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Identifying effective social work practices in response to prostitution

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II

Abstract

This thesis aims to explore social work practices in relation to sex work. It addresses the research question of *what challenges, trends and implications evolve for professional social work in Germany once effective practices in response to prostitution have been identified*. These issues are explored through the method of qualitative interviews.

The study uses social stigma theory as a theoretical framework and starting point to discuss methods in relation to managing risk and stigma(tization) processes. The current debate around how to regulate prostitution is presented through a review of feminist perspectives on prostitution. An (inter)national exchange of social work practice in the field of sex work is performed through consideration of the Swedish approach to regulate prostitution.

This thesis draws two conclusions. Firstly, it issues a clear call for decriminalization of sex work since restrictive regulations lead to harsh conditions for the most vulnerable, as was observed in the urban quarter of St. Georg in Hamburg. Secondly, it calls for the German prostitution law in force today to be extended, since it currently consists only of three paragraphs, additionally for all federal states to adequately and consistently implement it.

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List of Abbreviations

Berufsverband Sexarbeit	Trade Association Erotic and sexual services Berufsverband erotische und sexuelle Dienstleistungen e. V. (founded October 2013)
GO	Government Organisation
ICRSE	International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation

1 Introduction

Through an internship at the equality agency for women in Munich (Gleichstellungsstelle für Frauen der Landeshauptstadt München) it was possible to visit the 2nd Frankfurter Prostitution Congress in November 2013, where sex workers gathered in order to strive for more recognition, rights and against the stigmatization of their occupation. For the first time listening to sex workers and their perceptions of the current legal, social and international situation the author became further intrigued about the how feminists can become so divided about this topic while the common overall goal for them is to enhance women's rights and their position in society. Thus an illustration of feminist standpoints towards prostitution will serve as an introduction to this study.

Through interviewing social workers about their experiences, actions, methods, approaches and reflections in their every-day work with women, men and transgender people as well as migrants engaged in sex work this paper aims to provide a critical glance towards a social work practice in this field and also serve as a platform of exchange and dialogue within the profession. Thereby political, social and ideological arenas between the social workers and clients are touched upon (Payne 2014: 27).

1.1 Purposes of the study and research question

Through the examination of social work practice in relation to the theorization of stigma, the overall goal of the paper is to identify possible strategies to improve the work and living conditions of women, men and transgender people engaged in sex work. Further objectives are to contribute to the awareness raising, clarification and recognition within society about sex work and therefore also to challenge related stereotypes. Additionally it constitutes a professional and informative exchange of social work approaches throughout an application-

orientated discussion around management methods and strategies towards stigma, risk and decriminalization within welfare service agencies in Germany and one in Sweden.

Suppositions to look at are the liberal prostitution law in Germany and its correlation to human trafficking, and the impacts of aiming to achieve amendments through liberating the prostitution law in Germany 2002 without regulating it for a social work practice, for sex workers and for the prostitution milieu itself.

What does that mean for a social work practice within this field considering that prostitution can't be thought about without migration anymore? Does the law give justice to the fact that three-fourths of the sex workers do come from outside of Germany? Different places and approaches will also reveal how social workers negotiate their role differently.

Assumptions and hypotheses before conducting the interviews were mainly driven by a great interest in how help services are generally organized and implemented in order to support people with social problems in relation to prostitution. Therefore the questionnaires entailed inquiries as, what are their specific needs, methods, strategies, approaches and how do they differ; what experiences and traditions do they have; what challenges are there in the present; which are expected in relation to the future concerning current debates and social stigma?

Theoretical access towards social stigma explores how it evolves and how deviant behavior is dependent upon social norms and becomes influential over negative attributes in relation to people's identities and influences their scope of action within society. This theoretical framework gives the foundation for an analytical gaze towards the practice within professional social work interventions in Germany, especially outreach work, that have been discovered throughout nine interviews with mostly social workers. Amongst them were one educator that also was a sex worker, a cultural mediator, psychologists and activists within (counseling) social service agencies and Non-Governmental Organization's (NGO), as well as one Governmental Organization (GO) for sex workers that are

operating throughout accepting or rights based approaches in Hamburg, Munich and Nürnberg. Target groups of social work practices and how those are designed reveal something about wider social processes (Skilbrei and Holmström 2013: 7). Since those social work practices are closely tied to social norms within a society it is also important to critically reflect on historical processes.

How does the media debate around human trafficking and abolition affect stereotypes in relation to prostitution? The idea here is that the media discourse rather reproduces clichés of the "whore stigma". Further it mixes discourses of migration and human trafficking and communicates and illustrates an exclusively criminal and deviant picture of the milieu.

Through being able to attend the 2nd Frankfurter Prostitution Congress in Germany it was possible for me to identify two big requests of the sex worker movement: on the one hand to amend bias and prejudice evolving out of media commentatorship; and on the other hand striving for auditory and recognition, meaning to develop an own interest group to challenge being "talked-about" and represent demands and claims out of subjective experiences and not political interests. Do the present representatives within the movement in Germany include the target group of the interviewed social work approaches within this study?

The overall objectives of the thesis are:

- ✓ Reviewing effective social work practices in responding to prostitution
- ✓ Identifying evolving challenges, trends and implications for social work

The insights and therefore argumentation of this paper are based on eight qualitative interviews on experiences about working with women, men and transgender people in prostitution and approaches towards professional strategies as well as challenges in supporting them. One additional interview was conducted with a social worker based in Malmö; besides a participant observation in the 2nd Prostitution Congress in Frankfurt in November 2013; and a participation in the expert conference and symposium "Where there's a will, there's a way?! Successfully fighting human trafficking in women" in Nürnberg in Oktober 2013.

1.2 Background on the topic and outline

There are diverse definitions of prostitution. The German dictionary defines it as the commercial practice of sexual activities,[1] meaning the explicit exchange of sexual practices against an explicit amount of money, whereas Sanders states that "[p]rostitution is a consumer industry where sexuality is explicitly for sale, but it can be argued that this is not vastly different from other feminized workplaces where sexuality is capitalized on, not only by female workers but also by employers." (Sanders 2005: 337).

There are diverse places and forms of sex work, which simultaneously constitutes the umbrella term for stripping, dancing, apartment prostitution, hotel and elite prostitution, escort services and so on. This paper aims to focus on street-based prostitution as well as indoor prostitution, meaning hotels, private apartments and brothels as main spaces where street work is carried out.

With respect to data, studies and publications base their numbers on estimations, so there is almost no valid data, also due to the unreported cases, since few sex workers register their business which makes it difficult to access the field.

Thereby people who sell sexual services identify as female, male and trans, on the other hand buyers can also be male, female or trans. Yet the biggest part of prostitution takes part in the heterosexual constellation female-to-male. However this paper focuses on male and transgender prostitutes as well since they are also a highly stigmatized and invisibilized group within the sex industry.

Additionally the terms prostitution (usually referring to female-to-male) and "male prostitution" (referring to male-to-male) need to be defined in a certain space and time since they constitute trans historical categories, have political effects and what they cover depends upon notions and concepts within sexology. For instance notions of transsexuality and homosexuality are not existent since always, ideas about (ab)normal behavior and perceptions of identities also played

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[1] http://www.duden.de/suchen/dudenonline/prostitution, Accessed 11th April 2014
 (own translation)

roles on which grounds categorizations were played out and therefore had impacts on social lives (Tanke in Hope Ditmore 2006a: 275 - 277). Hence, "[…] what is, at any given time and place, governed as prostitution is not a given, but rather needs to be seen as produced within a specific context." (Skilbrei and Holmström 2013: 6). Perceptions of gender thereby do not only determine the life of sex workers but also have strong impacts for the work of social service.

There is a variety of approaches towards regulating prostitution by law in a European as well as global perspective, whose experiences can all contribute to an enforced improvement of social work practices towards sex work. Here main item and topic of interest is the German prostitution law and if it constitutes a practical and solid framework for sex workers themselves and how social work practices (can) operate within it. Through additional notes from an interview with a social worker in Malmö (Sweden) a side glance will be given to the Swedish approach since it goes in line with the radical feminist idea of abolishing prostitution through criminalizing the purchase of sex and therefore punishing the buyers.

Since 2002 Germany has one of the most liberal prostitution laws in the world, meaning that it was not illegal before, but it is now not deemed "sittenwidrig" anymore, which means it was legal but *immoral* to sell sexual services and therefore sex workers have the opportunity to register their services as a legal craft both self-employed and employed and for instance receive social insurances. This is very interesting in relation to social stigma, since "sittenwidrig" means against "good" social norms. But erasing the denotation out of the law does of course not mean to simultaneously delete stigma out of society, too. In practice this is almost never applied. On the contrary there has been a call for vice squads as well as especially spatial control over prostitution since the 19th century (Ruhne 2006: 2524) which can still be found in the present even though it is framed as a legal occupation by law and the European Court of Justice.

Since 2013 Germany and the European Union as a whole are in the state of an extremely polarized debate between the "pro sex work approach" and the "anti-

prostitution" position. The *International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe* (ICRSE) strives on that level against the criminalization of clients and for a representation of sex workers interests and explicitly holds a declaration of the rights of sex workers in Europe were current rights violations and required actions are highlighted.[2] In contrast the *European Women´s Lobby* (EWL) holds a campaign "Together for a Europe free from prostitution" to call for abolishing an out their perspective form of violence against women.[3] This paper does not have space to also discuss the debate on an international level, yet it is important to keep those political developments in mind since they influence politics on a national level.

1.3 Literature review

This review will be done through an introduction and elaboration towards feminist perspectives on prostitution.

Additionally this paper is located in a postmodernist Western tradition of thought, which for this study means as Bell argues, that the prostitute body is "signified differently in different [cultures or] discourses" (Bell 1994: 2) and therefore always a matter of social construction. Additionally a "uniform feminist position on prostitution" does not exist (Beran 2012: 22). There are diverse feminist productions of prostitution and "the prostitute". Bell mentions that "a process of othering runs through […] feminist constructions of the prostitute body; [and] that the modern discourse dichotomizes the female into the "good" and "bad" woman […]" (Bell 1994: 2).

Throughout the ideological positions of feminism during the 1970s there was no space to speak out for sex workers themselves which changed amongst others due to the emerging postmodern feminism at the end of the 1980s (Bell 1994: 73).

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[2] http://www.sexworkeurope.org/de, Accessed 8th May 2014
[3] http://www.womenlobby.org/get-involved/ewl-campaigns-actions/together-for-a-europe-free-from/?lang=en, Accessed 8th May 2014

Within it can be identified a "deep division […] what prostitution is." (Outshoorn 2005: 144).

Likely feminist standpoints contradict and polarize most between the domination theory's argument that sex is a form of violence and sex work as the institutionalization of women's dependency on men and on the other hand the notion that women can be empowered through receiving money for sexual services that are supposed to be available for free under referring to the sex work approach (Sloan and Wahab 2000: 463, 468). Roughly they can be divided in argumentations that either aim for an eradication or for a legalization of prostitution while there are several standpoints in between, who are simultaneously criticizing a solely binary emphasis on the topic that is insufficient in relation to its complex reality.

For example Kissil and Davey (2010) classify the "contemporary feminist debate" roughly into the *"pro group"*, groups that are in favor of prostitute rights and the *"anti group"*, feminists who are against prostitution. This classification seems superficial, but becomes yet more obvious in the German context later on.

The Abolitionists

Radical feminists are mostly referred to as having an abolitionist perspective (Sanders 2005: 320). They see prostitutes at the "'frontline' of patriarchal oppression" (Carpenter 1994: 25) and strive for recognition of prostitution as a form of violence against and objectification of women, which is an outcome of a patriarchal structure and unequal power-relations within society, through which women are forced to by their individual social circumstances. Therefore prostitution can never be consensual and a free choice. Additionally if women "sell themselves" it is not just them that are affected, but all women as a whole (Kissil and Davey 2010: 6, 7).
Radical feminists are mostly in favor of the approach of a partial decriminalization policy model in relation with prostitution, which is for example

substituted in Sweden. That means the buyer is criminalized but not the prostitute. At the same time a complete criminalization is refused which would punish the prostitute as well (Beran 2012: 37). It becomes clear, that there are many facets of approaches and ideas for regulating prostitution.

