitution as actually practiced in the world usually does satisfy the elements of trafficking (...). Thus, States Parties with legalized prostitution industries have a heavy responsibility to ensure (…) that their legalized prostitution regimes are not simply perpetuating widespread and systematic trafficking. As current conditions throughout the world attest, States Parties that maintain legalized prostitution are far from satisfying this obligation."

Most of the considerations above apply to the situation in Denmark. In Denmark both selling and buying of sex is legal. The discussion on new legal provisions is centered on two stances that can be summarized in the following way. One: that sale og sex should be normalized and be a job like every other job. The other: that buying of sex should be forbidden (and selling of sex subsequently impossible but not a legal offense). Since both selling and buying of sex is legal in Denmark I will explore the ramifications of the point of view that the sale of sex should be “normalized”.

In Denmark the only restriction on sex sale is that you are not allowed to profit on other persons selling sex (rufferiparagraffen). Hence pimping and brothel keeping is not allowed, nor is renting out of property to prostitution for higher than normal rent. Otherwise, prostitution is a trade like everything else in the sense that formally you have to pay tax of your income and VAT on your sales, keep books and pay social fees like every other self employed person. Persons in prostitution are free to organize cooperatives, to form professional associations and buy pension schemes like everyone else. It is being said that persons in prostitution cannot hire telephone girls, bouncers or drivers, but this question has never been tried in a legalized business with a CVR-number and Straffelovsrådet writes i 2012, that according to long lasting legal tradition “telephone girls” and other persons employed by the persons in prostitution for help and protection are not being criminalized.[[21]](#footnote-21) Another consequence is of course that income generated from prostitution formally impinges on the receipt of social benefits, student benefits and other entitlements. And in view of the above mentioned internationalization of prostitution a working permit is required for migrants. In the legal sense further “normalization” is for all practical purposes a question of legalizing pimping and brothel keeping.

Knowing the reality of prostitution in Denmark it is obvious that the above description is far from reality. Prostitution as we know it today, serves as a mostly undisturbed social enclave where legislation on tax and VAT is not enforced, which is opened to unrestricted labor migration, and where dangerous and degrading working conditions are not controlled. Pimping, specially by foreign nationals, is in general not prosecuted except for cases suspected of being trafficking and brothel keeping is with a few exceptions undisturbed. There seems to be a common understanding between various authorities that the law does not really apply in this area, and this understanding is generously extended to include migrants in prostitution who in most cases are allowed to practice without being challenged. Whatever their intentions the Danish authorities are in this way setting the scene for trafficking and other forms of exploitation of persons in prostitution. As the experience from Germany (See Kleine) shows legalizing pimping and brothel keeping will not give persons in prostitution any tangible benefits. One could even surmise that harder competition from foreign and maybe trafficked nationals would worsen their situation.

**Discussion**

As mentioned above the purchase of sexual services is legal in Denmark.

Here, as well as in Sweden and Norway, there are strong voices in policy as well as in research in favor of a legalization and normalization of prostitution, e.g. in favor of establishing prostitution as a profession like any other (Stormhøj et al. 2015, Rogg 2016 and Korsvig og Yttergreen & Westerstrand 2016). Arguments for this kind of legalization and regulation target many different levels of the phenomenon, and so do voices in favor criminalization of customers.

The public debate on prostitution - as well as the debate among researchers - are carried out from many different standpoints, and therefore at many different levels. In the following discussion we will try to separate these.

In the debates, we find a political and neoliberal standpoint that accepts reification of anything that may be transformed into merchandise, including intimate relations and bodily services.

The anti-neoliberal standpoint is, that we must define limits to what can be purchased, and to place sexualized services beyond such a limit. Questions concerning prostitution are questions of what sort of society we want. Also, as it is dependent on global as well as local inequality, prostitution must be seen as not sustainable. Prostitution is big business. Many people are earning smaller or bigger fortunes at different levels of procuring – though rarely persons in prostitution themselves. Procurers have an impact on political processes, even when part of their business is illegal.

Apparently, seemingly feminist points of view prove useful in promoting both legalization as well as criminalization of purchasers. Some researchers and politicians claim that a feminist point of view is that women in prostitution should not be seen as victims, but as strong women who have made a free choice of how to earn money. This point of view is often supported by persons active in prostitution. The argument is that legalization will help these women to obtain a safer and more secure life including pensions, insurances and organization in unions. From this point of view legalization is also supposed to reduce stigmatizing.

The development in Germany indicates that this does not happen. Persons in prostitution do not become organized, prices may drop, and violence remains a part of the trade, even seems to increase. Degrading language and actions are still used by the general public (media) as well as by customers. Furthermore, statements from women in prostitution must be seen in relation to statements from women who have given up prostitution. It is well known from psychological studies that people in destructive situations are inclined to understate them when they see no way out of them.

