



The Nordic Model on Prostitution

A change in perspective in protection of human dignity

Corona has laid bare what prostitution is and where it leads women: it leads them into an ABYSS. From one day to the next many prostituted women have become destitute and homeless, because they never had a home in the first place, just a brothel to live in. The majority has been brought back to their home countries by their pimps.

In Mid-May 2020, 16 parliamentarians¹ of the Christian Democrat and the Social Democratic Party publicly spoke out in favor of the Nordic Model and criticized the liberalized course that Germany has been following since the passing of the Prostitution Act of 2002 and the Prostitutes' Protection Act of 2017. The debate over what may be the best prostitution policy is becoming increasingly heated among lawmakers, but the media continues to report on the subject in a superficial manner. The profiteers of the system of prostitution maintain a very large influence on many politicians, successfully disseminating a romanticized view of prostitution. It is surprising that it is the left-wing parties (Social Democrats, Greens and the Left Party), who claim to value critiques of capitalism and to support women's rights, who still broadly view prostitution as an occupation of choice and who unquestioningly repeat myths about the sex industry, leading to the creation of legal frameworks that enable women's degradation to cheap products and their sexual exploitation.

In this text, I wish to expose these lies for what they are and to call on all people to join the fight for a world where sexual violence is no longer viewed as "sexual service". Because as long as sex-buying remains legal, this form of sexual violence against women goes unpunished.

Dr. Ingeborg Kraus, Karlsruhe, July 5th, 2021.

¹ Bundestagsabgeordnete fordern Freierbestrafung [German Parliamentarians call for a Sex Purchase Ban]. 15.05.2020. <https://www.trauma-andprostitution.eu/2020/05/21/bundestagsabgeordnete-fordern-freierbestrafung/>

The first country to pass a law not criminalizing women in prostitution, but sex buyers was Sweden in 1999. It was part of the “Kvinnofrid” (Peace for Women) initiative. A few years later (2009), Norway and Iceland passed similar laws and the approach became known as the “Nordic Model”. In the following years, more countries adopted such laws and expanded on them: Canada (2014), Northern Ireland (2015), France (2016), Ireland (2017) and Israel (2020). Today this policy approach to prostitution is also known as the “Sex Purchase Ban” or the “Abolitionist” or “Equality Model”.

The Model consists of 4 key elements:

- **Decriminalization of prostituted people:** Soliciting sex buyers and carrying out prostitution is not a crime.
- **Meaningful exiting support:** Alternatives to prostitution are offered to build a life outside the industry coupled with psychosocial support; safe housing; education opportunities; debt counselling; trauma therapy, etc.
- **Education and Prevention:** Prevention work at schools, public education campaigns to raise awareness about prostitution. Training for police, the justice system, social workers and all others tasked with the implementation of prostitution-related law.
- **Prohibition on Sex-Buying and Criminalization of all Profiteers:** Sex-buying, promoting prostitution, pimping and human trafficking for sexual exploitation are criminalized in all forms.

France has developed a version of this law that offers even stronger protections for women in prostitution: Prostituted people are entirely decriminalized, meaning additional crimes carried out during their time of exploitation will be struck from their record. They have a right to exit prostitution and to participate in a state-funded exit program, receive a right of residence and access to housing. The punishment of buyers comes on varying levels (beginning with fines and ending in prison time) and also includes mandatory educational programs.

On the introduction of the “Nordic Model”:

- The 1949 “Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others”² declares that *“prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community”*. This convention remains unratified by Germany.
- According to a non-binding 2014 resolution of the European Parliament, prostitution violates human dignity and prevents equality between men and women³: In its resolution “Sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality” the European Parliament takes the position that the so-called Nordic Model is “a method, to combat the trade in women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation and to improve gender equality”. The European Parliament expresses the view that: *„Prostitution, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation are highly gendered issues and violations of human dignity, contrary to human rights principles, among which*

² Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/TrafficInPersons.aspx>

³ European Parliament. Punish the Client, not the Prostitute. News. 2014.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20140221IPR36644/punish-the-client-not-the-prostitute>

gender equality, and therefore contrary to the principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including the goal and the principle of gender equality.”

- In 2014 the Council of Europe also called on European governments to strengthen their efforts in combating sexual slavery and prostitution. Parliamentarians named Sweden’s approach that included the prohibition on the purchase of sexual services as exemplary. Trafficking in women had been strongly reduced according to a report by the assembly in Strasbourg⁴.
- On April 16th 2016, the French National Assembly passed a prohibition on sex-buying with the following reasoning: **“Prostitution is physical, psychological and sexual violence, an affront to human dignity and in violation of the principle of equality between men and women.”**⁵ Maud Olivier of the Socialist Party, parliamentarian and drafter of the law, said the following on the proposed legislation: *“This law to me is the result of our battle against violence against women. Prostitution used to be violence against women that was permissible and carried out with impunity. As long as the trade in women is legitimized, all forms of violence against women remain so, too.”*⁶
- In 2018 some French NGOs criticized the law and filed a motion to audit its constitutionality. The French Constitutional Court announced on the 1st of February 2019 that the historic decision to punish sex buyers was not in conflict with the fundamental rights enshrined in the French constitution⁷. The court made the following case: On the basis of the balancing principle, they reached the conclusion that the majority of people in the sex trade are victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution and that the state makes its laws for the well-being of the general public instead of individuals and that prostitution affects the most vulnerable people in the country. The French legal expert Marie-Anne Frison-Roche takes this decision to mean that human dignity has an objective character which the state is mandated to protect⁸.
- In a report for the G7 forum in Biarritz in 2019, independent advisors were asked to identify the most effective and progressive laws which further and create equality between the sexes. The Nordic Model was one such policy recommended by the report:

*“According to various studies, the number of women exploited through trafficking and prostitution is significantly lower in states with a Nordic model approach. Through the prohibition on the purchase of sex acts states have recognized that sexual exploitation is connected to sexual and gender-specific violence.”*⁹

⁴ Europarat fordert Maßnahmen gegen Sex-Sklaverei und Prostitution [Council of Europe calls for measures against sexual slavery and prostitution]. In: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 8. April 2014. <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/europarat-europarat-fordert-massnahmen-gegen-sex-sklaverei-und-prostitutiondpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-140408-99-06049>

⁵ Assemblée Nationale – Proposition de loi renforçant la lutte contre le système prostitutionnel: <http://www.assembleenationale.fr/14/propositions/pion1437.asp> ; See also: Dr. Inge Kleine: Das französische Gesetz zur Freierbestrafung [The French Law Punishing Sex Buyers]: https://www.academia.edu/28982923/Das_franzoesische_Gesetz_zur_Freierbestrafung

⁶ Maud Olivier, rapporteure de la loi du 13 avril 2016 à l’Assemblée, in: prostitution et société, November 2017: <http://www.prostitutionetsociete.fr/eclairage/interviews/article/maud-olivier-rapporteure-de-la-loi-du-13-avril-2016-a-lassemblee>

⁷ 7 Conseil Constitutionnel: Décision n° 2018-761 QPC du 1er février 2019: <https://www.conseilconstitutionnel.fr/decision/2019/2018761QPC.htm>

