



Prostitution is Violence against Women!

Speech held by Dr. Ingeborg Kraus on 25th November 2016 in Strasbourg / France.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women the Préfet of the Alsace Champagne-Ardenne Lorraine region, the head of the regional health authority in co-operation with the organizations called centre d'information des droits des femmes et des familles (CIDFF), Mouvement du Nid France and Pénélope 67 have invited to a cross-border symposium related on the subject of "Prostitution and Health: Challenges and Change of Perspective in Europe".

I would like to thank the organizers for this German-French symposium. This first event after the introduction of the legislation for abolishing the prostitution system in France located next to Germany has a symbolic meaning to us. I think it is indeed necessary to wake Germany up. Germany, which provides guidelines with regard to a lot of European subjects, may – in this case – need tutoring from France and Sweden.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I would like to report about the dramatic consequences for prostitution after its legalization in Germany and I will prove that prostitution is violence against women. Afterwards, I would like to talk about its psychological impact.

The reason why I want to focus on the violence is because the political discussions in Germany have never really recognized the aspect of violence. Prostitution is seen as a private play which is none of the state's business.¹

1. Violence in Prostitution:

In Germany, there is a large Federal Study² dated 2004 on subjection to violence. Among the total of 10,000 interviewed women, there were 110 prostitutes who made these statements:

¹ Dr. Inge Kleine: *Freierbestrafung: das Gesetz in Frankreich und was wir davon lernen können*. S. 3-11. Kofra 157. Sept./Okt. 2016. <http://kofra.de/htm/Zeitung/157KOFRA.pdf>

82% named forms of psychological violence, 92% experienced sexual harassment, 87% experienced physical violence, 59% experienced sexual violence.

There is a second study in Germany dated 2001 by Zumbeck³ with 54 prostitutes. It found out that all women had experienced traumas. 70% had been physically attacked and 68 % had been raped.

The „voluntary“ decision to choose prostitution requires certain preconditions. All prostituted women who visited my practise had a history of insufficient protection in their childhood and – as a consequence – insufficient self protection. At a very early age, these women learned to „shut themselves off“. Also here, there are numerous studies that prove the relation between experiences of violence as a child and prostitution. Zumbeck’s study in Germany has shown that 65% of the women had been physically abused and 50% had been sexually abused in their childhood.

Violence in Prostitution has many Faces:

It starts with light clothing or even being totally naked in the cold.

In the street prostitution there are only poor hygiene conditions, no washing facilities, no protection, no safety, darkness, coldness, being exposed to the gaze of the sex buyers and passers-by who evaluate, devaluate, insult, call names etc.

In the brothels the women are „locked up“. The right of instruction is held by the owner of the brothel, which means that the owner decides who can get in and who cannot. If someone is seeking contact to the women he needs to “get along well” with the owners. The contact with the outside world is strictly regulated. Not everybody is allowed to speak to the women. The women are not free.

In the brothels the women do not experience any self-determination. They do not have the right to speak or make any claims. As Manfred Paulus⁴ describes it, „from the very beginning they are prisoners of these mainly criminal subcultures in the red light district. In these milieus they are located at the very bottom of the hierarchy. They are deprived of all their rights, defenseless, helplessly exposed“.

There is a totally asymmetrical relationship between women and men: *„Today, prostitution looks this way: About 90 % of the women in prostitution originally come from poorer EU-countries from the East. About 30 % are under the age of 21. They do not practice safer sex, they cannot set limits or negotiate. They are in a very inferior situation. They do not have the power to enforce their claims. For 30 Euros they will do everything, the johns want. They are totally overstrained, totally traumatized“.*⁵

² Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend : Gender Datenreport », Kapitel 10: Gewalthandlungen und Gewaltbetroffenheit von Frauen und Männern, P. 651-652, 2004.

³ Zumbeck, Sibylle: «Die Prävalenz traumatischer Erfahrungen, Posttraumatische Belastungsstörungen und Dissoziation bei Prostituierten », Hamburg, 2001.

⁴ Manfred Paulus: *Menschenhandel*, 2014, Klemm + Oelschläger Verlag, S. 107.

⁵ Fernsehen Interview mit Sabine Constabel, Sozialarbeiterin, die über 20 Jahre mit prostituierten Frauen in Stuttgart arbeitet, am 17.03.2013 in SWR1 Leute. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpCPKDRcFg0>

An additionally large problem is the fact that these women are mostly sacrificed by their own families. The income of their occupation is sent to the family in the countries of origin. Therefore, exiting prostitution is related to deep inner conflicts. It is not like freeing oneself from the chains of a strange pimp but one is forced to break up with the own family. The prostitution mainly taking place today actually is worse than forced prostitution because the human trafficker is no strange predator but the own family.

Also the high daily rents (up to 180,—€ every woman needs to pay) can be called violence because that means that women need to serve up to 6 johns, before they can even start to earn a single Euro.

Flatrate brothels are against human dignity. It is humiliating to know that you are sold for 50,—€ in a complete package along with a sausage and beer.