Radical feminists criticize the liberal feminist's points of view towards prostitution because they would lack a structural analysis of society through taking into consideration a social reality that is patriarchal and therefore supports unequal gender norms (Beran 2012: 36, 37).

The Liberals

The overall objective of this movement is to remove prohibitions while regulating sex work as an occupation and guarantee sex workers equal rights (Outshoorn 2005: 145).

The liberal feminist perspective towards prostitution assumes that "sex work is an occupational choice among other gendered and discriminated forms of work available for women […]" (Kissil and Davey 2010: 6) whereas agents choose prostitution out of economic reasons and thereby have power to negotiate. Additionally the argument is that sex work is not merely and exclusively about the body, it is more about the actual service (Sloan and Wahab 2000: 469) in the sense of labour.

Important at this point is to consider that sexual services constitute a labor production for direct consumption in contrast to labor involved for commodity exchange under capitalism. This is a specificity within the labor in production of sexual services (Beloso 2012: 50). Services can't be restored, so every service is individual, they are consumed at the same time they are produced and they can't be stored, which also means the demand can´t be precisely foreseen. That has unstable implications for the lives of sex workers since one never knows exactly how high the demand and therefore ones wage will be.

Sex worker rights activist Agustin mentions that feminists often see prostitutes as victims that are women but never workers. The fact that this thesis in its limited

amount of space tries to include the perspective of social work with male, transgender sex workers as well as migrant sex workers since most of the clients migrated in order to work, it opens up this perspective in many ways. The dominant discourse on migration is gendered as well, because men that migrate are supposed to do it for work, whereas women that migrate are more questioned and discussed in relation with trafficking (Agustin 2007: 19). The interviews confirmed that argumentation line out of the social workers perception to the extent that the two organizations targeting male sex workers referred to reasons as breadwinners whereas the organizations working with female prostitutes strongly denied the relation to trafficking for their clients. Since the abolitionist debate around prostitution in Germany is based on human trafficking the extent of its correlation to prostitution needs to be discussed which will be done in chapter four. What feminists at this point generally contributed to prostitution is the conception of the feminization of labor. It is challenging the imagination that women only recently started to migrate and therefore showing that women always have been traveling amongst others for reasons of labor throughout history. Thereby the term migrant mostly refers to working class or poor people and in relation to the sex industry that is also why people moving from poorer to richer countries are referred to as "economic migrants", where also the biggest part of the clients fall under. Throughout those processes citizenship symbols as passport are defining the access to rights and how actors are referred to (Agustin in Hope Ditmore 2006a: 308, 309).

However the liberal feminists aim to reform inequities within the law to legalize one's own choice to sell sexual services, so to say to strive for equal labor rights (2nd Frankfurter Prostitution Congress). Inherent is the basic idea of "sexual free choice", meaning offering sexual services only throughout freely consent (Beran 2012: 31).

"[P]rostitutes are now, to some extent, organized […]" (Carpenter 1994: 25). Even though twenty years old this quote is important to mention, since this process of uniting and joining forces, experiences and demands added to the

feminist discussion and contributed to develop and increase the liberalist feminist perspective within the prostitution debate, while challenging the radical point of view and therefore still needs to be pursued.

Carpenter calls the dilemma between the radical and liberal feminist positioning towards prostitution being torn between supporting women (prostitutes) and/or criticizing patriarchy (prostitution system) and hence seeing them as agents or victims (Carpenter 1994: 25). Considering that the extent to which sex workers organized have further developed within two decades after Carpenters article, this could be a reason why Jeffreys identifies the "sex work position" as she calls the liberalist standpoint nowadays the dominant perspective compared to the abolitionist approach that was dominant till the 80s (Jeffreys 2009: 316).

Critics refer to radical feminist's lack of being connected to women's experiences that work in the sex industry and their solely victim view. Hence, in order to meet the various needs of different women engaged in the sex industry and this complex system it is probably not an either or question but it will eventually be necessary to look at both and in-between those two standpoints (Beran 2012: 45). Also Florin criticizes a "narrow view of prostitution as heterosexual female subordination/male dominance" (Florin 2012: 274) that might not help to illustrate the heterogeneous factors of influence that were spoken about throughout conducting the interviews. Stories were far from a black and white perspective.
Beran describes three main policy approaches that reflect the feminist strands: legalizing prostitution like in the Netherlands and Germany; decriminalization as in New Zealand; and total criminalization like in some states in the US. Here can be added a model of partial criminalization as in Sweden. Simultaneously Beran also criticizes a lacking connection between feminist theory and policies concerning prostitution (Beran 2012: 21, 23). In the analysis part it will be questioned if this is the case for a social work practice, too. Thereby it emerges that a social work practice with an accepting approach towards prostitution and sex work can only correlate with the liberal feminist position.

Out of this review results the motivation of this paper, starting from a feminist methodology, to listen to individual practical experiences and impressions of social workers in responding to stated challenges and start analyzing from their experiences.

Furthermore in her article Beloso argues (through a Marxist perspective) that feminists of both camps more or less concentrate solely on theorizing sexuality and gender, and therefore identity in relation to prostitution, while lacking to take class in the sense of seeing women in sex work as workers and their work as commodity and labor at the crossroads of patriarchy and capitalism, and what that means for their live into account (Beloso 2012). Putting more emphasis on the *work* instead of *sex* when talking about sex work is also the intention of Melissa Gira Grants new book "The work of sex work".

Prevailing literature on the topic mostly focuses on women within sex work, male or transgender perspectives are rare if existent here and there as for instance Don Kulicks anthropological work 'Travesti' on Brazilian transgender prostitutes. Hope Ditmore adds that the academic discourse usually refers to the sex industry as deviance (2006a: 155). Through interviewing two organizations that are working with male sex workers the paper aims also to "take into consideration variations in sex trade experiences, for instance, in terms of gender and sexual orientation." (Florin 2012: 274) even though the literature basically relates to female to male prostitution.

In her article about constructing the category "prostitute" in relation to scientific examination Pheterson stated and warned already in 1990 to thereby intensify stigma and negative stereotypes towards sex workers. She claimed for a deconstruction of the term and that more variables need to be taken into account besides the good-bad woman dichotomy in order to open up the paradigm about prostitutes. Through asking if "there [are] any differences between women and men across all those categories?" she traced the lack in a gendered perspective and therefore combined research on women and men in the field of prostitution (Pheterson 1990: 197 – 204). This paper aims to contribute to that gap on the basis

of interviews with two representatives of organizations that are supporting male sex workers and one that is including interests of transgender in sex work, too. Whereas all organizations try to include transgender people.

Social stigma theory was fundamentally presented by Erving Goffman (1963). Mostly stigma theory is referring to perspectives on mental illness or disability.

The paper argues that neither of the two extreme positions within feminism towards prostitution can adequately represent a social work reality. A correlation can only build on a liberalist point of view. Social work has addressed issues around prostitution ever since it evolved even though under changing perceptions and conceptions that are still shifting and mostly influenced through legal regulations and welfare policies and not always in a good way since social work practices also have been an instrument for regulating societal behavior, navigating deviance as well as women's bodies.

2 Theoretical Framework

Basing the paper in a western feminist postmodern theory

Since the discussion of this paper focuses on the German setting and structure towards prostitution the western postmodern feminist theory on what it is based should be briefly described in its historic line and tradition of argumentation.

Postmodernism goes in line with feminist attempts towards research and thereby means "the belief that knowledge is both local and contingent and there are no [universal] standards beyond particular contexts […]." That shows that ideas about concepts as truth and objectivity are also always related to a certain time and space (May 2001: 16, 17) and therefore conclusions out of this study must consider that when being read in different contexts.

According to Acker feminist theories aim to explain how women's subordination is build up as well as adhered and how it could be challenged, so it is a way to understand and act up against unequal power relations (Acker 1984: 420). Feminism didn't achieve gender equality yet therefore it is important to think of the fact that there are different and diverse strands and approaches of feminism towards conquering gender inequality, related to different interests, experiences, places and times.

In terms of prostitution feminists strive and attempt to remove the emphasis on the victimhood. Contrary for instance in the US abolitionist feminists motivated "John schools" as a form of diversion program for punters (Hope Ditmore 2006a: 156, 157). At this point it is important to mention Bells (1994) argument that solely a postmodernist feminism enables space for sex workers to not just unite but provides space and comprehension for them to articulate their demands instead of only being talked about.

2.1 Critical feminist social work practice theory

Since social work is always framed by social norms and also (re)producing them in carrying out social welfare services feminism challenges "taken-for-granted social attitudes" because of questioning gendered assumptions within relationships and social institutions (Payne 2014: 354). Examples of this will be shown throughout a historical perspective.

A feminist perspective within social work and particularly with regard to prostitution is helpful to for instance „identify areas in which women can work with men and those that men are solely responsible for addressing." (Dominelli 2002: 104). In the case of this study there are obviously spaces wherein only women are able to carry out help services. Gendered relations can be found on the one hand in relation to most social workers being female and how that effects help relationships. Also within the interviewed organizations solely working with women it constitutes a criteria to be a female social worker since the rooms also constitute a protection area for the female sex workers. Generally looking at clients of social work they are mostly female as well, since for instance Payne argues in the majority of societies women are structurally affected by poverty to a greater extent than men (Payne 2014: 350). This also applies here whereas other reasons might be influential, as for instance the majority of clients are men and therefore the prostitution system itself is illustrated predominantly throughout female-to-male services.

To mention here is that Swedish social worker Green states that there might be a great number of unnoticed male prostitutes within Sweden, not addressing social welfare services due to higher stigma on male prostitutes. Throughout the interviews it could be identified that street work with male prostitutes is carried either only of male or in combination male-female social workers.

The theories referred to above, as well as literature and concepts, social (re)constructions of reality, discussion and critiques being studied are almost exclusively referring to women. What about male or transgendered perspectives?

Those two remain highly invisibilized and thin mentioned subjects within literature as well as real life. Interviewees as the representative of *Sperrgebiet* could imagine a double stigmatization of male prostitutes because of prostitution and homosexuality or transsexuality. For instance heterosexual male sex workers had to confirm their heterosexual masculinity through practices like visibly talking about girlfriends and wives or showing pictures of their children back home and calling them so their colleagues could hear that in order to counterbalance homosexual practices that are requested from them at work and confirm that they are not homosexual. The interviewee of *Marikas* further stated that

> *"The majority even though they have sex with men is heterosexual. The boys always underline their sexuality throughout going to prostitutes themselves [...] and say 'I'm not gay'. So they draw a very clear line between private life and context of work."*

Furthermore migrating to Germany in order to earn money with prostitution offers a chance for young men to test and experiment with their sexual identity. This can be linked to Butler's concept of the heterosexual matrix (1990) and the argumentation about being raised into certain preset (sexual) norms within society. A postmodern feminist perspective highlights not just how discourses create ideas how certain groups in a society should be dealt with but also how language influences the way we construct our pictures of reality (Payne 2014: 352, 253).

2.2   Social stigma theory (E. Goffman)

The term *stigma* was introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman and "[…] refer[s] to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" and describes downgrading possessors of characteristics that represent "an undesired differentness of what we had anticipated" (Goffman 1963: 3, 5).

"When a stranger comes into our presence, then, first appearances are likely to enable us to anticipate his category or attributes, his "social identity" […]"

(Goffman 1963: 2). Inherent in the theory of stigma is the concept of *social identity* which refers to personal and structural attributes of a person. The latter could amongst others refer to a person's occupation that is perceived as deviant from the norm, in this case prostitution. He distinguishes between the *virtual social identity* that is constructed through ideas imposed of the social environment and the *actual social identity*, which are factual characteristics that could be actually proved (ibid., 2). This study will focus on the virtual social identity in terms of society and social perceptions since not directly being in dialogue with sex workers themselves doesn't allow to make statements about them.