⁸ 8 Marie-Anne Frison-Roche: Le conseil constitutionnel pose la définition objective de l’être humain. 01.02.2019. <https://mafr.fr/fr/article/le-conseil-constitutionnel-pose-la-definition-obje/>

⁹ Biarritz Partnership for Gender Equality – Recommendations of the Gender Equality Advisory Council for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women - A Call to Action. p. 17. <https://www.elysee.fr/admin/upload/default/0001/05/cfb1e2ba2b9aa09c1660f1b6df2cabbc815eccc2.pdf?>

- “Discouraging The Demand”¹⁰ is the name of a 2021 OSCE report regarding human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The motor behind this highly lucrative form of human trafficking, is money, as global yearly profits are estimated at around 100 billion dollars. The fuel is the demand. This is why the OSCE strongly encourages its member states to review their criminal justice responses in regards to curbing demand. There are various aspects that need to be considered: Sex buyers are directly and indirectly responsible for the immense suffering visited upon victims of human trafficking. States must acknowledge the gravity and seriousness of the issue: The violence is almost exclusively enacted by men on the victims who are overwhelmingly women and girls who in turn are almost always especially vulnerable (e.g. part of a minority group in society). Sex buyers cannot and/or don’t want to identify victims of human trafficking. States have to be aware of the messages send to society particularly in regards to the protection of vulnerable people since criminal laws solidify social norms.

Evaluation of the “Nordic Model”:

- Because of the Sex Purchase Ban in Sweden and Norway, both countries have a significantly smaller prostitution market than other European countries of similar population size. In Sweden, street prostitution has halved over the course of 10 years following the introduction of the Sex Purchase Ban, as evaluated by the government in 2010. There is no evidence that more Swedish men are going abroad to purchase sex, nor that there has been an increase in “hidden” prostitution. Welfare institutions and police emphasize that it is impossible for prostitution to continue completely hidden since it requires advertising to reach buyers.¹¹
- The Sex Purchase Ban enables the Swedish police to combat organized crime, human trafficking and pimping effectively.¹² Several studies have shown that human trafficking and pimping is decreasing.¹³ Per-Anders Sunesson, the then Swedish Ambassador for Combatting Human Trafficking, points to Interpol reports that clearly show that the Swedish market for prostitution is nearly dead because of the focus on the sex buyer and the change in public mentality.¹⁴
- When Sweden introduced the Sex Purchase Ban in 1999 ca. 30% of the population was opposed to the practice of sex buying. As a consequence of the law, a clear transformation of public consciousness took place, as today ca. 70% of Swedes reject sex buying.¹⁵
- **The law had a normative effect in Sweden leading to a change in public perception: young girls do not dream of becoming “Pretty Woman” and boys don’t boast about having gone to the brothel.** In Germany, a normative effect has also taken place – just in the exact opposite direction: It is not uncommon for

¹⁰ OSCE - Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Being. DISCOURAGING THE DEMAND that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. 2021. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/f/489388_1.pdf

¹¹ Wissenschaftliche Evaluierung des schwedischen Gesetzes gegen den Kauf sexueller Dienste für die Jahre 1999-2008 [Scientific evaluation of the Swedish Law To Prohibit the Purchase of Sexual Services during the Years 1999-2008]. (English summary on pages 29-44), 2010.

¹² Gunilla Ekberg: ‚Briefing on Swedish law and policies on prostitution and trafficking in human beings‘, B.S.W., JD, 2012.

¹³ Deutscher Bundestag: Auswirkungen des „Nordischen Modells“ – Studienergebnisse zur Prostitutionspolitik in Schweden und Norwegen [German parliament: Impacts of the „Nordic Model“ – Results of studies on the prostitution policy in Sweden and Norway] – Wissenschaftliche Dienste — 2020.

¹⁴ Per-Anders Sunesson: Rede auf dem 3. Weltkongress gegen die Sexuelle Ausbeutung von Frauen und Mädchen in Mainz [Speech given on the 3rd World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls in Mainz]. 2.- 5. April 2019. <https://solwodiweltkongress.blogspot.com>

¹⁵ Kuosmanen: Tioårmed lagen (SWE), 2008, S. 362.

German men to celebrate stag nights in brothels or for soccer clubs to visit them after a game.

- Since Sweden passed the Nordic Model in 1999, one woman in prostitution has been murdered (by her ex-husband). **In Germany between 2002 and 2021 more than 100 women in prostitution were killed by pimps or sex buyers, with another 60+ murder attempts registered.**¹⁶ The dark figure regarding the real number of cases is high.
- The Swedish government can demonstrate that prostitution has not increased since the introduction of the Sex Purchase Ban.¹⁷ Countries, however, that have chosen to take the path of legalization, like Germany, are lamenting an extreme increase in the size of the prostitution market. There are no exact numbers, but police experts are speaking of a c. 30% increase since the introduction of Germany's 2002 law.¹⁸
- Police estimate that the level of violence against people in prostitution in Sweden is very low. In Germany on the other hand, there is little to no educational training of police, which leads many women to express feeling let down by authorities. Many victims in Germany do not dare report to police, because there is no trust and/or they've already made the experience that reporting a pimp or trafficker ends in the case being dismissed for lack of evidence. The decrease in completed investigations showcases this: In 2000, 151 persons were sentenced for the crime of pimping, in 2011 it was only 32¹⁹.
- Because of the Nordic Model people in prostitution are fully decriminalized and experience more safety and protection from violence. In Germany, on the other hand, people in prostitution remain criminalized by a multitude of regulations: through no-tolerance zones and schedules, mandatory licensing schemes, taxation, etc.
- 3 years after the introduction of the Sex Purchase Ban in France the first evaluation shows positive results: 2654 sex buyers have been punished, out of these 271 have participated in education programs²⁰.
- The yearly Federal Report on human trafficking and exploitation of the German Bureau for Criminal Investigations shows how difficult it has become for German police to effectively counteract human trafficking and pimping. **Pimping is legal in Germany, only "exploitative pimping" is criminalized. To prove the presence of the latter before a court is nearly impossible. When it comes to cases of human trafficking and pimping, many victims do not report in the first place, due to fear of reprisals from organized crime networks.** In 2011 German authorities registered 636 cases of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, nearly a third less than 10 years earlier²¹. The number of cases registered within the 2018 Federal Report is even lower (430 victims)²². This does not indicate a decrease in actual cases but showcases how liberalized policy and the resulting societal attitude cause a lack of interest in and ability to investigate this crime.

¹⁶ Sex Industry Kills: <https://www.sexindustry-kills.de/doku.php?id=prostitutionmurders:de>

¹⁷ Swedish Ministry of Justice. Evaluation of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services, 02.07.2010. <https://www.government.se/articles/2011/03/evaluation-of-the-prohibition-of-the-purchase-of-sexual-services/>

¹⁸ Interview with Helmut Sporer, 10.07.2014, Augsburger Allgemeine. <https://www.augsburger-allgemeine.de/bayern/Immer-mehr-Prostituierte-aus-Osteuropa-kommen-nach-Augsburgid30512282.html>

¹⁹ Der Spiegel. Wie der deutsche Staat Prostitution fördert [How the German state encourages prostitution]. 27.03.2013. <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d96238909.html>

²⁰ Fondation Scelles: Rapport d'évaluation de la mise en oeuvre de la loi 2016-444 http://fondationscelles.org/pdf/evaluation_locale/Dossier_presse_rapport_Evaluation3.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3uICfvoj_5aSg2WK_oFYEkA4GGgP9w4fXvPM_-6nys7UNBuPr8K3UCV10g

²¹ Der Spiegel 22/2013: Prostitution in Deutschland. Artikel von Cordula Meyer, Conny Neumann, Fidelius Schmid, Petra Truckendanner und Steffen Winter, 27.05.2013.