Other researchers and politicians understand a feminist perspective as viewing prostitution as connected to patriarchal structures, and women in prostitution as persons selling a sexuality not their own. They are seen as reduced to commodities for purchasers, and legalization is understood as a confirmation of notions promoting ‘male sexuality’ as natural and as a fundamental demand and right. This does not exclude understanding women in prostitution as active agents.

Yet another approach, often combined with this feminist view, focuses on the social and personal consequences that women in prostitution suffer. This is often voiced by social workers, trying to offer them support by running counselling centers and shelters for women in street prostitution. The social workers speak from their experience. They attempt to inform the public about the harm persons in prostitution are subjected to – physically as well as psychologically. They equally point to changes in prostitution, and how to it has become a bigger business in which women, mostly migrants and often illegal, from Eastern Europe and Africa, are moved from one country to another, never able to settle or establish relations anywhere.

A further standpoint in the debate on prostitution is that of pragmatism: Prostitution will always exist, so we might as well legalize, regulated and organize it. But experiences from Germany show that legalization does not just regulate status quo. Prostitution increases, criminality in the field increases, and women in prostitution do not seem to profit from legalization. As mentioned prices drop, demand increases, and apparently so do violence. Moreover, studies from Norway and Sweden show that attitudes towards prostitution can be changed, and that criminalization of purchasers has an impact on attitudes.

Furthermore, in the debate voices for legalization may be presented as special consideration, regard and respect for migrant women in prostitution. Criminalization of purchasers, the argument goes, will be of great harm to migrant women, when trying to make better living through prostitution in Denmark. Yet, this is a result of massive global inequality, an inequality that cannot be solved through sexualized exploitation of women. We should consider the vulnerability of lives these women’s lives, being transported from country to country as is now the situation of many migrants in prostitution.

Although the countless problems of women in prostitution should be well known, you even still hear arguments for legalization from a romanticizing point of view. Women in prostitution are presented as warm-hearted givers of sexual satisfaction to pitiable men, who seem to have no other way to obtain a discursively legitimized right to sex. But it is questionable whether sex should be understood as a right to be demanded at the expense of the objectification of women, children or other men.

Finally, proponents of the normalization of prostitution often point to LGBT persons who, according to the proponents, have prostitution as their only option to make a living. While it is evident that some LGBT persons face special problems getting into the ordinary labor market, the problem is one of discrimination and should thus be addressed as such.

**Reflections and discussion points**

*The field*

* In Denmark – as in most of Europa - prostitution is internationalized, consisting mainly of foreign nationals.
* Prostitution is heavily bound up with various forms of criminal activity (eg. trafficking) - regardless of the prostitution regime
* The problems in prostitution must be solved as complex questions of poverty and migration.
* Ultimately it is a *political* question whether we want to establish prostitution as a profession, and not merely see it as a social problem.
* BY signing the CEDAW convention Denmark has committed itself to discourage the demand for prostitution.
* In Denmark prostitution is legal. The most imminent point of concern is a possible elimination of the legal paragraph on procuring.
* The extent of prostitution and the business conditions are poorly researched.

*Prostitution Research*

* The field of prostitution it is much more complex than usually acknowledged. Knowledge is often partialized, and connections between diverse aspects of the field and to society at large are overlooked or neglected.
* Prostitution research is often too remote from, or too close to practice, and frequently one-sided.
* Research is heavily politizied. Evidence is mixed up with diverse standpoints, either critical or neoliberal, or affirmative of practice.
* The rhetoric often consists of mixtures of social concern and neoliberal commodification that muddles the discussions.

*Moreover*

* Individuals who most demean and threaten persons in prostitution, and those who have left it, are often the customers.
* That we have to differentiate between persons in prostitution and the practice itself.
* That constituting prostitution as profession makes it appear to be a unified practice, and heightens visibility - increasing stigmatization.
* And finally, that criminalizing customers must be imbedded in other laws and social practices supportive and protective of persons in prostitution.