The structure of our society is tied to social norms. In the case of prostitution and sexuality that are norms about (sexual) relationships, romance, love, intimacy, where there is the normative idea of a mutual faithful relationship of two preferable heterosexual partners, that becomes disturbed by prostitution in many ways. So in interactions people have anticipations, expectations and therefore demands tied to those notions according to behavior and social identity towards others and each other. Within this system Goffman describes three main actors:

the *stigmatized* → in this study represented by the sex workers,

the *normals* → without any stigma,

the *sympathic others* divided into

    those *who share the stigma* → others operating in the sex industry and

    the *wise* → social workers.

(Goffman 1963: 20 - 28)

The *sympathic others* are from special interest for this paper, since those *who share the stigma* are representing the sex worker unions.

The *wise* are referred to as "[…] persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatized

individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance […]" (Goffman 1963: 28), which goes beyond and must be differentiated through a professional relationship between social worker and client, but the crucial and common issue here is to expect full acceptance.

Thereby the stigma can be either expected by the stigmatized individual to be visible to the normal (discredited) or the negatively valued attribute is thought to be invisible (discreditable) or not directly perceivable for *normals*. The *stigmatized* are different and therefore discriminated, inhumanized or constructed as inferior. They can either "believe messages about themselves as inferior or have consciously to reject the process of stigmatization and challenge the stereotype assigned to them." (Pierson & Thomas 2010: 503). A social stigma can also be refused by the stigmatized person in the sense that its behavior does not correlate with what is expected. For that reason stigmata are always linked to relations and can only exist in social relationships. Stigma is thereby divided into three levels:

→ obvious body-related physical differences,
→ individual characteristics,
→ and tribal stigmas like ethnicity, nation or religion (ibid., 4).

Consequentially it constitutes not yet an actual behavior but can be seen as a form of prejudices. Discreditation based on a stigma is called *stigmatization*, whereas also further negative deficiencies can be construed or implied. Thereby deviance is defined as a learned social role (Goffman 1963). Core question is how the identity is organized around deviant behavioural patterns and how the person handles this situation? In relation to this paper the question is how social workers can successfully support them in doing so?

Goffman divides three identities: the *social identity*, the *personal identity* and the *ego-identity*. The former refers to the process of people integrating themselves into social categories (for instance drug addict) if those have an undesirable attribute it could be the cause for stigmatization. In this study it can also mean

being categorized by society, law or the social environment. *Personal identity* means each person's uniqueness in relation to its biography in the sense of a continuous individual record of social facts, in this paper often illustrated by migration biographies. *Ego identity* is the subjective sensation or perception of ones own situation as a result of social experiences, which can at this point only be referred to how social workers perceive it, but no direct declaration can be made (Goffman 1963).

This triple identity construction illustrates three different conflict areas in working with stigmatized people. Social identity shows how stigmatization evolves, throughout being externally assigned towards an undesirable social category. In relation to personal identity Goffman shows techniques of information control and stigma-management, to either hide ones stigma or work on strategies to challenge problems within interaction. Throughout the ego-identity access towards the feelings and perceptions of the stigmatized can be obtained. Experiences in interaction can have a strong impact on feelings and ego-identity (Cloerkes 2000: 108).

According to Cloerkes the socialization in the role of a stigmatized person can occur throughout childhood, in interaction with *normals* throughout their stereotypical expectations, or as a client of social services with the goal of re-socialization (Cloerkes 2000: 106).

Bell argues the identity can be accepted or challenged. "Identification is the discoursive process through which subjects assume the identities set up in the dominant discourse; counter-identification is a process in which the identity constructed by the dominant discourse is rejected while the subject remains complicit in that rejection, […]" (Bell on Foucault 1994: 14). Also Rubin argues that "[s]tigmatized sexual populations develop their identity through collective resistance to the dominant constructions." (Rubin in Bell 1994: 95). Such a described counter identification process took part throughout sex workers uniting at the 2nd Frankfurter Prostitution Congress where they spoke out against the

restrictive regulations that were discussed by the newly elected political coalition and the campaign of Alice Schwarzer. The strategy was to take action against enhanced control and licensing of brothels.[4]

One strategy to deal with stigma is *passing*, whereas an individual decides to hide its stigma. In the case of this study this process can refer to living a double life, which means not revealing being a prostitute in certain social settings, like in another job, family, parents and so on. Concerning stigmatized people Goffman explicitly mentions prostitutes in between the poles of a stigma that no one knows and a stigma that everyone knows in the sense being forced to carry out a difficult balance act between being carefully secret about ones stigma and systematically exposing oneself to other persons like clients (Hirshi in Goffman 1963: 73).

Now the question is how on the one hand social stigma(tization) processes and on the other hand further problems within prostitution can be challenged? Goffman offers strategies like *handling risks* "by dividing the world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies […]" (Goffman 1963: 117) which was confirmed throughout the interviews in terms of sex workers often

> *"[…] living a very concrete double life." (Ra)*

Another technique is *stigma management* in relation to either visible or invisible stigmata. In chapter four the paper carves out how a current social work practice in Germany is responding to this question.

Critics, Outline

The labels or categories are written in italic since this is meant to be done for a comprehensible way of applying and combining a theoretical perspective towards the field and collected data and of course there can't be made such generalizations in reality. To not immediately re-discriminating sex workers by using stigmatized categories this paper can only do so since the interviews revealed an already

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[4] http://www.donacarmen.de/, Accessed 11th May 2014

stigmatized status. Also this paper in contrast to Goffman's theories carefully aims to avoid discussing only with referring to men. Additionally this theory is written within a context where prostitution is criminalized and basically refers to stigmatization processes in relation to disabled people.

At first glance stigma theory might apply when interviewing sex workers directly, but after conducting the interviews it was deemed as a useful frame since the stigma was the center for most of the named problematics: the reason why legal regulations are done in such a restrictive way in order to condemn prostitution from certain spaces within cities, the reason why media and public debate are discussing almost solely social and moral ideas or standards and the reason why male and transgender perspectives are still invisibilised.

3 Feminist Methodology

Feminist methodology is a way to produce knowledge and simultaneously to be critical about this process while counterbalancing a male-centered tradition within social research which could be criticized for "reflect[ing] a bias which defines society and science in terms of particular values" (May 2001: 17) and aims to deconstruct social, economic and political perceptions of a natural position of women within society (Harding in May 2001: 19).

Having this in mind since knowledge is embedded in social power (May 2001: 43) it also influences the research process who the researcher is and what questions have been asked and if there was an engaged respectful interaction with the research subjects. Through epistemology we understand knowledge as partial truths (Clifford 1986) of a certain time and space.

The stated points are deemed very important within this paper since Social Sciences of Gender as well as Social Work as sciences are both interdisciplinary research fields and hence need to be accountable and as far as possible adaptable to other scientific disciplines. With this objective in mind a feminist approach covered the whole process of collecting, evaluating, working with and the critical part of interpreting data.

Additionally the paper aims to challenge the three main criticisms towards feminist methodology in its connectivity towards mainstream sciences illustrated by Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 3, 4).

The **first claim** comes from dominant approaches of philosophy sciences and criticizes that feminist methodology fails to produce rational, general, authoritative and objective knowledge and therefore needs to justify its validity. Breaking this down it postulates a demand for objectivity which means a universal truth of a certain reality. In contrast every single person is experiencing the progressive, current, social reality surrounding us differently, because like argued in the intersectional approach everybody is confronted with a unique social life, including individual characteristics of identity and thus distinct structures of

oppression or in this case stigma or stigmatization processes. The challenge lies in examining those diverse patterns and the connections and relationships between them (McCall 2005: 1772).

In this regard the paper does not study objects and claims to produce universal knowledge or truths. Instead this study is conducting data in behalf on subjects within their actual subjective real world and therefore tries to "hear" (Kasper in Gorelick 1991: 462) their opinions and ideas in order to understand their conditions and situations as authentic through an empathetic way of listening.

The **second claim** is challenging the demand to include women's varying experiences, which also means to question factors of identity. Identity is a very important factor within the research process, in its relation to stigma, in the sense of how people are labeling, calling and categorizing themselves, to explore how processes of "othering" evolve and which terminologies are used.

That is a way to take into consideration the dilemma within feminism of the "unitary" category of women itself (Harding 2004: 1776). Talking about shared subordination overlooks the important fact, that there are on the one hand also certain power-relations between women and on the other hand impacts of suppressive systems affecting them and simultaneously being experienced differently from women. This is for instance the case when exploring newly evolved sex worker associations and if they are representing sex workers as such.

Throughout a male dominated structure of society women can also hold power over other women, as well as there are contradictions and differences within the category of women itself (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002: 39) and also transgender people and men suffer from patriarchal structures within sex work, so other identity factors or commonalities as country of origin and sexual identity might become more important.

The **third postulate** tries to challenge the unequal position between the researcher and researched in the sense that the researcher as the focal point for giving attention to the knowledge interviewees were willing to share and for instance through decisions on what themes to focus on constitutes a certain picture about the individual social realities described by the respondents.

The strategy of this paper in challenging this is to code themes from the data to focus upon in the analysis that have been named by most of the interviewees in the sense of assuming a higher relevance for practice. Crenshaw argues for the "strength of shared experiences" in form of group consciousness, which have more power than view individual voices (Crenshaw 1991: 1241). Within this paper it is additionally considered a way of applying Hardings project of "studying up", which argues for more of an investigative way of exploring dominant systems that are producing oppressive structures and not just exploring interviewees as informants of inequality in the sense of "studying down" (Harding 2004: 30). This implies that it is important to have preliminary ideas about the research field, but not to go into dialogue with preconceived ideas and prejudices. In that sense the theoretical underpinnings were chosen after visiting the field.

May further states that "expect[ing] someone to reveal important and personal information without entering into a dialogue is untenable […]" therefore engagement was another postulate for this feminist research (May 2001: 135). In terms of a respectful engagement throughout the whole research process, from starting the dialogue until sending out the transcriptions of the interviews was on a free basis in terms of time, place, setting, duration of the interview, questions and designed after the wills of the participants. This included also showing them the questionnaires in advance if the interviewees asked for it, as well as changing or erasing certain questions, therefore the questionnaires might have minor differences. It also was seen necessary to visit the attendants in their work spaces, because a personal conversation face-to-face was considered extremely important and had the further advantage to get to know the outreach areas and facilities of the organizations. Another "information-exchange" took place when it was promised to *Kassandra* to forward the notes from the informal interview in Sweden because of an interest in the Swedish social work approach.

Additionally after finishing this paper it will be send to the interviewees and they will be asked to respond to the thesis and share their feedback and opinions if they would like to. Those reviews will be added in the appendage in order to strive for

an ongoing dialogue and give the interviewees on the one hand the opportunity to evaluate, answer and criticize the conclusions that have been drawn from their statements and on the other hand to respond to their interest in an professional exchange. That meets the interest of conferring into a *dialogue* with the subjects of interests (Gorelick 1991: 469).

3.1   Reflexivity – positioning myself

The research interest evolved out of the engagement in the debate throughout a previous internship and how a social work practice is acting throughout and in between the different viewpoints and changing law regulations. Obvious through history social stigma is a constant companion of prostitution. How do social workers position themselves? It was not expected that the field will take such a clear stance against restrictive regulations concerning prostitution.

Approaching the interviewees through Internet, E-mail and phone calls as well as conducting the interviews as such went smoothly and were a rewarding and informative task. Visiting the interviewees directly and partly even during working hours and within the prostitution milieu itself were further rewarding impressions for the study in order to more holistically understand the multifaceted dimensions of the field.

The objective was to find out about a) the individual organizations as such, b) their (feminist) work approaches, personal history and c) about the prostitution milieu, the clients and their opinions and statements towards the (media) debate and the appeal against prostitution of German second wave feminist Alice Schwarzer, which received a lot of attention. Personally it could also be observed that the way of how to structure and approach interviewees went smoother from interview to interview, even though while transcribing the answers more inquiry would have been interesting. It is important to question or at least state that it is not the intention to further intensify the stigma throughout categorizing

interviewees and their clients within the theory and only used as a strategy to analyze the data.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Participant observation

In November 2013 it was possible to attend the 2nd Frankfurter Prostitution Congress which was organized by *Dona Carmen* an association for the social and political rights of prostitutes.[5] Sex workers, brothels owners, activists within the field, social workers gathered in order to discuss repressive political regulations towards controlling prostitution and the media discourse around poverty and coercive prostitution, that might cause a backlash towards ostracism and further social exclusion as before the prostitution law in 2002. Therefore it constrains pursuing to legalize prostitution and a discussion around equal rights for sex workers.