²² Bundeskriminalamt. Bundeslagebild 2018 – Menschenhandel und Ausbeutung.

Myths About Prostitution and the Nordic Model

Myth 1: A Sex Purchase Ban will cause the prostitution industry to go underground

- Swedish police officers, such as Simon Häggström, who for 10 years has been active with Stockholm's "prostitution" unit, find this argument surprising. *"Outside Sweden, everybody is an expert about what happens when this law is enforced",* says Häggström. *"I don't really know where that argument comes from, to be honest. Of course, we've seen a shift in prostitution arenas. In the 1990s, most prostitution was out in the open, in the streets. But then the Internet revolution came and now we have apartments and hotel rooms, and that's where prostitution goes on. But just because it isn't in the public eye, it doesn't mean that it has gone underground. **We have our methods to find it and if the buyer can find these women in apartments or hotel rooms, so can the police. All I need is a cellphone.** Basically, this argument is just a myth, but it has become very widespread. Don't believe the myths, just talk to us, the people that actually work with the law, because we know. [...] finding prostitution is definitely not a problem for us at all. [...] I am so sick and tired of hearing this argument because it has nothing to do with the reality."*²³
- **When Norway introduced its Nordic Model style law in 2009 the market was nearly dead. When a slight increase was registered in time, the market remained as visible to police as before.** Many "good" customers had disappeared, but this had not led to an increase in bad customers.²⁴
- **There is a common argument that the Sex Purchase Ban leads prostitution to go underground.** The fact is that only 33.000 out of an estimated 400.000 prostitutes in Germany are officially registered.²⁵ At the start of 2019, only 76 out of those had used this avenue to register for social security.²⁶ **This means that even with our new "Prostitutes' Protection Act" the majority of the trade in Germany is currently underground.** Often enough no authority is aware that these women are even in the country. They are completely at the mercy of their exploiters.²⁷
- **Counselling services that work with prostituted women report again and again that the new law does not help women.** The counselling center "Luise" in Karlsruhe states that it does not observe women making free self-determined choices to be in prostitution: "The women do not do this job out of their own free will, they are often trapped in that situation", says Anita Beneta talking to ka-news.de. The biggest problem is migration, as most women come from Eastern Europe, from Bulgaria, Hungary or Romania. "Every Monday is street-prostitution-night" and they go by bus to offer support to women in street prostitution. To find women they drive through

²³ Interview with Simon Häggström: <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2018/07/20/how-the-swedish-sex-purchase-law-moved-the-shame-of-prostitution-from-the-women-to-the-punters/>

²⁴ „Evaluation des Verbots, sexuelle Dienste zu kaufen.“ [Evaluation of the Sex Purchase Ban in Norway]. Teilübersetzung des norwegischen Evaluationsbericht von 2014, im Auftrag des norwegischen Justiz- und Innenministeriums erstellt, 17. Juli 2014. Übersetzung erfolgte durch den Sprachdienst des Deutschen Bundestages. Seite 5 und 6.

²⁵ Statista: Prostitution in Deutschland. 26.11.2019. <https://de.statista.com/infografik/20104/in-deutschland-gemeldeteprostituierte/>

²⁶ Die TAZ: Gesetze ohne Wirkung. 18.02.2019. <https://taz.de/Nur-wenige-Prostituierte-sozialversichert/!5573866/>

²⁷ Brief von 16 Bundestagsabgeordnete vom 15.05.2019 an alle MinisterpräsidentInnen um die Bordelle geschlossen zu halten [Letter from 16 parliamentarians to keep brothels closed]: <https://sisters-ev.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Brief-der-16-ParlamentarierInnen.pdf>

various places in Karlsruhe – among others to the train station in Durlach.²⁸ They feel that the law has not improved women’s situation.

- Former chief inspector Manfred Paulus states: **“The police barely have a chance to prove exploitative sex-buying, pimping or prostitution under the current legal regime. The regulated prostitution market offers perfect conditions for force and coercion of every kind and no protection at all.”**²⁹
- The comparative study “Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?” investigated the sex trade in 150 countries with three independent researchers from Berlin, Heidelberg and London, concluding that a liberalized prostitution law, such as the one introduced by Germany in 2002, leads to an increase in human trafficking³⁰. The number of prostitutes in Germany is 60 times higher than Sweden, even though the Swedish population is just 10 times smaller.

The argument that the introduction of the Nordic Model would push prostituted women into illegality where they’d be exposed to greater danger is an unfounded claim that gains much attention, meanwhile the clear and visible consequences for women under liberalized prostitution law are ignored.

To say that a Sex Purchase Ban leads to prostitution going underground is to ignore the fact that the majority of prostituted women in Germany have ended up in situations without protections from exploitation precisely because of the legalized regime: they are not registered with authorities, do not have insurance, do not speak the local language, do not know their rights and are dependent on pimps and traffickers.³¹

High Councilor for Criminal Matters Helmut Sporer, who was responsible for combating organized crime in Augsburg for many years, estimates that the number of sex trafficking victims in Germany is in the six figures. If one takes a look at the 2019 Human Trafficking Report of the German Bureau for Criminal Investigations³², one finds a total of 427 confirmed cases and 287 court proceedings. *“Only a fraction of victims are ever identified”,* says Sporer. *“Lawmakers are tolerating a situation where most victims are never identified and the crimes committed against them are never prosecuted.”*

In an elaborate position paper to the parliament of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia³³, Sporer says, that it is illusionary to believe that a “legal sector” keeps human trafficking at bay. The biggest underground sector, according to Sporer, is found within legal brothels! *„In many brothels, especially large so-called “mega businesses”, but also in the street prostitution sector, one finds predominantly young foreign women, who are highly likely in situations of exploitation. The expert authorities who are familiar with the situation on the ground, are usually aware that these women are controlled and exploited by third parties. However, proving this requires extensive investigation of concrete causes of suspicion,*

²⁸ Teufelskreis Sexarbeit: Das neue Gesetz hilft den Prostituierten in Karlsruhe nicht [Stuck in sex work: The new law does not help prostitutes in Karlsruhe]. In: ka.news am 28.10.2019. <https://www.ka-news.de/region/karlsruhe/sex-in-karlsruhe/Teufelskreis-Sexarbeit-Das-neue-Gesetz-hilft-denProstituierten-in-Karlsruhenicht;art6066,2449313?fbclid=IwAR0wgAwyFYFbaxC2PW5BMz3vjwPIGre8C50tz8MhCH66YXliRS-Tzf5iMyg>

²⁹ Paulus, Manfred, Erster Kriminalkommissar a.d., Vortrag Weltkongress in Mainz, 2019, <https://www.solwodi.de/seite/396262/weltkongress-reden.html>

³⁰ Cho, Seo-Young; Dreher, Axel; Neumayer, Eric (2013): Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking? In: World Development 41 (1), 67-82. https://ec.europa.eu/antitrafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/does_legalized_prostitution_increase_human_trafficking_1.pdf

³¹ Dr. Ingeborg Kraus: Prostitution, 2016, Raum & Zeit, S. 3.

