From Russia with Love?

Newspaper Coverage of Cross-Border Prostitution in Northern Norway, 1990–2001

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ABSTRACT The article examines national news reports on prostitution of Russian women in northern Norway between 1990 and 2001. Applying critical discourse analysis, the author shows how this particular type of cross-border, rural prostitution is represented as sexual transaction, as a sociopolitical problem (of public order, public health, social/moral breakdown and stigma), and as a symbolic issue used to legitimize stricter border controls. Images of prostitutes, pimps and customers are also discussed. The different thematizations are in turn connected to various historical practices of state regulation of sexuality, to constructions of group identities based on moral categories, and to social definitions of what is normal and what is deviant.

KEY WORDS critical discourse analysis ◆ customer ◆ disease ◆ news analysis ◆ Norway ◆ prostitution ◆ public order ◆ Russia ◆ sex work ◆ stigma

In the far north of Europe, Norway and Russia share about 200 km of border. For most of the 20th century, this border did not just separate two national territories. As a divide between East and West, there was minimal exchange of people, goods or ideas. Around 1990 this situation changed radically, and the inhabitants of Norway's northernmost administrative region, Finnmark, suddenly found themselves a few hours drive from the Russian city of Murmansk, with a population as large as Norway's capital, Oslo. The opening of the border made it possible for Russians and Norwegians to cross, and many have done so. Russians have come as tourists to see what 'the West' is like, and as traders, carrying goods for sale at Norwegian markets and pavements.

This article focuses on Norwegian newspaper coverage of one of the most remarked consequences of this radically increased contact between

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northern Norway and northern Russia, namely that of Russian women selling sex to Norwegian men. There have been reports of Russian prostitutes operating in other parts of Norway too, but the media have in general concentrated on 'the Finnmark prostitution'. Its rural character is rather special. Prostitution in industrialized countries has usually been located in urban settings, at least in the public imagination (Hunt, 1999). One popular image involves an economically poor but morally rich country girl moving to a city, where she becomes the victim of economically rich but morally poor men. Another common image portrays an urban drug addict who sells her body on the street due to economic need. In rural Finnmark, the possible scenarios are different: during the last decade, this most sparsely populated region of Norway has become a scene of prostitution involving Russian women, many of whom have city backgrounds and higher education. The rural men of Norway have the money, and the urban women of Russia the 'luxury goods'.

In the newspaper material analysed, the issue of prostitution in Finnmark is textually related to and partly understood in terms of several other themes commonly associated with post-Communist Russia, including deprivation, organized crime and disease. I point to some of these different 'thematizations' of the cross-border exchange of sexual services for money, as they were presented during the 1990s in two national Norwegian newspapers and in releases from the Norwegian News Agency, and discuss how these themes relate to / are part of 'discursive practices' around issues of sexuality and group inclusion / exclusion. There is variation in the material, in the sense that several different approaches to the issue are represented. Still, most of the thematizations have in common negative notions of the activity, as well as of Russians and Russia in general. These notions can be seen as part of larger discursive practices involving social groups, defined through oppositions such as normal / deviant, Norwegian / foreign and moral / immoral. For example, Russian prostitutes are constituted as foreign and Norwegian customers as immoral, and both these groups as deviant, thereby providing contrastive meaning to majority groups of normal, moral and Norwegian people.

The analysis proceeds, metaphorically speaking, by zooming out from the specific texts through various contextual layers of meaning. I start looking at the issue of prostitution in Finnmark as it is explicitly commented on in the texts, with special focus on prostitutes, customers and pimps. Then other themes frequently raised in the material are discussed, before the thematic structure of the newspaper coverage of 'the Finnmark prostitution' is analysed as part of discursive traditions including historical and sociopolitical factors. These three layers may be referred to as text, co-text and context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article is inspired by critical discourse analysis (CDA),[1] whose practitioners claim inspiration from a number of sources within linguistics, philosophy and social science, such as Antonio Gramsci, critical theory, Michel Foucault and functional systemic as well as cognitive linguistics (Titscher et al., 2000: 144). A key assumption among critical discourse analysts is that group-based power and authority is produced and reproduced through language use, or 'discourse'. Discourse is seen as a social practice implying a dialectical relationship between language and social / institutional context (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258). Moreover, CDA embraces an ideal of social science with a cause. Discursively reproduced power and authority should be exposed and challenged, in order to promote less inequality and thereby improve the social conditions among deprived groups in society.