Additionally an expert conference in Nürnberg in Oktober 2013 was visited in relation to find strategies in successfully combatting human trafficking with women. Discussed were amongst others the relation between the prostitution law and sexual exploitation of women which will be elaborated on in chapter four.

3.2.2 Conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews

Altogether nine interviews have been undertaken. Eight of them in a semi-structured format since this interview setting was deemed to be best in line with a feminist research format considering on the one hand a latitude towards the individual thematic emphases and revealings of the interviewees. On the other hand still offering the possibility to use a structural frame in the form of an interview guide for including intended topics (May 2001: 123).

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[5] http://www.donacarmen.de/, Accessed 6th May 2014

Another advantage of this research format is that throughout the questionnaire it is possible to compare common parts of the organizations. There is still the opportunity to specifically and systematically elaborate on peculiar characteristics or the particular interviewee with his or her points of views and methods of operation (O'Reilly 2009: 126). That was especially helpful in this research project since the organizations had besides the common target group of clients different core points and emphases within their conceptions like rights, drugs or counseling and the interviewees different occupations and core areas. This offered a more inflexible proceeding as found in structured interviewing (Bryman 2012: 470).

Given that the Swedish approach towards prostitution lead to heated statements and there could be felt a need for exchange a complementary but unrecorded interview with a representative of the Support Team for sexual services in Malmö (*Sociala Resursförvaltningen från Malmö Stad för Råd- och stödteamet Sexuella Tjänster)*[6] was arranged in order to investigate how social work operates under different legal regulations.

Aiming for a feminist research design "[…] it is clear that the question of whether there is or can be a feminist ethnography is a matter of ongoing debate." (Bryman 2008: 423) the thesis does not assume or claim to explore any universal "truth" (May 2001: 23) about prostitution then in fact comprehensibly illustrating and reflecting upon selection processes inherent in every step and decision of the data collection activity (Oakley 1998: 714) while acknowledging that "there are many versions of social reality" (May 2001: 23). Contacting appropriate, interesting and relevant informants, deciding upon themes for the interview related to the research question and professional interest, asking defined questions as well as coding and interpreting to finally figure out relations and produce meaning are all distinct steps and therefore constitute a unique cutout of a certain

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[6] The Counselling and Support Team for Sexual Services of the Social Resource Center in Malmö, Sweden

time and space while simultaneously always aiming for a particular general adaptability of findings and outcomes.

Discussing feminist research from another angle Visweswaran's article and discussion about different periods and kinds of feminism through referring to feminist waves point out the important fact that feminism itself is rather unstable, a movement that is always developing and in transformation, depending on different advocacy and interest groups and the political situation that it has to deal with. Consequently claiming that this fieldwork is mainly focusing on social workers there is due to the limited perspectives towards the system of prostitution no justification for general conclusions, modifications or changes besides applying them to my correspondents and their personal as well as professional work realities and experiences and how those have been understood and made sense of within this paper (Visweswaran 1994: 596).

As there are many feminisms a feminist research process would accordingly need to have many ways of being realized and conducted. Applying this idea by means of designing this research process in treating others as oneself would like to be treated (Oakley 1998: 711) meant to:

- ✓ Letting the participants offer for them suitable dates and times
- ✓ Letting the participants choose the place of the interview
- ✓ Offering them complete confidentiality
- ✓ Telling the interviewees not to answer whatever they don't feel or want to
- ✓ Add whatever they consider important
- ✓ Asking them if they want or feel to change questions
- ✓ Make breaks throughout the interviews whenever they want to
- ✓ Offering them to re-read the transcript and final thesis draft in terms of misunderstandings or changes
- ✓ Making them feel valued in the stories they are offering as well as truly trying to understand context and correlations

- ✓ Motivating them to ask questions about the research interest
- ✓ Showing my gratitude for sharing their experiences

Considering that "a fuller understanding" of the interview's content can be achieved through actually being there and experiencing the event that is the purpose of study (May 2001: 144), which would either be using insights of the participant observation or points of contact within throughout this study as visiting the organizations themselves, the "Hamburger Kiez" and streets were the organizations referred to street prostitution.

How the first contact with the participants is handled in gaining access to the field, as well as what questions are asked and how the researcher presents herself can affect the rest of the whole research process according to O'Reilly (O'Reilly 2009: 6). For that reason this process was taken into account very sensitively in approaching informants via e-mail and/or direct personal telephone contact, explaining the situation, the research topic, the research process so far and what that would mean for them.

3.2.3   Who are they to talk?

Beloso points out the missing analysis of class within prostitution that can be discussed with regard to the power relations one has to consider (Beloso 2012: 50) while discussing sex work on the basis of gathered data through interviews with social workers. Can they adequately represent the needs and demands of their clients? The only possibility is to refer to the social workers *perception* of sex workers experiences, refer to the statements listened to at the 2nd Frankfurter Prostitution Congress but otherwise people engaged in sex work must be asked directly. A special position here has one of interviewees of *Kassandra* in Nürnberg, since she is a sex worker herself as well and can therefore not maybe just best relate to her clients but simultaneously talk out of own experiences.
The elaborations of the interviewee from *Ragazza* have been done very carefully in terms of labeling her conclusions and statements *about* sex workers as true,

because she was reflecting about her privileged position, therefore grounding it in subjective perspective and standpoint and illustrating it as her ideas that might potentially be simply wrong and that it is not comparable to judge or even a possibility to equally understand the situation out of her position:

> "I'm a darling of fortune, because I'm born here, with all my possibilities/choices, but… and I think that shouldn't be forgotten, how women […] that are living differently, or people as a whole, are hindered from participating and acting in terms of a self-determined life […]." (Ra)

So what should be drawn from this chapter is that one and especially social workers should be careful and highly reflected under the social norms they are acting and therefore be constantly critically questioning their help approaches and concepts within sex work. One way in doing so is using outreach work since

> "[…] it also serves to get an idea about the living and work situation. Since the aim of our work is the improvement of the live and work situation I first need to have knowledge about how the work and live conditions of the women within sex work are and therefore it is very important to be on the way within the scene on site and get to know and experience what's going on there, how are the structures, how does it proceed, how are the processes, how is it organized." (Mi)

However the most important paradigm is not to deny experiences and judge from an individual moral conception and standpoint.

> "If you really look at it from the perspective of sex workers, if you want to improve their life and working conditions, then you have to discuss, judicial and realistic and not in a moral way." (Ta)

Keeping this in mind social workers role is to act as reflected advocates for their clients. Hence there were chosen as interviewees in order to avoid ethical dilemmas when doing interviews with sex workers themselves for instance considering building up trustworthy relationships due to the limited amount of time. In that sense the interviewees also influenced the research process, for instance after the participant from *Kassandra* heard that I study in Sweden she immediately responded:

> "Then I would have completely different questions! Is there still social work in the field of prostitution or is it almost not existent anymore?" (Ka)

Since an informal interview with a social worker from Sweden was already planned it was offered to forward the notes of this dialogue given the approval of the interviewee, which was highly appreciated. Simultaneously the interviewee in Malmö referred to an exchange meeting of Swedish and German social workers in Berlin to critically discuss social policies as well as work approaches towards prostitution which was extremely rewarding for both sides.[7] Against her expectations of maybe being judged since representatives of two completely different approaches met it was figured out that the actual social services they carried out did not differ from each other to a great extent.

3.3   Research method and analysis of the interviews

The semi-structured format of the interviews possesses the advantage that the interviews are to some extent comparable since common topics were coded.

May argues „[…] editing the tapes, according to the theoretical categories in which the analysis is interested, assists in the comparative analysis of interview responses." (May 2001: 138). Therefore all interviews have been recorded. Except from the interview with Lisa Green in Malmö, all interviews were held in German. The dialogues within the rooms of the organizations did all have a good atmosphere. Sometimes the interaction might have been influenced to the extent that in the beginning of the interviews when the recorder was put on respondents were for instance scared to not adequately express themselves or speak in the thematically right order in relation to being recorded, which they were assured would not cause any problems.

Throughout the transcribing process common themes have been collected manually in an excel tablet and simultaneously marked in different colors within the transcriptions and coded into generally and in relation to the theory relevant topics in order to make structured sense out of the collected data. Even though

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[7] http://www.emma.de/artikel/schwedischer-weg-deutscher-irrweg-316663,
  Accessed 3rd May 2014

there were preliminary ideas before conducting the interviews the intention was to structure the paper based on observations and topics that are deemed current and relevant by the respondent's answers in relation to theory. Considering the limited research design the paper aims to theorize and argue under interpretive paradigms instead of claiming general findings (May 2001: 32, 40).

Following May's argument that categorizing data is dependent upon the theory and research question/interest the topics within the analysis have been set around the theoretical framework in chapter two and the collected data. That means looking at social work in relation to social stigma and prostitution, categorized under the following headings which also allow to index several important themes under them (May 2001: 139):

- ✓ Risk management
- ✓ Stigma management
- ✓ Call for decriminalization
- ✓ Role of professional social work

According to Strauss coding includes asking preliminary questions and giving provisional answers in terms of the set categories and how they might be linked (Strauss in May 2001: 138). Those hypothesis are referred to in the introduction and can be found in Chapter one. Quotes within this paper have been translated by the author. In order to assure the content of the translations is still according to what interviewees meant to express, the participants made the effort to go through and conform their quotes.

„[T]alk hast to be situated." (May 2001: 140). Therefore the context will be shown briefly prior to analyzing the data with information about the particular interviewee as gender, occupational position, age and so on. The names of the participants are not given in order to make sure the anonymity of all participants is provided, therefore the names of the respective organization is used. The abbreviations for them are registered in the end of the paper.

4 Empirical part and analysis: Social work responses to prostitution

Social work responses to prostitution take part in multi-professional teams addressing multi-problematic individual situations and are characterized by a low-threshold setting of all services and therefore three of the organizations are located very close or in the red-light district or particular street.

After briefly illustrating the context first of all this chapter looks at methods of minimizing harmful consequences of potentially risky activities, while subsequently looking at factors that influence stigma as social criteria that are again influenced by normative assumptions about accurate behaviors. Afterwards the discussion will go into the common call for further advancing and developing the German prostitution law and against restrictive regulations. Finally it will be elaborated on what that means for a feminist social work practice in relation to the interviews.

4.1 Contextualizing the data

Thinking back to the introduction at this point it is important to briefly portray the German discourse around the debate on prostitution in order to being able to locate and better understand the derivations of the statements of the interviews.

Within Germany there started a heated debate in relation to the *anti group* aiming to abolish prostitution and the *pro group* striving for further following and work out the decriminalization process that began with the law in 2002. Representative of the former was certainly Alice Schwarzer throughout editing the book *Prostitution a German scandal. How could we become the center of female human trafficking?* (own translation) followed by an edition of her magazine "EMMA" with a call to sign the appeal for abolishing prostitution. This campaign reached a lot of media attention and talk shows were basically interested in presenting clashes between radical abolitionist representatives and sex workers

rights activists. The interviewee from *Ragazza* criticized the way in which consistently women are again and again denied to appear as grown up, self-acting persons, instead always denied agency and understood as vicitms. Maybe some would like to do something else, but is it then not the right way to empower them in terms of enabling humans to make this decision on their own?

This is important to mention since all interviewees extremely criticized the debates and campaign for labelling sex workers as victims of trafficking while at the same time not denying those cases, but to the extent as *Tampep* states to call for a divine differentiation between crime and work, which will be elaborated on further down.

4.2   Risk management

4.2.1   Harm reduction

The model of minimizing harm rooted in drug use interventions and follows an accepting instead of abolishing approach with the main focus on risk reduction and achieving realistic goals. Dignity and rights are in the center and no judgments are made. The approach accepts that even though a behavior has risks "the benefits the user perceives as arising […] have to be taken into account if services are to be effective." (Harris & White 2013: 237).