³² BKA Menschenhandel Bericht 2019.

<https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/Menschenhandel/menschenhandelBundeslagebild2019.html?jsessionid=29DD45936B82607BF4AA2E939E201478.live2302?nn=27956>.

³³ <https://nordicmodelnow.files.wordpress.com/2021/03/helmut-sporer-statement-in-english-1.6.21.pdf>

usually bolstered by a prostitute's statement. This rarely ever occurs due to the aforementioned reasons (e.g., violence, threats, intimidations). This is why authorities are often forced to wait instead of act despite obvious cause for concern.

A brothel's public facade rarely reveals the real conditions happening behind closed doors – which is where you find the real 'underground'."

The sentencing of the owners of the "Paradise" mega-brothel chain confirms this: In 2019 they were sentenced to five years in prison for aiding serious human trafficking and pimping in 18 cases. *"What women reported about life in the Paradise brothel does not at all fit into its public image of being a wellness-oasis. They report having felt stuck in a never-ending hell. According to victims, humiliations and violence were part of daily life and were freely tolerated by the brothel operators."*³⁴

Sporer says, that one has to assume that similar criminal networks are at work behind many a seemingly clean brothel façade in Germany.

Myth 2: Criminalizing sex buyers causes an increase in violence against women in prostitution

In 2010 the Swedish government carried out an evaluation headed by leading attorney Anna Skarhed.³⁵ It concluded that there is no evidence to indicate an increase in violence against women in prostitution. Prostitution itself is a violent milieu, being a person in prostitution is fundamentally dangerous.

Speaking from experience Simon Häggström explains how the law protects women in prostitution, as it puts pressure on the buyers to "be on their best behavior" (to pay women adequately, to not push for sex acts which the women refuse etc.). Because the women can call the police without running the risk of being charged with a crime themselves. This creates a big risk for the sex buyer and sex buying is a shame-filled crime in Sweden today. If a sex buyer is publicly outed, he has got much to lose.

In Germany on the other hand sex buyers have become more extreme and are asking for ever riskier practices as a consequence of liberalized prostitution law.³⁶ Violence against prostituted women has consequently increased.

Quote by a German sex buyer: *"Then I really wanted her cute ass and put in my first finger. She said: 'Do you want to ass-fuck?' But of course, I do. So, I put some lube on that asshole and my willy and slowly pushed into her. Even though she yelped and whimpered, she stayed put as I jerked ever harder into her. Her whining and moaning kept getting louder, but because her blowjob had been so poor, I just kept going till I came. She was pretty finished by then, too... visibly worn out she cleaned herself off at the sink..."*

From: Freudenhaus Hase, a brothel that received an "ethical" seal from the German Brothel Owners Association.

The reviews sex buyers write on online forums show precisely why and how prostitution constitutes a violation of human dignity.³⁷ They view it as their "right as men" to degrade women and use them in any way possible. Menu-like lists of sex buyer

³⁴ <https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.paradise-prozess-am-stuttgarter-landgericht-taetowierungen-erinnern-an-die-peiniger.7d843368-6e1f-465e-b6d9-378900ec5ab8.html>

³⁵ Swedish Ministry of Justice. Evaluation of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services, 02.07.2010.

<https://www.government.se/articles/2011/03/evaluation-of-the-prohibition-of-the-purchase-of-sexual-services/>

³⁶ Radio Interview with dominatrix Ellen Templin, 08.03.2010: <http://abolition2014.blogspot.de/2014/05/interview-miteiner-domina.html>

³⁷ Die Unsichtbaren Männer: <https://dieunsichtbarenmaenner.wordpress.com/>; www.freiersblick.de

demands circulate online.³⁸ Abroad these create a visceral reaction and are viewed as descriptions of torture. Here, too, the German government evades responsibility by criminalizing some services under the Prostitutes' Protection Act (advertising for pregnant women, gang-bangs and flatrate offers), but considers others acceptable: including anal sex, fisting, French kissing, scrotum licking, deep throat, orgies, urinating on women or "playing with stool", ...

Of course, these risky sexual practices have led to an increase in sexually transmitted infections. A scientific study from 2008 carried out under Dr. Anna Wolff studies the developments in the area of health and well-being with a focus on STIs³⁹. The study's subject were 110 prostitutes in Lübeck. 26% had an STI that required medical treatment. 42% had an acute infection or had had one in the recent past.

Inside the brothels, women are "locked-in". The brothel owner controls daily life, which means he decides who may come in and who may not. If one wishes to approach the women, one first has to be "in good standing" with the brothel owner. Any contact with the outside world is heavily restricted. Not just anyone may speak to the women. The women are not free.

Women in brothels do not experience a life of self-determination. They are, as Manfred Paulus describes⁴⁰, *"from the very start prisoners of a mostly criminal subculture that rules the red-light districts. In the hierarchy of this milieu, they are at the very bottom. They have no rights, no protections, they are helpless."*

The women have a completely asymmetrical relation to the men: *"Today the prostitution market consists of c. 90% women from poorer EU-countries in the East. Circa 30% are under 21-years-old. The majority does not speak German, some are even illiterate. They do not practice safer sex, they cannot assert their boundaries, cannot negotiate. They are in a situation of complete inferiority. They do not have the power to make demands. For 30 euros they do anything the sex buyers want. They are completely overwhelmed, completely traumatized."*⁴¹

An additional big challenge is the fact that women are often being trafficked by their own families or so-called "friends". Her earnings go back home to the family or "friends", who are her pimps. An attempt at exiting prostitution consequently creates a lot of inner turmoil. It does not mean escaping the clutches of an unknown perpetrator, but the dissolution of bonds with someone who is intimately familiar.⁴²

Violence is also expressed in the high daily rent in brothels (women are having to pay up to 180€ daily), which means that women are seeing 6 buyers before they earn a single euro.

The working conditions are disastrous. Women are completely dependent on the establishment: Many work, eat and sleep in brothels. They live in a lawless parallel world with no access to the outside. Women are being sold in Germany according to the laws of most brutal capitalism: Profit maximization and low cost, etc.

³⁸ Laufhaus Erosark in Karlsruhe: <https://www.erospark-karlsruhe.de>

³⁹ Anna Wolff, Untersuchung zum Infektionsstatus von Prostituierten in Lübeck. Heidelberg, 2007. <http://www.zhb.uniluebeck.de/ebooks/ediss468.pdf>

⁴⁰ Manfred Paulus: Menschenhandel, 2014, Klemm + Oelschläger Verlag, S. 107.