Since the legalization, the sex buyers have become more perverted and the practices accordingly more dangerous. Of course, as a result the violence against prostituted women has increased. In many sex buyer forums⁶ men pride themselves, how „hard“ they „pushed“ the prostitute and they evaluate her. Obviously they see it as their male right to evaluate women and to use them in every way. There is a „menu“ circulating on the Internet, where buyers can choose what they want from a long à la carte list. In other countries this creates disgust and is seen as torture. In Germany, this seems to have become normality. Here are some examples⁷:

AF = Algierfranzösisch (Zungenanal) – **Tongue anal**
AFF = Analer Faustfick (die ganze Hand im Hintereingang) – **Anal Fist Fucking**
AO = alles ohne Gummi – **everything without rubber**
Braun-weiß = Spiele mit Scheiße und Sperma – **play with shit and sperma**
DP = Doppelpack (Sex mit zwei Frauen) oder: double Penetration (zwei Männer in einer Frau) – **Sex with 2 women or double penetration (2 men in one woman)**
EL = Eierlecken – **licking the balls**
FF = Faustfick– **Fist Fuck**
FP = Französisch pur (Blasen ohne Gummi und ohne Aufnahme) – **blowjob without rubber**
GB = Gesichtsbesamung **Ejaculating in the face.**
GS = Gruppensex – **Group Sex.**
Kvp = Kaviar Passiv (Frau lässt sich anscheißen) – **Man shits on a woman**
Nsp = Natursekt Passiv (Frau lässt sich anpinkeln) – Man urinates on a woman
OV = Oralverkehr (Blasen, Lecken); - Oral intercourse (Blowjob or Licking)
SW = Sandwich, eine Frau zwischen zwei Männern – **one woman between 2 men**
tbl, = tabulos, ALLES ist erlaubt – **without taboo, everything is allowed.**
ZA = Zungenanal (am / im Hintereingang lecken) – **lick the anus.**

It goes without saying that due to these risky sex practices the infection rates have increased. There is a scientific study⁸ by Dr. Anna Wolff dated 2008, which gives an overview on the health state having the focus on sexually transmitted diseases. 110 Prostituierte were examined in Lübeck / Germany. 26% had a sexually transmitted disease which needed

⁶ www.freiersblick.de

⁷ Dr. Anita Heiliger: *Zur Realität in der Prostitution und ihre gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen*, 2015.
<http://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2015/01/23/zur-realitaet-in-der-prostitution-und-ihre-gesellschaftlichen-auswirkungen/>

⁸ Anna Wolff, *Untersuchung zum Infektionsstatus von Prostituierten in Lübeck*. Heidelberg, 2007.
<http://www.zhb.uni-luebeck.de/epubs/ediss468.pdf>

treatment. 42% of the women were affected by an acute infection or an infection that had already taken place.

There are disastrous working conditions: the women are totally dependent on the companies. Many work, sleep and eat in the brothels. They live in a parallel world without any rights and without access to the outer world. Meanwhile, in Germany the „product“ called woman is maximally exploited according to the law of the hardest and toughest capitalism: profit maximization and low cost etc.

The working times are a health hazard: prostituted women always have to be „ready“ for the customers and therefore they sleep a maximum of 5 hours per night.

Many women live like nomads here in Germany. They have no permanent residence and they are often shipped from one brothel to another to provide diversion for the sex buyers. Very often they do not even know where they are.

The UN has sought advice regarding prostitution and one question was: „What about the reproduction rights of prostituted women?“ My answer to it was that in this context it is totally absurd to talk about reproduction rights. Today, pregnant women are very popular among sex buyers. That means that they want to feel the child in the woman’s womb. Therefore, late abortions abroad happen very often. There are also many women giving their child up for adoption. To serve this market, shortly after giving birth women are systematically impregnated again. It is said that meanwhile Berlin has more babies than seeking adoptive parents.⁹ The stress and the emotional situation for pregnant women while practising sex non-stop is harmful, not just for the mother but for the development of the child in the womb as well.

The violence does not only take place in prostitution. The women do not experience any protection outside prostitution, either. They experience physical violence by their pimps, brothel owners, traffickers and even murder. They experience mental violence through contemptuous looks and exclusion from the society. They are not taken seriously, they are discriminated, they remain an “ex-whore”.

But violence also happens in the so called „luxury prostitution“. The German prostitution survivor Marie describes it like this¹⁰: *„The „respect“ that man showed me was not the respect they had towards me but the respect in the note that they had invested. To work in prostitution, to bear the smell of strange men, to feel their skin on one’s own body, a woman has to overcome all boundaries. Thereby, I have not even experienced the worst kind of prostitution, but even after I had left prostitution this life has caught with me and it hit down on me like a wave.“*

Sexuality requires an interaction of the mind and the body. To enable strangers to penetrate your own body requires shutting off natural functions, which otherwise would be inevitable¹¹: fear, shame, strangeness, disgust, despise, smell, pain etc. This shutting off is a phenomenon that is called dissociation. Alcohol and drugs are an additional help to bear the

⁹ Dr. Lutz Besser: Stellungnahme zur Anhörung zum Entwurf eines Gesetzes zur Regelung des Prostitutionsgewerbes im Ausschuss für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Gesundheit. 04.06.2016. <http://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2016/06/04/lutz-besser-stellungnahme-zum-prostituiertenschutzg/>

¹⁰ <http://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2015/01/12/prostitution-als-reinszenierung-erlebter-traumata/>

¹¹ Michaela Huber: *Trauma und Prostitution aus traumatherapeutischer Sicht*, 2014: <http://www.michaela-huber.com/files/vortraege2014/trauma-und-prostitution-aus-traumatherapeutischer-sicht.pdf>

emotional pain. Using the vagina as a numb work tool is only possible in a state of pathological dissociation.