Rooted in pragmatism it consents that eliminating all harms might be unrealistic and hence strives for removing as much as possible starting from the particular person and his or her individual environment (Carden in Hope Ditmore 2006a: 199). Objectives within the organizations in relation to risk management are concentrating on offering a safe place for support and refuge, mitigation and health. Therefore habitable rooms are offered to hang out, meet, talk, eat, wash clothes or receive counseling and five organizations have resources to offer spending the night there. At this point the role of social workers as the

sympathic others becomes very clear since the interviewees as for instance *Mimikry* put emphasis on the fact that clients can approach them with all matters:

> *"The target group [...] can first of all approach us with all concerns. So to say there are no taboos, nothing were we would say, no we won´t take care of it."*

There is no explicit goal in motivating clients to giving-up, though the approach supports clients who are searching for new perspectives.

Counseling

Against general perceptions interviewees were eager to point out that counseling sessions often involve matters besides prostitution as personal matters, questions around social welfare and unemployment benefits and applications, court procedures, homelessness, regulating debts, health issues or transition to other organizations at the intersection of drugs or violence. Additionally the organization *Kassandra* stated it is important

> *"[t]o see both sides, there needs to be a counseling into sex work and on the other hand there is counseling out of sex work and both have their entitlement."*

Usually attempts to offer counseling for entering sex work is highly criticized in order to not motivate people to become engaged in prostitution but the organization *Kassandra* justified this technique through stating

> *"80 % of those with whom we do this counseling already had experiences. That is always seen very negatively in the sense of 'you bring them into sex work'. That is nonsense. What we try is to give an as much as possible realistic picture and to inform about possibilities but also about risks. [...] and therefore we call it occupational counseling, which holistically informs about the job and possible problematic situations around it."*

4.2.2   Outreach and street work

> *"Outreach and street work are the most effective strategies for establishing and maintaining contact with sex workers. Such interventions need to be systematic, frequent and intensive in order to build a relationship of trust with sex workers."*[8] *(Ta)*

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[8] http://tampep.eu/about.asp?section=methodology, Accessed 11th May 2014

Further objectives revealed throughout the interviews were giving guidance for legal and social matters through distributing information, safer sex material and serving as an opportunity for the social workers to collect information about the situation and developments within the milieu. Following the "bottom-up" approach within harm reduction outreach work towards prostitutes is seen as infiltrating the clients workplaces (and sometimes living place, too).

> *"Therefore we act very carefully and approach the women only if they give us a sign." (BP)*

The representative of *Mimikry* added:

> *"We visit the women at their workplaces, and I think that is essentially and necessary in the work with sex workers because otherwise there are view services that they make use of, if you don't find the way to them."*

Through reducing harmful situations and satisfying basic needs like homelessness, sickness the goal is to achieve a more responsible behavior within risky situations.

4.3   Strategies of challenging and managing stigma

"Dominant political, social and cultural values play key roles in the operation of stigma, as they help to formulate individual value systems and reinforce the stereotypes of what is desirable for individuals or groups within society." (Pierson & Thomas 2010: 502, 503)

In accordance with stigma theory there could be discovered that out of the social workers perspectives there are groups that actively challenge their stigmas as the new association for erotic and sexual services was mentioned but also others that don't, for instance male prostitutes. As the participant from *Marikas* mentioned out of his perspective there were no attempts of his clients in getting politically or publicly engaged.

Since prostitution or sex work in general is nothing imprinted in the body and therefore an *individual characteristic* in terms of an occupation and as the case maybe a *tribal stigma* like ethnicity (being part of a marginalized group like

Romanies) or nation, prostitution is mostly an invisible stigma. Hence techniques of information control, like passing or revealing/disclosure can be applied. Those techniques demand reflexivity, the ability to focus on this might be there or not depending upon how precarious the clients situation is and what other problematics are more important in that particular moment.

4.3.1 (Double) Moral aspects

Prostitution is an appealing topic for media and debate since it is questioning and scrutinizing the taboos around notions of sexual double moral standards in its relation to handling, manipulating, exposing and commercializing one's own sexuality and body.

"The modern discourse on prostitution was part of a broader discursive production of female sexuality which separated the female body into reproductive body and the un(re)productive body: normal female sexuality was defined in terms of woman's reproductive functions; deviant female sexuality was defined in terms of prostitution. Reproductive sexuality, which denied woman active sexual desire and pleasure, was the respectable norm; prostitution was its inversion." (Bell 2004: 41). Since female honor was and is measured in its relation to her chastity moral notions are the starting point for stigmatizing processes.

Thereby Alice Schwarzers campaign on prohibiting prostitution and the media debate have been criticized for carrying out the debate solely on those moral grounds, because it is not respecting personal and individual decisions of individuals as *TAMPEP* refers to:

> *„The topic prostitution is really difficult, because it has to do with moral, or a double moral, maybe that is why opinions are so divided. Many are just looking at it and discussing it from this perspective, but I think you need to discuss sex work objectively and based on facts because it is work, if you accept it or not. […] Even though the prostitution law is already twelve years old, I think, that the society did yet not fully accept it. […] It is not just that they are uninformed, it is this moral idea about the good and the bad woman, this black-white imagination. I think this is the problem and that is why it will take time." (Ta)*

This leads to questioning through what identity is constructed since "[t]he identity / otherness dichotomy is duplicated inside the category "woman" to produce an internal dichotomy: virtuous woman / whore." (Bell 1994: 40).

4.3.2 Perceptions of how sex workers transform collective and self-identity

"[T]he prostitute" was actively produced as a marginalized negative social-sexual identity, particularly during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century." (Bell 1994: 40). Throughout the interviews could be discovered that feminists, sex workers and social workers try to challenge this notion and perception of deviance. As described in the theory section there are several actors within the stigma process. Representatives of the *association sexual and erotical services* can be seen as the stigmatized themselves or "those who share the stigma" but simultaneously try to "make […] a profession out of their stigma" (Goffman 1963) through enhanced social participation. Yet Goffman mentions that those *native leaders* are obliged to be in exchange with other categories of the group. Reviewing the interviews the creation of the association was highly and positively embraced, while simultaneously the demands they state did not apply to their client's needs. For instance *Sperrgebiet* and the *BASIS-Project* stated that:

> "[…] some did organize and unite, but that are of course not our women and we always try to remember them that they can assert and claim all of that and speak for themselves, but they should not forget, that there are other facets of prostitution because sometimes they forget about that. Those are super-well organized women who already have a certain standing in the job […]."

> "… [the prostitution law] is more constructed and functions for professional working persons in its scope of action."

So if identity is socially constructed through the discourse around the subject(s) then it is important to look at "who is talking" within a debate. Is it the subjects themselves or the environment around them? I would argue in the current German prostitution discourse it is mostly *other* people speaking in the sense of not being involved in sex work themselves. If sex workers as such talk they are often denied

significance, validity or representativeness, while considering that the stigmata on prostitution makes it impossible for many to speak out because of family or job. Hence prostitutes are still usually referred to as identities that are nothing more than passive victims. But going back to constructing a resistant counter identity towards the dominant discourse and therefore social perception sex workers start to formulate their own discourses in relation to labor through aiming to organize in unions and building collectives in order to represent their interests.

Common claims that could be discovered throughout the interviewed organizations are clear and homogenous regulations within all federal states in order to become more feasible and conform to the labor mobility within prostitution.

> *"We have a very unclear and confusing situation. That is one of the things that the sex worker movement wants to change towards a homogeneous regulation on a national level." (Ta)*

Further collective strive is "[t]he prostitutes´ rights movement is attempting to construct a new prostitute identity […]" (Bell 1994: 135) in terms of labor, service and expression of women's sexuality.

Being able to do their work requires emotional labour (Hochschild in Sanders 2005: 335) and a good identity management as Sanders argues in her article about capitalizing sexuality through researching female sex workers in Birmingham.

Going back to Goffman's concepts of the virtual social identity and the actual social identity it is interesting to relate it to Sanders concept of the *manufactured / commodified identity* that sex workers professionally play out in order to make a divine between the private and public live, which is on the one hand deemed to protect the self through using it as a business strategy as well as protection strategy. The latter is often accompanied by creating a "double life" in order to circumvent the "whore stigma" and stereotypes attached to it, especially when having an own family (Sanders 2005: 329). On the other hand there can also be

seen a relation between "double life" as double identity in which sex workers are forced, due to stigma, as described:

> *"[…] most of the women – the ones I got to know - put huge emphasis on the fact that this is one side of their life, but a side that must not come into the other life, so to say a very concrete way of doing a double life." (Ra)*

This shows that within prostitution it is also very clearly that sex workers actively work to have different identities within different contexts. A singular notion of identity is misleading since there are many "axes of power relations" like class, race, sexual orientation and ethnicity that in compilation with "masculine / feminine binary" are shaping different shades within the multiple identities that we hold (Harding in Butler 1990: 4).

A practical example that gives an idea how hard it is to draw lines between a *social* and a *private* identity can be found with heterosexual-identified male prostitutes struggle to (re)affirm their sexual identity while doing homosexual acts in their work, which sometimes confuses themselves:

> *„[…] the majority [of the guys] is heterosexual even though they have sex with men – and the guys emphasize their [heterosexual] sexuality, throughout saying… or by going to [female] prostitutes themselves and want… that is also often topic in our contact point. That they say "I´m not gay." They show the pictures of their children and call their wives, so they want… they draw clear lines between their private live and the occupational context." (Ma)*

> *„They often ask themselves, what do I actually do here and then they often say, ok that´s it, I quit, so to say they quarrel a bit, `Who am I and in fact I´m not gay, but what do I do here?´ But the next day, they are back and I think that is where private and job are mixed, but the next day they are clearly back to their job, their work and there I think they simply try to split it." (Ma)*

Throughout those emotional states of uncertainty about one's own instant identity the organizations provide a space for this through the accepting approach. Further challenges are that there are difficulties in accommodating trans-people, for instance biological men identifying as female. Hence integrating them in contemporary help services is a challenge to be resolved. Thereby the organizations find themselves in conflict with clearly constituting a shelter space for women or men versus how to integrate people that identify diverse genders as for instance female identified trans-people when this

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"[…] meets the resistance of the original, meaning biological women [since] they don´t have single rooms, they sleep together […] sometimes they come after being raped, sometimes they also have just trouble with their guy, but then they come to us intentionally , want to sleep here and a trans-woman in bed doesn't look that female anymore and that is the point, it is a very interesting debate, how can we deal with it, because the trans-women also need to sleep somewhere, they also don´t have anything and in male-dominated spaces where trans-men or biological men are it is much more unpleasant, […] it is an interesting debate but also a painful one." (Ra)

"[T]he feminist who sees only victims everywhere she or he looks at prostitution misses entirely the ingenuity and agency of the human being who chooses to work in the sex industry" (Beloso 2012: 62). Challenging this notion *Kassandra* states:

"[…] we really meet those girls and talk with them and the work self-determined without any doubt. You also have to make a difference, they say, all those girls from Eastern Europe, they are trafficked and so on. I always have a choice, if I go cleaning,[…] or I pay someone because I´m not well versed in organizing papers and my journey to Germany and I come here and I know, that I will work here, because I count on better earnings… for me that is not trafficked. Then I have actively decided upon it. And once I´m here then I can still consider, do I work with this, does it fit for me, or do I prefer […] going back to my country."

Following this approach it is at the same time important for *Ragazza* not to deny human trafficking or women and people that can't cope with earning money as sex workers and acknowledging that sex work is a specific kind of work.

The use of terminology and denotation tells something about self-perceptions.

"We have very constructed terms, like for example sex worker, it depends, but some (sex workers) really don`t like it […]. But I want them to become conscious, that they actually work. They somehow should see their service as work! Everything sounds in some way constructed, it kind of is, because it is not in the usual current vocabulary to see sex work as sex work and therefore as a sexual service supply, but I want that they start to hear it and think of it, because it grades up their own personality." (Ra)

Here one can see that the social worker tries to enhance the self-esteem throughout perceiving oneself as doing labor work. Another example how the use of terminology was described as a possible survival strategy was stated by the *BASIS-Project* after asking how he calls his male clients:

"I also speak about 'the boys'. 'The boys' themselves also use that term – I think they like it. It is something… something nice and that is why I said euphemism before that is something quite positively framed, the situation is not so nice, how

we see it mirrored in that term, but maybe that is also part of a survival strategy, that you construct things nicely."