⁴¹ Sabine Constabel, Sozialarbeiterin, die über 20 Jahre mit prostituierten Frauen in Stuttgart arbeitet, Fernseh-Interview am 17.03.2013 in SWR1 Leute. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpCPKDRcFg0>

⁴² Dr. Ingeborg Kraus: Vortrag in Washington: „Survivor Strategies to Deal with Traumatic Stress: Dissociation and Trauma Bonding“: <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2019/06/07/coalition-to-end-sexual-exploitation-global-summit-june12-15-2019-washington-d-c/>

The work shifts in of themselves pose a health risk: Prostituted women are having to be “available” to customers around the clock and consequently often sleep for just five hours a night.

Many women live in Germany like nomads. **They have no stable housing and are transported from brothel to brothel so that sex buyers can be offered “variety”.** Often they don’t even know what city they are in.

Gynaecologists who work with women in prostitution are reporting that pregnant women are in high demand among sex buyers⁴³. This means that late abortions are very common or that many women are giving up children for adoption shortly after birth. The physical and emotional stress caused by women having to offer sex conveyor-belt-style isn’t just risky for the pregnant woman, but also for the development of the fetus inside her body.

Reports like that of gynaecologist Liane Bissinger describing the bodily harms of prostitution are a harrowing read.⁴⁴ She reports destroyed intestinal floras, illnesses regarding teeth/mouth/jaws, skin eczemas, whole body pain and frequent hip joint pain (from having to endure the heavy weight of sex buyers and their violent thrusts for hours on end), irreversible damage to the pelvic floor leading to urinal and stool incontinence.

Considering the dramatic developments in prostitution in Germany and the increase in violence against women in the industry since the introduction of the Prostitution Act in 2002, one does wonder why the argument that a Sex Purchase Ban may increase violence is still considered viable. **The German state refuses to see the violence done to women in prostitution. Prostitution is a system of violence!**

Myth 3: A Sex Purchase Ban Increases Violence Against Women in the General Population

This argument itself is shameful since it demands a group of women to be sacrificed to men’s sexual violence, in order to protect other (socially more advantaged) women from said violence. This is a deeply racist and sexist view, dividing women into persons worthy and unworthy of protection. Still, studies show once again that prostitution does not decrease violence in society, but – quite the opposite – encourages it.

The example of Nevada:

In the U.S. prostitution law is a state-level matter and in the last 40 years, only one of the 51 American states has chosen to completely legalize prostitution and sex buying: Nevada. It’s no coincidence that Nevada has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the U.S.: Nevada has the most victims of domestic violence⁴⁵, the third-highest rate of rape and sexual assault⁴⁶ and the fourth-highest in femicide⁴⁷. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey,

⁴³ Dr. Wolfgang Heide: Stellungnahme zur öffentlichen Anhörung zur „Regulierung des Prostitutionsgewerbes“ im Ausschuss für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Gesundheit im Deutschen Bundestag am 06. Juni 2016:

<https://www.traumaand-prostitution.eu/2016/06/05/stellungnahme-von-wolfgang-heide-facharzt-fuer-gynaekologie-und-geburtshilfe/>

⁴⁴ Liane Bissinger: Körperliche Schäden der Prostitution - Bericht einer Frauenärztin aus der offenen Arbeit. Auf Abolition 2014, November 2019. <http://abolition2014.blogspot.com/2019/11/korperliche-schaden-der-prostitution.html>

⁴⁵ <https://www.rosenblumlawlv.com/blog/2018/3/31/nevada-domestic-violence-by-the-numbers/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/232563/forcible-rape-rate-in-the-us-by-state/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.nevadacurrent.com/blog/nevada-has-nations-4th-highest-rate-for-intimate-murder-of-women/>

nearly half of all women (48,1%) in Nevada have been raped, experienced physical violence and/or have been stalked at least once.⁴⁸

The rate for human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Nevada is 63% higher than that of the state coming right after, including states such as New York and California.⁴⁹

In Germany, too, the liberalization of prostitution has had extremely negative effects on society. Because: Prostitution doesn't just have devastating effects on women in the industry, but also on women who are the partners of buyers, whom we in Germany call "Schattenfrauen" ("Shadow women").⁵⁰ These are women who are cheated on by their partners who use prostitution and they remain in the shadows of the prostitution system.

This tragic "collateral damage" of prostitution has never been part of the debate and still is not. Every day c. 1,2 million men visit a prostitute. If we assume that it's not always the same men who are sex buying and that a large number are married or in a relationship the number of women who are cheated on and who suffers significant psychological harm upon finding out has to be in the tens of millions.⁵¹

"...the deceit, the secrecy, the betrayal and the view of women as mere sex objects, the dehumanization is the real problem. Trust, mutual respect and real intimacy becomes impossible and so prostitution has a destructive effect on the very foundation of a couple's relationship. It destroys a person's value system and their ability to love." (Quote from a shadow woman)⁵²

Street workers who work with prostituted women often report that the women they meet have lost touch with themselves. They react fearful or apathetic. It seems obvious that the last thing they need is sex. But sex buyers see this and "don't give a damn". They laugh about it and enjoy themselves.

How is that possible? I ask myself this question – the same one Caroline Emcke asked herself in her book "Against Hate". Yes, how is it possible to not see the other person's distress, to just focus on one's own desires?

It's clearly possible, because legal sex-buying communicates to men that they have a right to sex and to using women. The woman is locked into a socially constructed image, an image of the "unsatiable sex beast". Other needs she may have are invisible. She is dehumanized, she is only that: A body with no soul. This allows the sex buyer any form of unscrupulousness, his compassion is blocked, and indifference takes its place.⁵³

Studies on sex buyers in London by researcher Melissa Farley prove this⁵⁴:

- 50% of the 103 sex buyers interviewed knew that a prostituted woman had been under the control of a pimp.
- One man said: "It's like, he's her owner."
- 35% believe that between 50% and 90% of prostitutes were abused in childhood.
- 55% believe that the majority of women entered prostitution by deceit or through human trafficking.

⁴⁸ <https://www.nevadabusiness.com/2018/11/nevada-coalition-to-end-domestic-and-sexual-violence-publishes-2017-intimate-partner-violence-homicide-report/>

⁴⁹ <https://de.scribd.com/document/379531366/Nevada-sex-trafficking-study>

⁵⁰ <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2018/04/09/schattenfrauen/>

⁵¹ <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2017/09/29/ex-freier-fordert-sexkaufverbot-jetzt/>

⁵² <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2018/04/09/schattenfrauen/>

⁵³ <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2017/12/06/darf-die-vagina-arbeitswerkzeug-sein/#more-1008>

⁵⁴ Melissa Farley, Men who buy Sex, London, 2009.

- What are sex buyers saying the prostitute is thinking while she's with them? She feels: Empty, disgusted, dirty, physically and emotionally in pain, fearful, she tries to switch off, tries to block out her thoughts, ...
- What is prostitution? **Quote from one buyer: "You pay for the convenience, it's a bit like using a public toilet."**

The legalization and normalization of prostitution equate to a capitulation in the face of violence against women. It signals to women that they must be sexually available to men. It signals to men that they need sex, they need a frequent pressure release, in order to remain stable and not become sexually violent. That is the hidden message which the system of prostitution communicates: These are endorsements of rape myths.

It is wrong to believe that men cannot control their sexuality. Men have to learn a new way of dealing with sexual frustration. The introduction of the Sex Purchase Ban is essential, precisely because we believe in men. Regulating one's emotions and learning to handle frustration responsibly are important achievements of civilization.