**Some related reading:**

* Bindel J. and Kelly L. (2003): A Critical Examination of Responses to Prostitution in Four Countries: Victoria, Australia; Ireland; the Netherlands; and Sweden. For the Routes Out Partnership Board. London Metropolitan University.
* Cho S-Y., Dreher A., Neumayer E. (2013): Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking? World Development, vol. 41, pp. 67-82.
* Henningsen I. (2014): Prostitution og tvivlsom statistik. Kommentar til rapport fra Statens Institut for Folkesundhed om klinikprostitution i Danmark. http://8marts.dk
* Holst K. (2014,): Forskning viser. Fett #3, s. 38-42.
* Højgaard C. (2014): The Presence of Pain in the Debate on Prostitution. Materialisten 1-2.
* Jakobsson N., Kotsadam A, (2013): The law and economics of international sex slavery: prostitution laws and trafficking for sexual exploitation. European Journal of Law and Economics no 35, pp. 87-107.
* Korsvik T. Rogg (2016): Prostitution in Norway: Neo-liberal Discourses? NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 24:1, 56-62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1136685>
* Kotsadam A., Jakobsson N. (2011): Do laws affect attitudes? An assessment of the Norwegian prostitution law using longitudinal data.
* Longwoth C.E. (2010): Male Violence Against Women: Weighing Feminist Legislative Responses to a Troubling Canadian Phenomenon. Review of Current Law and Law Reform, no. 1, pp.58-85. University of Victoria. Journals.uvic.ca.
* Lux K. (2009): Work, Violence, or Both? Framing the Sex Trade and Setting an agenda for Justice. Advocates Forum. <http://www.ssa.uchicago.edu/publications/advoforum.shtml>
* Prakash H. (2013): Prostitution and its Impact on Society – A Criminological Perspective. International research Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 2(3).
* Schilbrei M. L. (2012): The Development of Norwegian Prostitution Policies: A Marriage of convenience Between Pragmatism and Principle. Sex Res Soc Policy, vol. 9, pp. 244-257.
* Spanger M. (2010): Destabilizing Sex Work and Intimacy: Gender Performances of Female Thai Migrants Selling Sex in Denmark. Roskilde University.
* Stormhøj C., Pedersen B., Henningsen I.B., Hansen K.G., Rahm T. (2015): Prostitution in Denmark – research and Neo-Liberal Public Debates. NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research.
* Strøm A. ( 2009): A Glimpse into 30 Years of Struggle Against Prostitution by the Women’s Liberation Movement in Norway. Reproductive Health Matters.
* Strøm A. (2014): Bevegelsene i europeisk prostitutionspolitikk. Materialisten.
* Yttergren Å. & Westerstrand J. (20016): The Swedish Legal Approach to Prostitution. Trends and Tendencies in the Prostitution Debates. NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 24:1, 56-62. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2016.1143252
* Waltman M. (2011): Sweden’s prohibition of purchase of sex: The law’s reasons, impact, and potential. Women’s Studies International Forum 34, pp 449-474.
* Wondie S.L. (2013): Representing who? – An analysis and critical discussion of the Sex Workers’ Rights Movement in Danish context. Lund University, Department of Sociology.

1. Associate Professor Emerita, Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University. Author of several articles on prostitution and former field-worker in the Prostitution Team in Bergen, Norway M MA i nordisk sprog og litteratesearch. and NM MA i nordisk sprog og litteratesearch. and N [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Professor and associate dean at Malmö University, Faculty of Health and Society. S-A M’s research is primarily in gender, sexuality and social work, the recent years with focus on the impact of the Nordic Model [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. And we may add, poverty. Statistics from diverse European countries support this. (See for example Stormhøj, C., et al. (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. MA in Nordic Language and Literature from University of Bergen, co-founder of *Kvinnefronten* (Women’s Front). Engaged for many years in the questions of prostitution and trafficking and has, among other publications on the subject, published “Bevegelsene i den europeiske prostitutionspolitiken” (Developments in the European policy on prostitution). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In 1875 Josephine Butler founded an organisation with the aim of abolishing prostitution [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Dr. and Ph.D.**,** member of Kofra (Communications Centre for Women’s Work and Life Situation). Has been engaged in the question of sexual violence and prostitution. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Service/Publikationen/publikationsliste,did=100352.html>   
   <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/bericht-der-br-zum-prostg-englisch,property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Associated professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, Aalborg University. Center for Study of Migration and Diversity. Author of several works on commodified sexuality. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Social worker, principal of *Reden* and *Reden International* (counseling and shelter for women in street prostitution) for many years. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Graduate student at Roskilde University and sexologist [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. M.Sc. in social work, Center Manager and founder of Liva Rehab -s was: We are the strong ones,ges caused by prostitution.specific concitions.ls and possible concluions? [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Reseacher, Kvinderådet [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Due to time limitations this talk was skipped at the symposium [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Fondation Scelles: <http://infos.fondationscelles.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. UNDOC (2010), "Trafficking in Persons to Europe for Sexual Exploitation", Chapter extracted from *The Globalization of Crime. A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment* (p.1):

    <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/tocta-2010.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. , Steinar Strøm, Sidsel Sverdrup og Vibeke Wøie *Evaluering av forbudet mot kjøp av seksuelle tjenester,* Vista Analyse, Rapport 2014/30 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Cho, S., Dreher, A., Neumayer, E. (2013), «Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking ?», *World*  
     *Develop* For a discussion see Ingeborg Rasmussen *ment,* Vol. 41 No. 1, 2013, pp. 67-82; Jakobsson, N., Kotsadam, A. (2013), «The law and economics of  
     international sex slavery : prostitution laws and trafficking for sexual exploitation », *European Journal of Law &*  
     *Economics,* Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 87-107. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Liz Kelly et al, *Shifting Sands*, A comparison of 9 prostitution regimes across 9 countries, Child & Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU), London Metropolitan University, no date but probably 2010. Funded by the UK Home Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 8 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of the victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Sigma Huda (E/CN.4/2006/62), par. 42-43:

    http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/109/64/PDF/G0610964.pdf?OpenElement [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Straffelovrådets betænkning om seksualforbrydelser, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)