In relation to representation of sex workers throughout for instance sex workers rights groups that are often invisible or lacking autonomous organizations like it is the case in many Eastern European countries (Garofalo 2010: 223, 224) or merely representing certain groups or interests, which would be important in order to represent collective interests.

4.3.3   Society and social perceptions

The prostitute is the epitome within society in relation to a stigmatized woman. The whore as a female gender stigma is related to shame, disease, unchastity and also blamed for violence and exposed to imaginations of (deserved) abuse. Thus, purifying practices as control are justified, (Pheterson in Hope Ditmore 2006b: 461, 462). On the other hand this also relates to male and transgender people within sex work and since prostitution is tied to other social stigmas like poverty, homelessness, sexual orientation and police records to name just a view it affects sex workers on many other levels in their private and work lives. For instance *Marikas* stated that it restricts prostitutes from contacting the police in cases of crimes against them whereas the *equality agency* mentioned if they are not even harassed by the police itself, which was one of the reasons to launch the round table prostitution in Munich. Within society there are

> *"plenty of clichés [...] but because of that it still needs recognition and not stigmatization." (BP)*

Therefore *TAMPEP* argues the big variety and broad representation of sex workers within the debate is an important contribution towards challenging the one dimensional imagination within people's notions or stereotypes of prostitution that are strongly shaped by media images, who are mostly dominated by mixtures with the migration and trafficking debate.

> *"A sex worker says: 'Ok, they can see it this way, but I am the sex worker and my experience is different.' [...] The good thing is, that a person that sees everything*

only from one perspective gets confronted with another side. And not only that! This other 'perspective' has been speaking out more frequently, lately!" (Ta)

"…[T]he way in which a society approaches prostitution can be seen as mirroring political responses to broader social changes and societal processes […] [t]hus, approaches to prostitution also have implications outside the realm of the sex industry." (Skilbrei and Holmström 2013: 4). The other way around this also shows and means that without the consent of society it is hard to accomplish laws.

That is maybe also the reason why debates and talk shows persistently try to find an answer to the question if prostitution can be a job like any other. The thesis does not aim to solve the conflict between the contrasting viewpoints, but a starting point here is the experience of the only sex worker that was interviewed and stated

"Prostitution is a job, but not like any other." (Ka)

With a glance towards the current discourse it still remains what Beauvoir already stated in 1959 "[a]s long as middle-class people surround the sexual act – and especially virginity – with strong taboos, just so long will it seem a matter of indifference in many peasant and working-class environments." (Beauvoir 1959: 570).

4.3.4 "Addressing" the punters

Mostly male consumers basically constitute a diverse

> *"...group, which mirrors the complete society. [...] The approach was from the beginning, sex between a hustler and a punter involves two parties and both parties need to be informed about what they do, because it can be risky. Punters in male to male prostitution are a group of people with diverse stigmata. It's about homosexuality, it's about prostitution, it's about sexuality as such, also about unusual sexual practices, it's about gay and age, because in the gay life reality you have this ideal of youthfulness out of the magazines and that is, why it is a very separated and isolated scene." (BP)*

In meeting the increasing demand of male clients approaching the social services organizations out of different reasons *Sperrgebiet* suggested, that there is a need

of a distinct contact point. Especially the organizations that work with female sex workers can hardly incorporate working with the customers of their clients, but had increasing requests from punters via phone and e-mail.

In relation to this important impressions and experiences from Sweden can be drawn, since their emphasis is on addressing the male clients as they are responding to a legal system that criminalizes the purchase of sex and therefore the buyers. Thereby Lisa Green states that in the beginning sex buyers haven't approached the department a lot, after a change predominantly men (sometimes after being motivated by their wives) started to contact her because of bad feelings resulting out of buying sex and at the same time feeling unsatisfied and/or lonely and therefore wanting to stop buying sexual services.

The men are usually extremely relieved that they are able to have a contact person, in the sense of a *wise normal* with regards to buying sex, since they have even been in counseling for many years addressing all kinds of problems, but the part of buying sex was too constrained with shame, stigma and taboo to dare to talk about it. Sex buyers contacting the social department receive anonymous counseling as long as there are no children or other criminal acts involved where the social workers get into ethical conflicts and are forced to react.
The interest here is clearly to dissuade men from buying sex, which not necessarily needs to be adapted for Germany, but obviously there is a demand there as well for a contact point.
Putting them in relation to Goffman's theory being a punter entails an invisible social stigma and therefore being discreditable, which they at all costs try to hide, since they are often married and have families. In so doing in that case they actively work in order to construct a virtual social identity of a *normal*, while the actual social identity is someone who shares the stigma.

Criminalizing punters makes use of this attempt to stay anonymous by

> *"[...] not offering to pay the fines cash, instead there will be send post back home in every case, to inform the wife [...]" (BP)*

4.3.5 Power relations

Given the patriarchal structure of a heteronormative society, gendered power relations occur within sex work on many levels when mostly men purchase sexual services from mostly women and therefore out of the perspective of the *equality agency for women* prostitution

> *"[…] mirrors a social domination system, which needs to be questioned and not protected." (Gst)*

Bell argues "[p]rostitution is marked in the present social context by power imbalances: gender, class, and racial inequalities are played out in prostitution." (Bell 1994: 135). As discussed above it is also discourse that executes power over prostitutes. Rubin states that systems of sexual hierarchy construct the sex workers as powerless and the work as dangerous (Rubin in Bell 1994: 96). But in fact it should not lead to trivialize prostitution exclusively to coercion, violence and dependencies and deny prostitutes any other status and perception then the victim as *Ragazza* bases their relation to feminist standpoints. For them

> *"Sex work is defined as a possibility to finance oneself, which is something to be valued very high." (Ra)*

In relation to power and class the *BASIS-Project* critically took the gentrification process into account.

> *"I say St. Georg is suffering under gentrification processes [out of the sex workers perspective] others would say it is profiting and then marginalized groups always have it harder, when a certain district becomes rich and is attended by casting out disadvantaged groups." (BP)*

With regard to a social domination system the organization *Sperrgebiet* also sees a need to challenge it and referred to alternative ways of organizing brothels as in a small scale practice model from a social worker from Bremen/Germany:

> *"[…] he launched a brothel […] and he says he tries to continue and upgrade the education of his women and tries to politicize them and women could also do that […] run a different brothel […] that does not belong to the Hells Angels or so, you have that in Hamburg, that there sits a woman only for show, the*

housekeeper… It should be a real self-employed woman, who is doing something for her employees, offering to upgrade them, empower them and there are language courses […]" (Sp)

One of the key aspects in the approach of the organization *Kassandra* is the qualification of prostitutes within sex work through two special services. On the one hand there is a project called OPERA an information, orientation and education program that seeks to offer language courses as well as alternatives towards sex work. On the other hand they offer a further training in "sexual assistance" resulting out of a collaboration with *pro familia* which means:

"There are many elderly and handicapped people, that would otherwise have no possibility to get sexuality and there are not many women or sex workers offering that and accordingly for such a special target group you have to train them."

Additionally the *Kassandra* has a very concrete vision for their future:

"Our biggest wish is a Kassandra-house, where we have everything in one place, the educational training centers, our information and counseling center, emergency overnight accommodations, for women that got into trouble, a big kitchen in which everybody can meet. We hope to achieve this in order to keep all the know-how, we have collected now through the projects […], due to our big supply more women are approaching us."

Applied, those power structures occur from a social economic exchange point of view, were market principles and economic conditions influence the price of sexual services in relation to supply and demand. Therefore the pressure of competition among sellers is leading to conditions were sex workers sometimes become business rivals and therefore stop peer educating each other which is a strategy of traditional sharing of skills and information between older and younger sex workers (Fawkes in Hope Ditmore 2006b: 350) and

"[…] in former times it was the case that they introduced each other to the work, they said the social workers don´t have a clue, I prefer to ask my colleague […] throughout the Eastern European women this is not the case anymore, […] or also about how one can do it in a smoother way for oneself, because there are techniques […]." (Sp)

Another problem within the extremely gender polarized constellation are pimps. In contrast pimps are not existent in male prostitution. The representative of the

equality agency for women in Munich points out the relation between being embedded in a network and the risk of dependent relations.

> *"[…] the more anonymous and the less embedded women are within their community the higher is the dependency on panders […]." (Gst)*

A form of sex workers representation could be found while talking with the representative of the *equality agency for women in Munich* that strongly encourages representation of interests of women themselves in form of a round table. But this process primarily launched from sex workers themselves was dominated by

> *"[…] more and more brothel owners and they have compared to the women "[…] such different interests, that you can´t put them on one table." (Gst)*

4.4   A call for decriminalization

4.4.1   Social and prostitution policies

> *"[Prostitution is] still stigmatized and discriminated, but only in the moment when sex workers have (labor) rights you have the possibility to change this, because rights are the basis to work against stigma and because only then they can defend themselves and answer back." (Ta)*

Since 2002 Germany has an own prostitution law. It consists of three paragraphs, which already show how limited its scope of action and regulation is. Nevertheless it constitutes a basic ground formulated in a gender neutral language in order to give persons earning their money with sexual services the possibility to access social security services through legally safeguarded employment contracts and its further aim was to improve the living conditions of prostitutes in general. Twelve years after it is clear that both of those aims failed (Schrader 2007).

This can be confirmed out of the interviews, were a clear common response was, that the prostitution law did not touch upon the life realities of have no influence or failed to bring *any social change for the women, transgender and men working in the sex industry.*

> *"[…] they [the clients] do not profit from it [the law] at all, the planning process missed them out. […]" (BP)*

"[T]he law is not for drug users or other marginal / disadvantaged groups [within prostitution], but only for the professionals [...]." (Sp)

Furthermore there are completely different ways of conversion and concerning the tax regulations even uncertainty how to implement the law in the federal states. With a glance towards the high mobility within prostitution it becomes clear that it is almost impossible to follow a continuous tax payment.

For instance the interviewee of the *BASIS-Project* mentioned twelve years after adopting the prostitution law the city of Hamburg still does not have its own prostitution law on a communal level. The feminist debate towards the prostitution law influencing social and political perceptions through great media attention was mainly portrayed by on the one hand the *appeal against prostitution*[9] initiated from German feminist Alice Schwarzer and on the other hand the *appeal for prostitution*[10] launched by the first German legal association of sex workers "occupational union erotic and sexual services".

On an analytical level the former – even though its goal is the ban on the purchase of sex – can be seen as a representative of the radical abolitionist wing of feminism. Even though its goal is the ban on the purchase of sex, the solely partial arguments around victimization and violation are coinciding. The latter is covering the liberal feminist's argumentation in terms of sex work as labour.

Discussing a ban on the purchase of sex the representative of *TAMPEP* replied in relation to women's rights very clearly that violence against sex workers has never been so high, prostitutes have to work in hidden (places), are not able to choose clients, "good" and regular costumers stay absent and dangerous and bad work conditions increase as a whole. Hence for her out of this feminist perspective improving the work and life situations of sex workers didn't succeed. All interviewees strongly refused and rejected banning the purchase of sexual services:

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[9] http://www.emma.de/thema/der-appell-gegen-prostitution-111249, Accessed 27th April 2014
[10] http://sexwork-deutschland.de/politik/appell-fuer-prostitution/, Accessed 27th April 2014

"It would bring force women into distress to a greater extent." (Sp)

"The consequences are catastrophically." (Ta)

"It has actually entirely negative effects on the women." (Ra)

They argue for advancing and promoting legal regulations in terms of developing the current prostitution law further to alleviate risks and protect sex workers.

On the other hand a weakness of the German prostitution law is that only sex workers who have the necessary social, economic and cultural capital to participate in the created legal situation can benefit from it (Schrader 2007). The situation within practice shows that many of the clients working on the street are practicing under illegal conditions either due to banned district regulations or without being registered, caused by citizenship, legal status, verbal skills or bureaucratic and administrative barriers.