Myth 4: The Swedish Model prevents women in prostitution from earning money

All studies have shown that prostitution affects the most vulnerable women in society. They are not the daughters of well-to-do families, no, women in prostitution are extremely vulnerable: Poverty, experiences of violence, dysfunctional families, marginalization, vulnerability. In Canada the majority of affected women are indigenous, in India, it's women from lower casts, in New Zealand, it's aboriginal women and in Germany women from the poorest countries of Europe. Their decision to enter prostitution is not a free choice, but a consequence of a lack of choices!

Prostitution is not work like any other. It is indefensible sexual, psychological and economic violence. It is sexist violence; it is paid rape. Prostituted people are victims of sexual encounters which denigrate and oppress women, they are at the mercy of men's sexual desires and victims of pimps who want to make money fast; they are victims of poverty, social instability, victims of an economic system that does not manage to integrate them and has no response to their distress.

To call prostitution work is the height of discrimination and racism and in no way empowering for women. U.S. prostitution survivor Vednita Carter whose great-grandmother was a slave labels prostitution as a continuation of slavery. In the past white men used to rape black women, today they still do – for a few measly dollars.

Myth 5: A Sex Purchase Ban is an Attack on Personal Freedom

No! A Sex Purchase Ban guarantees the protection of personal freedom.

Parisian law professor Muriel Fabre-Magnan recently wrote a book on the subject of freedom titled "L'insitution de la liberté"⁵⁵. In it, she explains that freedom cannot be the ability to destroy that which protects and enables freedom. Accordingly, "consenting" to place oneself at someone else's mercy does not constitute freedom. Especially since we know how tenuous this so-called "consent" often is: lack of choice, violence, coercion, dependency etc. In this context, women's "consent" is only consent to their own loss of freedom. The labelling

⁵⁵ Prof. Muriel Fabre-Magnan: L'istitution de la liberté" – PUF, Oktober 2018.

of the Sex Purchase Ban as paternalistic, in other words forcing one's view of right and wrong on other people, is simply false, says Ms. Fabre-Magnan. The point is not to protect the person from themselves or to tell them what choices to make but it is primarily about protecting people from exploitation. The goal of abolishing prostitution is not about protecting women from themselves, but protecting them from those who wish to exploit them.

Those who repeat over and over again that prostitution is a job like any other should be mandated to go to the streets and service 20 buyers a night, says the Parisian professor. The lack of imagination that many have is really about "not wanting to see what's going on", which finally results in total indifference to the suffering of others.⁵⁶

When the French Constitutional Court at the start of this year ruled in support of the Sex Purchase Ban it added that the law was not only constitutional but that France needed a law of this kind in order to reach other goals of its constitution, namely those that seek to protect human rights and human dignity.

Myth 6: Forced prostitution should be combatted, but not voluntary prostitution

Testimony from police:

Even though so-called "voluntary prostitution" is legal in Germany, police testify that forced prostitution is far more common.⁵⁷ *"Competent criminal investigators estimate that 96 to 98% of women in German prostitution are under the control of third parties"*, says Detective Superintendent Manfred Paulus. Helmut Sporer, head of the 1st Commissariat of the Criminal Investigations Department Augsburg, says that 90% of women are not voluntarily in prostitution, 80% are migrants coming from Eastern European states that recently joined the EU.⁵⁸ *"Germany has long since become a hub for human trafficking and forced prostitution."*⁵⁹

We have to assume that more than 90% of people in prostitution (most of them women and girls) are victims of forced prostitution and human trafficking!

Testimony from doctors and psychotraumatologists:

Forced prostitution and "voluntary" prostitution are inextricably linked. That is why it's hard to separate the two and to treat them differently. The entry into prostitution is usually preceded by experiences of violence in childhood – in this context, it's inappropriate to speak of "free choice".⁶⁰ The "free choice" to enter prostitution requires certain conditions. Here, too, there are countless studies showing a connection between violent experiences in childhood and prostitution.⁶¹ Many women lacked protection in childhood and consequently didn't learn self-protection. These women learned how to "switch off" early on.

⁵⁶ Interview mit Prof. Muriel Fabre-Magnan: « Consentir à se mettre à disposition d'autrui n'est pas la liberté ». 08.01.2019. <https://mouvementdunid.org/prostitution-societe/tribunes/consentir-a-se-mettre-a-disposition-dautrui-nestpas-la-liberte/>

⁵⁷ Paulus, M.: Tatort Deutschland. Menschenhandel, 2014; TAGESPIEGEL vom 15.03.2014: „Prostitutions-Verbot: Schweden als Vorbild für Deutschland?“ von Livia Gerster.

⁵⁸ Helmut Sporer: Speech for the Seminar „Reality of Prostitution“ of the European Women's Lobby on 1 Oct 2013 in Brussels: „90 % of these women have not freely chosen prostitution, they are subjected to various forms of pressure. About 80 % of the women these days come from abroad, they are migrant women, especially from the new EU member states in South East Europe.“

⁵⁹ Manfred Paulus, in: Dokumentation „Bordell Deutschland – Milliardengeschäft Prostitution“, ZDFinfo, 2017.

⁶⁰ Dr. Ingeborg Kraus, Prostitution und Freiwilligkeit, EMMA, 2013. <https://www.trauma-andprostitution.eu/2014/12/08/prostitution-und-freiwilligkeit/>

⁶¹ Die Studie von Zumbeck in Deutschland hat ergeben, dass 65 Prozent der Frauen in ihrer Kindheit körperlich und 50 Prozent sexuell misshandelt wurden.

Sexuality requires an interplay of mind and body. In order to be penetrated by strangers, it is necessary to switch off instinctual reactions which otherwise would inevitably occur⁶²: Fear, shame, alienation, disgust, contempt, smell, pain etc. The phenomenon of this switching-off is called “dissociation”. Additionally, alcohol and drugs help to endure the psychological pain. The use of the vagina as an unfeeling “work instrument” is only possible in a state of dissociation.

This is why the consequences of trauma are so widespread in prostitution: In the studies that the Trauma Center in Ulm has compiled, prostituted people are classified as a high-risk group for trauma disorders: “Work with consequences: according to studies, between 47 and 87 percent of the interviewed women suffer from a post-traumatic stress disorder, report the scientists from the Trauma Center of the University in Ulm”.⁶³

The frequency of developing PTSD in prostitution is more than twice as high as for victims of war (who have a prevalence of developing PTSD of 20%)⁶⁴. The trauma in prostitution is also more complex. Often the comparison with other activities is used (such as a cleaning job or as a saleswoman). However, prostitution cannot be compared with such activity, as the very most intimate area of a woman is abused here. More and more survivors report of the trauma. They say that “the sex trade teaches you that you are not to even human.”⁶⁵

89% of women in prostitution express the desire to exit the industry.⁶⁶ Many women continue because they see and/or have no other options. **Prostitution as it occurs today in Germany is overwhelmingly forced prostitution and prostitution born from poverty where the main profiteers are third parties.**

Myth 7: The problem isn't prostitution, but third party control, societal stigma and bad working conditions

There is an error in thinking behind the German prostitution model. Namely that prostitution is a freely chosen occupation, as long as the right criteria are met. In France prostitution is seen in every facet as a form of violence, because if the sex buyer didn't pay, no sex act would occur. This means that, even when there is payment, the sex is unwanted in every instance. **Women accept intercourse although they don't want it. It remains unwanted penetration.**

In France people deeply reflected on this issue: Prostitution has got nothing to do with men not being able to contain their urges. Prostitution exists because society has internalized a deep inequality between men and women, which prioritizes men's desires over women's

⁶² 8Michaela Huber: Trauma und Prostitution aus traumatherapeutischer Sicht, 2014:

<http://www.michaelahuber.com/files/vortraege2014/trauma-und-prostitution-aus-traumatherapeutischer-sicht.pdf>

⁶³ **Sebastian Mayr**, Sex, Scham, Schmerz. 14.05.2021, Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung.