2. The Psychological Harms caused by Prostitution:

In Germany, there is no health check or health protection for women in prostitution. Therefore, hardly any data collection can be found about the impact that prostitution has on women. Thus, women are in the clutches of a violent and extremely harmful milieu.

Zumbeck's study¹² dated 2001 found out that 60% of the women in prostitution had fully developed PTSD. Schröttle & Müller's study dated 2004 shows a high consumption of medicines: 67% of the women in prostitution take painkillers, 38% sedatives.

However, I would like to point out that in most cases it is not easy to describe or outline the mental damages women have while they are still prostituted. Lately, I treated a woman whom a sex buyer had inserted nails in her vagina. Her comment was: "It doesn't hurt. Everything is okay, Ms. Kraus." Very often counseling centers and police do not understand what dissociation means and which forms it can take. Often, the emotional pain only becomes accessible to women, once they find the way out of prostitution.

Very often I am emphatically asked by reporters if the women are really doing that bad in prostitution. They want to hear diagnoses. Indeed, many women show post-traumatic stress disorders, but not only that: addiction, anxiety and depressive disorders are also very common.

But which diagnosis can be given to a woman who is so traumatized that she stops talking? Which diagnosis can be given to a woman who does not feel any pain, when nails are inserted in her vagina? Here, we are often dealing with multiple post-traumatic stress disorders.

A colleague of mine who works in an exit program for prostitutes said to me that only a few are able to exit. The women usually work until they physically break down. She said that it is only a matter of time until this breakdown takes place.

Why is it like that, I wondered. Because these women's will was broken. These women see no future for themselves, they have no dreams, no identity outside prostitution. They are reduced to this constructed being called "prostitute" and they are not able to find a way out. They are trapped in their trauma and their shame.

The young women coming to Germany are totally overstrained and completely traumatized. Many of them ask for psychotropic and other drugs immediately after their first experiences. They say that they cannot survive this 'business' otherwise. Some women have only been there for a few weeks and say: 'I died here, I can't laugh anymore.' Others endure it for years and say: 'I have children at home, I have to hold on.' The women are very traumatized, they develop depressions, nightmares, and physical problems. They somatize, they have stomach pains. They get sick and they also feel very sick. They become very hopeless."

Jana Koch-Krawcak who goes into brothels as a street worker reports the same: She meets neglected women who lost any contact to themselves. They react in a scared or apathetic way. It is obvious that they need everything but sex. But next to them you see the sex buyers and those men do not give a damn about it. They laugh and they are amused.

¹² Zumbeck, Sibylle: «Die Prävalenz traumatischer Erfahrungen, Posttraumatische Belastungsstörungen und Dissoziation bei Prostituierten », Hamburg, 2001.

How can that be? I ask myself the same question Caroline Emcke¹³ had asked in her book „Gegen den Hass“ (“Against the Hate”). Yes, how is it possible to ignore, to not see the misery but only one’s own needs? How does this work?

It works because men think that they have a right to have sex and that they have a right to use women for that right. The woman is locked up in a socially constructed picture, namely the picture of an “insatiable sex beast”. Other needs that this woman might have are denied. She is dehumanized, she is only an „it“, an object. This allows the sex buyer every form of unscrupulousness, their empathy is blocked and replaced by indifference.

By using repression mechanisms and mental tricks this society and politics are avoiding to take responsibility. The violence is denied, the reality is blinded out. And what is this all for?

All of this is to defend a strong taboo topic, namely the male sexuality and its unquestioned right to unlimited development and unfoldment. At the same time, the sex industry with its staggering profits is being defended too. With its legislation in 2002 Germany is and with its legislation in 2016 Germany stays an eldorado for owners of brothels, pimps and human traffickers.

„The normalization of prostitution also has devastating effects in a society as a whole: it supports and cements a discriminating, gender hierarchical attitude of men towards women in Germany. Prostitution is violence against women! It reinforces and it promotes patriarchal gender relations, it is a symbol for the domination of men over women as well as for the collective degradation of women.“¹⁴

I thank you!

Dr. Ingeborg Kraus

Notes:

¹³ Carolin Emcke: *Gegen den Hass*. S. Fischer. 2016. S. 47.

¹⁴ Dr. Anita Heiliger: *Zur Realität in der Prostitution und ihre gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen*, 2015.

<http://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu/2015/01/23/zur-realitaet-in-der-prostitution-und-ihre-gesellschaftlichen-auswirkungen/>