Throughout the interview journey it was discovered that there are very contradictory regulations or ways in which prostitution is framed or configured by the respective communes. For instance on the one hand the city of Hamburg is strongly advertising with its *amusement streets* or *sinful mile*[11] online and plays out its red light district image to attract tourists, on the other hand there are three extremely restrictive main regulations that could be identified in the area of St. Georg were the interviews have been carried out:

→ *Banned district regulation*: refers to a certain area wherein prostitution is generally prohibited. Thereby the files get stockpiled and

"[...] simultaneously the people [sex workers] that have to pay the files are again reliant on doing illegal things, to pay of the files." (BP)

→ *Ban on soliciting* (additionally to the banned district) criminalizes the purchase of sex and therefore files the punters as well. This is referred to for instance from the *BASIS-Project* as protecting the sex workers, but meant to banish prostitution from certain areas. Furthermore the affected area in Hamburg is within a strong gentrification and modernization

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[11] http://www.hamburg.de/reeperbahn/, Accessed 27th April 2014

process. This regulation is in contradiction with the national prostitution law and in so doing creates conditions as in Sweden (or even worse since the sex workers gets punished as well), which banned the purchase of sex. Therefore it will be taken into account later on, also in terms of its social work approaches.

In a way this regulation was introduced with the intention to decriminalize the women. The interviewees get to know very repressive behavior from police against the women. Also there can be observed a drift towards the internet, concentration on regular customers or different places and

"...in St. Georg are the only ones left, the ones that really don't have another option." (Sp)

→ Additionally persons that are consuming drugs are registered from the police under BAP (Besonders Auffällige Person) which means extremely conspicuous person.

Those regulations deepen the stigma and are also referred to as „double standard" that intent to accept sex work only when it is hidden (Hope Ditmore 2006b: 636).

That shows that processes of "othering" are not only occurring within the categories of gender but also in terms of what kinds of emotions become connected with certain spaces, in the sense of this paper towards certain areas, brothels, train stations or street prostitution and how the milieu therefore is constantly (re)constructed as a space of the other and abnormal. A study in relation to social spaces has been conducted from Martina Löw and Renate Ruhne in Frankfurt (Löw, Ruhne 2011). The gentrification process with accompanied restrictive regulations constructs prostitution further as something accompanied by violence and dirt which constitutes something that doesn't fit into the idea of a new modernized upper-class urban quarter and therefore needs to be outsourced.

When the interviewees were asked the „wish question" in the sense that they could imagine being able to arrange laws and regulations for their clients as they would deem them best, for all the first answer was to abolish the banned district

regulation, since it is supposed to expulse prostitution from certain spaces and can be seen as part of the gentrification process and therefore class power.

According to the interviews the sex worker will build up or are forced to build up new infrastructures themselves if the purchase of sex is further banned like in St. Georg/Hamburg. Those strategies might be less safe and more risky. Again the criticism here is also directed towards on what prostitution policy making is supposed to be based on, in terms of ideologies (as gender equality) and in relation to that who is involved to debate (Skilbrei and Holmström 2013: 11).

4.4.2 Migrants rights

TAMPEP, an organization specifically focusing on migrant sex workers since they illustrate the biggest group within the sex trade nowadays, has the aim to inform sex workers about their rights. They fight against the idea of "*European citizens of 2nd class" (Ta)*, double moral and the sex work stigma and see rights as the only way out of those dilemmas since they put sex workers in a different power position, from which they can act and make claims for their demands.

"The changes in prostitution policies, however, do not take place in a vacuum, but are closely connected to social change and societal processes such as migration flows and patterns." (Skilbrei and Holmström 2013: 4). In order to give consideration and adjust to those developments as well as migration waves, especially within the European Union from East to West

> *"TAMPEP was built upon three levels and three pillars which proceeded parallel and simultaneously. The three levels were the national, the international and the European level. And the three pillars were research, meaning empirical research, practical work and political activism." (Ta)*

This flexible and holistic approach towards sex work aims to adapt to its extremely mobile system that is always in motion. Help services need to take that into account for instance the interviews revealed that sometimes there will be only

one contact with clients, therefore the first contact with a new client always constitutes a key moment to forward helpful information.

TAMPEP´s main task is to provide migrant and transgender sex workers with information about the rights they have. Thereby racist structures are exposed through were the approached women come from.

> *"Here you get a better idea about nationalities. That is a very important and interesting issue, the fact that the majority of migrants within sex work are nowadays from within the European Union. That produces a complete different status, a complete different quality within the prostitution scene, because the moment a person is European, it has entirely different rights and can establish her/himself much more easier. For non-Europeans it still remains difficult, despite the prostitution law." (Ta)*

Having a German, European or non-European origin and passport makes a momentous difference in terms of optional possible choices and self-determination in terms of residence permit status, access to healthcare, education and recognition of occupational qualifications as well as work permits, which shows that voluntariness and agency need to be discussed more differentiated.

Through the focus on a rights based approach and since "[t]he juridical structures of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power […]" (Butler 1990: 5). *TAMPEP* additionally aims to empower women and transgender in sex work in terms of knowledge around their right to work but also in relation to strengthen their self-confidence (stigma) and with a glance towards the immigration debate. Certain groups are devalued and the only common base is human rights. Additionally

> *"[i]t is important to tell the women that they have the same rights as every other European citizen. Because sometimes I get the impression that there is a tendency towards looking at and treating Bulgarians and Rumanians as European citizens of second class and they are not! They have the same rights as any French and English person. You have to tell the women again and again that they have rights! […] that is what it´s all about. For instance when the police does raid, what rights do they have and how to react. Yes, because when you have the police in front of you, first you are afraid, but when you which rights you have you feel more safe and confident!"*

4.4.3 EU-level

"You also always have to think on a European level and move on, not just sit in your four walls!" (Ta)

Trends about best approaches towards prostitution within the European member states also influence debates and politics within Germany also in terms of comparing approaches and how European laws have to be adapted to national legislations. In this respect the Swedish approach is highly debated and since in the district of St. Georg in Hamburg there could be found a situation which is almost regulated comparably to it and it furthermore goes in line with abolitionist feminist view on prostitution a short overview will be given here.

Within Swedish law sex work and prostitution is officially seen as male sexual violence against and exploitation of women and children that are defined as victims and it is furthermore deemed a tool of patriarchal oppression. Since the main cause is seen in male demand for sexual services the purchase of sex was criminalized in 1999, but not the offer of sexual services. That is important to acknowledge since it is the client or buyer of sexual services that is targeted for punishment and not the sex worker, which is justified with a gender equality approach and supposed to have a normative function towards the society (Ekberg 2004: 1189, 1205).

For this paper crucial aftermaths of this approach are that there exist contradictory opinions if the law has led to an increase or decrease in human trafficking of women for sexual exploitation (Ekberg 2004: 1199, 1200). Greater numbers of women, girls as well as some men are contacting social support services in order to get assistance for leaving prostitution. The interview with the social worker Lisa Green of the social department in Malmö responsible for prostitution confirmed this, but additionally mentioned that it was the law on the purchase on sex that first made it possible to get funds for counseling services specifically in relation to sex work. Furthermore they made the experience that especially men had long histories of preliminary therapies were they never (dared to) talk about buying sexual services. Sometimes they even have been in therapy for many years

and addressed all kinds of problems, but the sex buying part was too constrained with shame, stigma and taboo for them to talk about it. One reason for the increased numbers of men could be that there was more media attention towards that it is common and nothing shameful to admit buying sex.

The most interesting feedback from Lisa Green towards social work approaches with regard to prostitution was the work that social workers in Germany and Sweden actually do are not very different from each other in terms of being based on an acceptable approach and offering counseling and carrying out harm reduction techniques through doing outreach work.

Asking her if considers the Swedish approach useful or not in terms of enhancing the work and live conditions of sex workers or the German approach better than the Swedish Lisa Green replied that she can't answer this question. Sometimes there are very empowered women, which are happy with working in the sex industry and for them it would be more suitable to have a more liberal legal frame but for some it is the fact that the Swedish approach is rescuing them, so it depends on the sex worker itself, even though she does not like the idea behind the Swedish legal system that implies that the women can't decide for themselves. Lisa Green also appreciates the fact that in the evaluation of the Swedish law towards prostitution it was mentioned that some women that are working self-determined are suffering from the Swedish legal frame, but this might be "worth" helping the other women that are working under less free circumstances. It is not the task of the social department to tell the women if what they are doing is right or not, it is about supporting them in their needs.

In relation to expectations for future developments in the field they are expecting a decreasing number of teenagers (also boys) prostituting themselves as a form of self-destructive behavior. This is a phenomenon that received more attention and appeared through book publications of Caroline Engvall, for instance "14 år till salu" or "Skuggbarn". Since then more and more children/youths are contacting them.

4.4.4 Relation to human trafficking

In May 2013 the "SPIEGEL" magazine in Germany edited with the cover story "Brothel Germany – How the state fosters trafficking in women and prostitution".[12] Alice Schwarzer published a book "Prostitution – A German scandal. How could we become a paradise for human traffickers of women?"[13] In September 2012 the German TV channel one broadcast a popular crime thriller called TATORT - "The cast away girls"[14] were the track of trafficked girls led into the red light district. Representative of *Ragazza* sees a connection between media images of prostitution and trafficking and the sensitizing of society and states that:

> *"You see it in countries where it is forbidden, it still exists, but those women live in illegality and if something is illegal it marches crime and delinquency. [...] It is better to have a legal frame to being able to control it at its best. [...] That is money evolving out of the fact that someone had fun and someone else could pay rent and take care of children, why is that bad money?"*

Here one can see as argued from Goffman the drawn correlation between legal framing towards criminal framing, therefore delinquent abnormal behavior and therefore the perception of *bad* money, which is not valued or accepted. That would for instance also mean not being able to pay taxes on the income from prostitution when it is criminalized.

The expert conference symposium in Nürnberg in November 2013 summed up that Germany has the highest level on legal regulations in relation to human trafficking, but simultaneously the laws for intervening and acting out of the police' point of view are formulated too subjective, hard to measure and therefore an unuseful base to intervene. The introduction of the prostitution law without any regulation constitutes another problem.

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[12] 2013. Bordell Deutschland. Wie der Staat Frauenhandel und Prostitution fördert. *DER SPIEGEL.* (22)

[13] Schwarzer, Alice, 2013. *Prostitution. Ein deutscher Skandal. Wie konnten wir zum Paradies der Frauenhändler werden?* Köln: KiWi.

[14] http://www.daserste.de/unterhaltung/krimi/tatort/sendung/2012/wegwerfmaedchen-100.html, Accessed 27th April 2014

A strong statement and claim within the interviews was the necessity to a very clear distinction between sex work and trafficking, which is also communicated within the sex workers rights movement.

> *„ [...] you have to separate it, because you have to separate what is work from what is a crime. Additionally there are many forms of human trafficking, it is not just for reasons of sexual exploitation. Of course it is an easy argument to say that you can only combat and end human trafficking when you abolish prostitution, but that is too simple that is not the reality." (Ta)*

Therefore it is important to ask how human trafficking and prostitution are related and what that means for social work in practice.

There are several forms of human trafficking like exploiting labour and workforce and not just for purposes of sexual exploitation, even though it constitutes the majority of the cases within the participating European member states with 62 % according to the Eurostat report published from the European Commission in 2013 (European Commission 2013: 10), whereas Brynsk and Fitzpatrick argue that from a global perspective exploitation for reasons of labor affect even higher numbers (Brynsk & Choi-Fitzpatrick 2012: 2).

Nonetheless it is a very severe type and therefore still highlighted in the title of the European Commission report.[15] In addition it is important for the discussion with regard to clearly separate prostitution and trafficking in order to for example to not stigmatize sex workers. The situation on valid data is comparable with that in relation to prostitution there is none besides estimations.

The EU directive 2011/36/EU (European Parliament 2011) would constitute a practical solid legal foundation. Unfortunately the deadline was already in April 2013 and Germany still didn´t adopt it.[16] The prostitution law is in so far from interest for this discussion since its aim was to regulate prostitution under a new perspective. The problem was that the government at this point didn't decide on any regulations while approving to liberate a huge part of prostitution.