⁶⁴ Flatten, Gast, Hoffmann, Liebermann, Reddemann, Siol, Wöller, Petzold: *Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung. Leitlinie und Quellentext*. 2. Auflage. 1004. Seite 4. Epidemiologie. Schattauer.

⁶⁵ **Lynn Walsh**: The Sex trade teaches you that you are not even human. May 2021. The Morning Star.

<https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/sex-trade-teaches-you-youre-not-even-human>

⁶⁶ 9Melissa Farley: Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

<http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/Prostitutionin9Countries.pdf>

dignity. **As long as a state legitimizes this system, there cannot be equality between men and women. It is state-sanctioned misogyny!**

Because prostitution is neither about the desire, the feelings nor the dignity of women, violence is inherent to it and consequently impossible to reform out of the system.⁶⁷

This is confirmed by a large federal study on violence against women in Germany from 2004⁶⁸: Among the 10.000 women interviewed were 110 women in prostitution who reported the following: 82% had experienced psychological violence, 92% had experienced sexual harassment, 87% experienced physical violence and 59% sexual violence.

There is a second study done in Germany in 2001 interviewing 52 prostitutes⁶⁹. This study concluded that all women had experienced trauma. 70% had been physically attacked and 68% had been raped.

The violence takes many different forms: It begins with having to wear light clothing in cold temperatures or with having to be totally naked.

In street prostitution, women suffer bad hygienic conditions, no opportunity to wash themselves, no protection, no security, darkness, cold temperatures, exposure to sex buyers' and passerby's stares, who appraise, evaluate and shout insults, etc.

Violence doesn't just happen in prostitution. Women aren't protected outside of prostitution either: They experience violence, threats, etc. at the hands of their pimps, brothel owners, traffickers up to and including murder. They experience emotional violence through contemptuous looks and exclusion from society. They aren't taken seriously, are discriminated against and in the eyes of many remain "ex-hookers".

Prostitution survivor, Sandra Norak, describes it with the following words: *"To describe prostitution as 'work like any other' or simply as 'work' is completely misplaced considering the reality of the industry. Workers' rights or regulations are no solution to the precarious conditions and the violence in prostitution. The system of prostitution cannot be made free of violence against women. Prostitution itself destroys. For me and the women whom I met in prostitution, prostitution was extremely traumatic and severe violence, the symptoms of which often only show years later... What I and others endured under the German legislation is state-sanctioned sexual abuse. With its 2002 law, Germany tolerates and normalizes that people can be turned into products, into objects for sexual use by others."*⁷⁰

Myth 8: Prohibitions don't accomplish anything

If one takes this argument seriously there is no reason to punish anyone for anything and everything would have to be decriminalized. In order to be consistent, one would have to abolish the criminal code and simply appeal to people's good nature. If this is the view taken then slavery, too, should no longer be a crime, since it continues to exist despite the

⁶⁷ Dr. Ingeborg Kraus: Gegen den Hass – Nordisches Modell jetzt! Rede auf dem 3. Weltkongress gegen die sexuelle Ausbeutung von Frauen und Mädchen am 03.04.2019. <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2019/04/15/gegen-den-hass-nordisches-modell-jetzt/>

⁶⁸ Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend : Gender Datenreport, Kapitel 10: Gewalthandlungen und Gewaltbetroffenheit von Frauen und Männern, P. 651-652, 2004.

⁶⁹ Zumbeck, Sibylle: „Die Prävalenz traumatischer Erfahrungen, Posttraumatische Belastungsstörungen und Dissoziation bei Prostituierten“, Hamburg, 2001.

⁷⁰ Sandra Norak: Prostitution ist unvereinbar mit der Menschenwürde. Vortrag auf dem 3. Weltkongress gegen die sexuelle Ausbeutung von Frauen und Mädchen in Mainz. 3. April 2019. https://daten2.verwaltungsportal.de/dateien/seitengenerator/571c634ce60ff702826cd18799cadd7b186819/sandra_norak.pdf

prohibition against it. Why not legalize theft or murder? In those cases, it seems absurd. Yet this line of argument is used constantly in the context of sex buying. All it does is prove that those who argue like this do not take seriously and deny the violence done to women through the purchase of sex.

Myth 9: Prostitution is sex work

Prostitution cannot be called “work”, because it is extremely traumatizing. Innumerable studies have shown that post-traumatic stress disorder is extraordinarily common among women in prostitution and its intensity is equal to that of torture victims.⁷¹ Many are trying to numb their fears and pain through alcohol and other addictive substances which cause them to develop addictions. Even after years of therapy women say that they can objectively see their own worth, but they cannot feel it. They still feel like a piece of dirt, because that is how they were treated in prostitution.

And that is what fuels my motivation to be outspoken against prostitution because the job the state has given me is in essence to rehabilitate women’s dignity, while at the same time that very same state communicates to men that it is their right to trample on the dignity of women in prostitution.

Here I want to highlight Sandra Norak’s words:

“The following text may not be relatable to some, because the subject of the ‘soul’ is hard to make concrete. I myself am always focused on ‘precise numbers, data, facts, statistics, etc...’ but there are things in this world that are not tangible and that go beyond that which we can neatly explain. Beyond that which we are able to clearly reason. And really that is a good thing because it gives that hint of magic to our lives. If I put words out there like “soulmates” I assume that even some of the most rational people believe in it, even though it isn’t tangible and cannot be clearly explained.

So, I think back to the time when I was in brothels and we had to endure drunk and aggressive buyers at night, while we slept during the days, in order to recover at least a little bit, in order to line up again the next evening. Day in, day out. No path ahead of us, no direction, no aims, no dreams, no feelings – there was only emptiness. We were without souls.

At the start when we went to the private rooms with the men, we parked our feelings at the door and when the ‘act’ was over, we picked them up again. We transformed temporarily into unfeeling robots and then again became feeling people. But there came a point in time where we opened the door to become human again and we couldn’t find anything to pick up. We kept trying to put aside our own humanity while the buyers were there in order to endure all the penetration – at some point, we lost it entirely. From this point onwards we were robots even after leaving the private rooms. Shadows of ourselves we wandered disoriented, removed from the present moment.

But why did this happen?

Inside those four walls, sex buyers violated our boundaries, they took away our dignity. When they became violent and we realized resistance was futile we endured them, simply hoping that they would finish soon, because we were too tired to resist any further and had no energy left. No energy to keep saying the same things, no energy to keep pointing out

⁷¹ Dr. Ingeborg Kraus: Prostitution und Gesundheit. <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2018/05/11/prostitution-undgesundheit/>

that they were hurting us, which when they were drunk, they didn't even notice. No energy to keep appealing to a humanity that was never to be found. We resigned. I am purposely saying 'WE', because my experiences align with those of innumerable other prostituted women, whom I personally got to know.

As a feeling person there comes a point when it's not just the "act" that is impossible to endure, but the memories of it. The memories of "touches" that weren't wanted, the memories of word and images that one never wanted to hear or see. The thought that this will happen again very soon. You become unable to endure the life that you're in. So, at some point, you become the machine that you are when inside the rooms, the machine that can't be hurt, that isn't touched or fazed by anything at all.

The problem is that the soul that we carry inside ourselves does not turn to stone, it cannot make a home in a robot-like existence. The soul stays soft, stays vulnerable. So, as we lose our humanity due to external influences and mutate into machines in order to survive, our soul does not follow suit. But we can't hear it scream anymore, we can't hear it fighting back, because we set its voice to silent. It keeps trying to reach out to us, it fights and it sobs – but in vain.

When one finds one's way out of prostitution and once again becomes a feeling person, one expects the soul to be audible again. But many have the experience that it speaks no more, remains silent. During the process when we were losing our humanity it stopped breathing because it had to silently endure what it couldn't bear. It died.

When Lutz Besser, a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy, founder of the Lower Saxon Center for Psychotraumatology and Trauma Therapy, introduced me to his term "soul murder" in his article on prostitution published in EMMA, I thought about it a lot. However one defines or imagines 'the soul' – I am sure there is a soul and that I, as described above, have seen it die over and over again inside prostitution.

And at this point, it becomes clear why prostitution, apart from the physical violence, is so destructive. It becomes clear why one cannot simply tell prostituted women: 'Look, now you've exited prostitution, now it's all over and done with, now you've made it, now everything is alright again!'

Because what many people don't see is precisely this invisible death of the soul that happens to a person in prostitution. In contrast to the physical murder of the body, I do believe that the dead soul can be revived. I believe that because my soul came back to life – and it had definitely once passed over.

However, the way to get it back and to heal its silent screams and injuries from one's time as a robot is rocky. Back then, as a machine, one didn't hear what the soul had to say. Now if one wants to heal it, one has to approach it, take it back from its lifeless form, reanimate it and listen to it. This hurts because it means to go through the feelings of back then. One has to listen to what it used to say back then when it was fighting in vain in order to reach us, but wasn't able to, because we were too busy surviving our current situation.

To find back to one's soul and through that to one's life means to face up to it. It means the painful process of going over everything deep inside. To me it meant taking quiet moments to go back over the worst situations I experienced with sex buyers and instead of switching off as I did then or numbing myself with alcohol, to really feel these unbearable moments just once and to cry in exactly that space where in the past I had to laugh it off and pretend it wasn't happening.

It is easier to destroy a soul than to bring it back to life – that's why one has to try and prevent the murder of souls in the first place. In the context of prostitution, the only way is to

stop sex buyers from committing murder. Occasionally people say that what one reads on sex buyer forums is not reality, because in the real world men wouldn't dare do such selfish and inhuman things.

When I hear that I can only laugh. I wish they wouldn't dare, but what I saw done to me and to other prostituted women and what we went through is exactly what you find on the forums.

Degrading, inhumane behavior that turns a living being into a mere object...

I wish our government would finally take the initiative on state-funded exit programs for people in prostitution, a process that takes people who know what needs to be done, who know how to pave the way for prostituted people to take a step into a life marked by respect, by honor, by appreciation and empathy. It requires hope, it requires a friendly smile, kindness and warm-heartedness for people who in the most extreme cases have never experienced it and don't even know what it means to be treated well. And it requires understanding – even when there are setbacks because sometimes our starting position is rock bottom.

As a society, we have to fight for people's path back to life or into their very first life. We should fight for this, not simply accept this murder of souls – because what is a human without a soul?"⁷²

Prostitution destroys people. Prostitution is serious violence. To call prostitution "work" is to cover up the violence. It is an attitude that contributes to women slipping into a life of violence that they can hardly escape. Prostitution can and should neither be framed as work nor as an opportunity.

Germany's liberal prostitution policy amounts to a collective degradation of women and has contributed to an increase in violence against women across society. It cements inequality between men and women and equates to a capitulation in the face of male violence against women. It operates as a catalyst for forced prostitution, pimping and human trafficking and has made Germany into the brothel of Europe.

The system of prostitution tramples on the dignity of women.

And the German state even profits from this!

Human dignity for all! Nordic Model now!

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany: Article 1(1):

Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.

German politicians bear a historic responsibility in the evolution of a sex industry that claims thousands of victims of sexual exploitation every day. This causes the German state to violate its own constitution and entirely ignores European recommendations that would effectively combat human trafficking and violence against women.

Against the backdrop of this complete political failure of all established parties, we require an immediate change of course through the introduction of the Sex Purchase Ban in the spirit of the Nordic Model.

⁷² Sandra Norak: Über das unsichtbare Seelensterben. 05.08.2017

<https://mylifeinprostitution.wordpress.com/2017/08/05/ueber-das-unsichtbare-seelensterben/>

About the Author:

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PhD in psychology and internationally renowned psychotraumatologist. She has written and published a variety of works on the connection between trauma and prostitution. For years, she has been giving lectures and training courses on the subject worldwide. She has been invited to speak before parliaments including e.g., the Assemblée Nationale in Paris, l' ENA in Strasbourg, the Italian Senate and the parliament in Rome, in the Palaco de Cibeles in Madrid, as part of the CSW in New York and before the German Bundestag (parliament).

She spent 7 years providing humanitarian aid in Bosnia and Kosovo during and after the war and founded the first women's shelter in Prizren/Kosovo. Subsequently, she worked for 9 years as a psychotherapist, as well as head of therapeutics at psychosomatic clinics in Germany. Since 2012 she has been working in her own practice in Karlsruhe, Germany. She has worked with many trauma victims, including many women who were victims of prostitution and human trafficking.

Dr Kraus is co-founder of Green Prostitution Critics⁷³ (since 2007), the initiator of the Public Appeal of Trauma Therapists Against Prostitution and runs the website "Trauma and Prostitution"⁷⁴, a network of health experts (in the fields of medicine, psychology, and psychotraumatology) that offers medical and therapeutic assistance to women in prostitution and educates the public on the realities of prostitution, the damage done to women's health and the consequences for society. She is co-founder of the Alliance "Stop Sexkauf" ("Stop Sex Buying") and jointly launched the petition "Dismantle Prostitution in Germany".⁷⁵ In 2019 she founded the initiative "Karlsruhe gegen Sexkauf" ("Karlsruhe Against Sex Buying").⁷⁶

Translation into English: Elly Arrow

⁷³ <https://karlsruherappell.com/der-appell/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/>

⁷⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/sexkauf-bestrafen-prostitution-abbauen>

⁷⁶ <https://karlsruhe-gegen-sexkauf.de/>