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[15]*Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations convention against transnational organized crime.* United Nations, 2000

[16] http://fuer-niedersachsen-in-berlin.de/2014/04/laender-wollen-prostituierte-vor-gewalt-und-ausbeutung-schuetzen/, Accessed 27th April 2014

Human trafficking in relation to the statements of the interviews show that the two are different phenomena, meaning it is not gainful to build a relationship between sex work as a profession and by law a legal occupation as any else with the acceptance and agreement of all involved participants on the one hand and a crime, like slavery and coercion on the other hand. It promotes the stigmatization and harms the acceptance of sexual services with mutual agreement within society.

It is probably more important to have an explicit and detailed look at human trafficking and for instance to quickly adapt the EU directive that gives an excellent guide line and basis for how to adapt effective foundations for protection. Furthermore to add the missing regulations to the liberative prostitution law on how to develop, ensure and guarantee protection and prevention. Basic claims and demands are the following:

- ✓ Protection and rights of victims must be strengthened;
- ✓ Implementation of the related EU-directive in national law;
- ✓ Since the adoption of the prostitution law has changed almost nothing. Also in the area of regulation, regardless of many initiatives like for example the publication of an official document for regulation in 2009;[17]
- ✓ Not 90 % of prostitutes are victims of human trafficking. Within the debate prostitution is often mixed with trafficking in persons. It is important to have objective criteria for both and to look at them separately.

"You have to imagine, we are going to legal places where prostitution takes place, of course no one will take a forced prostitute there."(Mi)

"We have peripheral contact with human trafficking… however that is a different responsible area." (Sp)

The interviews very clearly revealed that the social work practice is to a great extent affected with prejudices, preconceptions and biased ideas about a certain reality of prostitution like portrayed in the media. They are not even denying

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[17]Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2012

trafficking and that there is a need for effective protective laws as well as organizations taking care of this severe problem, with which they are also cooperating with. Simultaneously it is not what they are affected by and dealing with in their daily work at all. *Kassandra* even said that they were two recorded cases of trafficking, but those are immediately forwarded to responsible professional organizations as well as the police, because they themselves would not even have the resources and skills to support those women.

4.5   Role of (the) professional social work(er) and feminist approaches

Social work practice must also be carefully aware of consequences and influence of social stigma and critically reflect on how they are themselves part of redefining stereotypes. For instance one interviewee referred to a case within the youth welfare office and child custody was rather given to a violent father instead of the mother which was a sex worker, but obviously deemed more risky in terms of her life style.

In relation to feminist theories and standpoints towards prostitution generally all interviewed organizations work with an acceptable approach, recognizing the activities of their clients as a form of labor, as *Ragazza* stated

> *"[…] we interpret it yet also with feminist standpoints, sex work, we <u>don't see the women as victims</u>, also not within sex work […] we define sex work as a possibility to finance oneself and that is something that has to be highly esteemed and when you look at it the way that I could actually choose my job […] but there are many people that couldn't even think about it, because they didn't have the education and that is why the debate becomes a little bit artificial sometimes, if you talk about voluntariness."*

Therefore they go in line with the liberal feminist approach towards sex work as labour. That means for *Ragazza* to

> *"[…] work anonymous, biased, acceptance-orientated […] and we perceive the women as subjects with operational competence and not as victims per se or we want to […] pick the women up where they stand."*

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The question is how can feminists that have the starting points in the diverse positions and interests of different women (and unprivileged and discriminated groups as a whole) likewise be supportive and solidary with all women that are working in the sex industry and their specific interests. For women that choose their work, those that don't deem their job particularly good, but it constitutes a possible way for them of earning money, those that are looking for alternative ways to work and also of course those that are ultimately affected of violence.

A very holistic scope of duties could be explored at *Kassandra*. The organization is taken as an example since their vision might constitute a concept in order to cover the demands, needs and requirements stated above. As most of the organizations they offer counseling, support, information and prevention, also through outreach work, they do networking and public relations, while also recently aiming to approach and reach male sex workers with their supply.

Interestingly they also offer contended counseling towards getting in to sex work and state

> *"We don't call it entrance counseling anymore, but rather occupational counseling, which holistically informs about the job and problematic situations that can evolve out of it. [...] around 80 % of those that do this counseling already had experiences. That [the counseling] is always seen very skeptical, in the sense of 'You bring them into prostitution!' That is nonsense. We aim to illustrate a realistic picture and inform about the possibilities but also the risks."*

What is special is that *Kassandra* offers in cooperation with *pro familia* a six month lasting qualification training as a sexual attendant or assistant for elderly or disabled people, since sexuality for those groups is still a stigmatized and often not accessible need. *Kassandra* also submits a project funded education center called *OPERA* which's main purpose is the qualification and conveying of an occupational reorientation of sex workers free of charge, which is a great response towards some sex workers'

> *"[...] perception as [prostitution not as] a working lifetime but a transition time throughout a period of financial shortage." (Gst).*

The interviews made clear that a dialogue with social workers offers an excellent opportunity to get engaged with and access to sex workers, gain insights what would be truly supportive for them and which kind of solidarity they would assess as useful and helpful and if and where they see the demand or necessity for help.

Challenges are that the social workers act like advocates and life facilitators or guides throughout support services and their help mandate towards people with self-defined (!) demand. The social workers dilemma lies within the double mandate between the interests and funding of the commune versus the clients that needs to be balanced between help and control. Especially with regard to prostitution social services have to constantly tremble about stable financial funding and mostly need to look after complementary project financing. In this position they function and work in a triangle pinpointed by society, the target group and social policies whereas the latter simultaneously merges the possibilities that can be utilized for clients.

As the social worker based in Malmö said the need for how to regulate prostitution depends upon the very individual person that is carrying out the job. On a realizable level this means that social work agencies that are adjusted to support sex workers in their very diverse and differing problematics related to work and private life should have a great freedom in their scope of duties, because this leads to the positive effect, that

> *"... more women come to us, we can reach more, because in former times, if someone needed something like this, we wouldn't have been able to offer it." (Ka)*

The vision from *Kassandra* with its very numerous and multifaceted supplies fulfilled those requirements closely throughout offering safeguarded ways in and out of sex work depending upon the very will of the respective person involved within sex work. Additionally cross sectioning areas as human trafficking, abuse, any form of physical, psychological violence, coercion and so on shouldn't be seen as inherent of sex work but instead need to be covered by being embedded within a functioning network of appropriate and relevant organizations, police and other actors.

5   Concluding Remarks

The overall objective of the thesis was to explore social work practice responses to prostitution mainly in Germany. Throughout the interviews could be discovered on the one hand a great variety of advanced approaches and techniques and on the other hand due to the current debate around prohibiting the purchase of sex great interest in an exchange towards how social work practice does or can look like under such conditions. Thereby objectives have been divided into risk management, challenging stigma and in order to enhance the living and work conditions of sex workers a call for decriminalization of prostitution.

A legal occupation must also have human conditions, therefore strives for and of sex worker unions must be supported and fostered. Even though prostitution is legalized hidden discrimination or a form of special treatment as representative of *Mimikry* calls it is still happening. For instance she revealed, are health insurances still demanding drug tests after registering as a prostitute. Social workers as political and social advocates for sex workers mainly strive for improving their conditions and to eliminate abuse, while combating stereotypes as roots for stigmatization processes through information, transparency and professionalizing. Challenges are how to include transgender people for instance in overnight-accommodations since that meets the resistance of female clients.

Power relations cannot just be found within the sex industry but also in terms of defining work from a middle class point of view. It was clearly claimed throughout the interviews to rethink this notion and critically reflect one's own standpoint in terms of perspectives and possibilities. Different places, life histories and concepts enable dissimilar and limited possibilities and perspectives to choose from.

After conducting the interviews it was obvious that the different organizations had developed certain useful instruments and specializations. At this point the thesis appears also as an instrument of exchange for different approaches and lines of actions within help networks that are (inter)nationally cross-linked.

In relation to male sex workers the interviews revealed that male prostitution has a different structure in its course of action and is more invisible within society, while simultaneously being affected by higher stigmatization which.

German and Swedish social work responses towards prostitution don't differ from each other to a great extent. In the center are the goals to on the one hand support the sex workers with her/his specials needs and on the other hand to support the working and life conditions as a whole. The base for the methods is an accepting approach. The interest in the interview with the *Counseling and support team for sexual services in Malmö* revealed not just an interest of German organizations in how other social workers act but also an interest towards challenges for social work since Germany still discusses how to proceed with the prostitution law. It further showed that it is less about taking a clear stand within social work towards abolishing prostitution or not, since the fact that the approaches in Sweden and Germany in contrast to the differing legal national frames are rather similar shows that it is more important how effectively and solution oriented the approaches and help services of organizations answer to the roots and consequences of stigmatization processes.

The Prostitution Congress revealed a clear call for the consultation of sex workers in policy making. In relation to representing the interests of prostitutes it became obvious that there are many categories and forms of prostitution and sex work and that interviewees observed differences between the claims and needs of the organized sex workers in relation to their target group or clients. Thereby it is important to keep in mind that one coming out as a sex worker has to expect social reprisals in terms of finding another job and therefore often forces them into a double life.

For example the ICRSE bases their claims on collectively established rights charters or the *Trade association erotic and sexual services* in cooperation with sex workers rights activism organizations has clearly established demands, basically commonly striving for legalizing sex work and achieving equal rights compared to other occupations. But due to the interviews the associations needs to

be careful in speaking out for *a* sex industry. The latter as a diversified group is usually facing poverty in combination with many other problems like homelessness, illness or legal documents and simply trying to survive throughout the current conditions, but do therefore not have the resources to challenge circumstances that are in deficit. Even though the social workers named many as for instance the restrictive regulations like the banned district regulation and the national unique ban on soliciting in the district of St. Georg in Hamburg that revealed precarious conditions that makes it almost impossible to proceed to work there for prostitutes so that only the most vulnerable who are not able to change place are left there. For this reason out of a social work perspective further restrictive regulations are strongly rejected from all interviewees.

There need to be working groups on how to improve the current prostitution law and challenge unequal power relations with an emphasis on experts from within the field and already existing ideas as referred to for instance the small scale brothel from Bremen or advancing services through educational trainings.

Due to the funding of the organizations under 18 year old girls and boys can be approached or not. In relation to this target group in Sweden prostitution as a self-destructive behavior is debated to a great extent. Further new fields seem to be work with family members, relatives and especially enhanced requests from punters. The exchange with the Swedish social work approach showed that an enhanced focus on punters meets a big demand since the men do not reveal within other counselling services, maybe due to the stigma. Positive Implications have been communicated in relation to an occupational counseling in order to inform about realistic possibilities and risks of prostitution beforehand that can further constitute a form of prevention.

In relation to a feminist perspective towards social work practices and statements towards feminism within the interviews the emphasis was towards that sex work could also be considered through the notion of empowerment which is a rather new one (Hope Ditmore 2006a: 157).

Call for homogeneous implementation of prostitution law

What the practical exchange has clearly shown is that all social workers see a tremendous risk in harming the most vulnerable through enhancing restrictive regulations. Instead they call for a homogeneous implementation of the prostitution law in all federal states. As the interviewee of Kassandra stated it is different from commune to commune if it is possible to register and hence there is practically no legal stability of the law, also due to not existing clear description of what for instance a brothel is.

Throughout the interviewees has been discovered a great negative suspicion towards the situation within Germany and the European Commissions influence towards new developments in regulating prostitution since the discussions are in great favour of the Swedish approach. Besides there was a great interest in how social work approaches look like in Sweden, further research should focus on a profound and deeper exchange and dialogue between social work approaches in those two countries. After reviewing the interviews social workers consistently agreed upon the fact that it would be wrong to abolish and/or criminalize prostitution. The problem lies in the fact that there is no reliable empirical data within the field and both camps rely on estimations which makes a fruitful discussion almost impossible.

Reviewing social work responses to prostitution through interviews and participant observations shows that they support sex workers in their strive for recognition as an own occupation. Common response was that sex work is a job, but not like any else. "Either – or" positions did neither help to theorize prostitution in relation to practice nor in terms of policies. As Lisa Green stated, she is happy not to be in the position to make decisions for legal regulations, since the most suitable legal framework is always depended upon the particular situation of the individual sex worker. Overall in the center of social work services are the needs of the individual and not the ideology of the legal framework.

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