Two useful concepts frequently applied (although far from exclusively) within critical discourse analysis are theme and discourse. Answering the question 'What is this [piece of text] about?' should identify its theme(s). The identification of themes in the newspaper items may be mapped out as a hierarchically organized thematic structure. In this article I concentrate on the most general thematizations of 'prostitution in Finnmark' found in the material. Given the search string used to identify the relevant items (see note 2), 'prostitution in Finnmark' is a central theme in most of them. After exploring this theme, I proceed to other themes that arise frequently, to map out what might be called the 'co-text' of the coverage of prostitution; that is, how prostitution is related to and therefore partly understood in terms of other themes (for example 'public order').

Discourse, on the other hand, is partly about themes, but adds at least two important contextual dimensions. The first one is historical, and concerns the origins, developments and interrelatedness of the various themes through time. What, for instance, has talk about 'public order' signified historically? One obvious answer is that public order is and has been understood as the opposite of lawlessness and chaos. On an ideological level, public order signifies something positive, something to be attained, and the semantic contrasts of lawlessness and chaos signify things to be avoided. This interpretation does not exclude alternative understandings. Public order might be understood as something inherently negative (e.g. by an anarchist), or at least lose its positive value in some situations (e.g. under a totalitarian regime); which brings us to the second contextual dimension of discourse: how are the different thematizations of prostitution inscribed in people's minds as well as in political and administrative practices, with different material consequences for those people that are implicated? For the 'public order' theme, for instance, a relevant issue would be how categorizations of actors (into

prostitutes, customers and pimps) are embedded in people's minds, guiding perceptions, opinions and actions, and in legal institutions, giving the police and courts powers to intervene against such types of actors. 'Discursive practices' can thus be defined as conventionalized and institutionalized forms of language use.

To sum up, 'the theme of public order' is one of the themes that are made relevant in these specific texts, thus being part of the 'co-text' in the coverage of the Finnmark prostitution. 'The discourse of public order', on the other hand, concerns the history of how the ideal of public order has become inscribed in people's minds as something to be unquestionably obtained, and how it has been sought to be enforced by state agencies such as the police, the judicial system and the educational system.

DATA MATERIAL AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The material on which I base my analysis consists of 175 written texts published from 1990 through to November 2001 by the two Oslo-issued national daily newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* and by the Norwegian News Agency (NTB). *Aftenposten* can be described as a politically right-of-centre quality newspaper and *Dagbladet* as a politically left-of-centre quality / tabloid hybrid. They are, respectively, the second and third largest newspapers in Norway, with average circulations of 288,000 and 206,000 copies daily (1998) – which means that they are read by a substantial part of Norway's 4.4 million inhabitants. The material was selected from an online electronic news archive named 'A-tekst'[2] for the time interval 1990–2001. After a qualitative exclusion of 238 hits irrelevant to the issue of prostitution in Finnmark (such as articles on night life in Moscow, immigration to Israel or trafficking in Germany), I was left with 175 items, of which most are from 1997 or later (see Table 1 for details). In 134 cases, 'prostitution in Finnmark' was the, or one of the, main theme(s) of the text. In the remaining 41 cases, it can be categorized as a subtheme,

TABLE 1
Numbers of News Items, by Source and Time Interval

	1990–5	**1996–8**	**1999–2001**	**Total**
Aftenposten	8	16	41	65
NTB	8	10	38	56
Dagbladet	–	23	31	54
Total	16	49	110	175

Note: The 'A-tekst' archive contains material from *Aftenposten* and *NTB* from January 1990, and from *Dagbladet* from January 1996. The first article is from 25 November 1990 and the last from 26 November 2001.

meaning that the text was mainly about something else (cross-border movements, trade, disease, organized crime, Russia) but that the issue of prostitution in Finnmark was mentioned. Most of the items can be characterized as news reports, but the material also includes a few editorials and letters to the editor.

The analysis does not distinguish between different authors or between the three sources. Focused on here are rather the dominant themes and corresponding discourses in national news coverage of 'the Finnmark prostitution', of which I expect these 175 texts to be representative. Newspaper coverage of prostitution in other places in Norway and of themes that frequently arise in the 'co-text' of prostitution in Finnmark (such as immigration, crime, morality, health, or Russians and Russia in general) are part of my material only when the Finnmark prostitution is explicitly referred to.[3]

I have studied the selected material through what Carol Lee Bacchi (1999: 8) has called 'the lens of a structuring question'. What is the problem of prostitution in Finnmark represented to be? Reading through the texts with this question in mind, I have thus arrived at a limited number of reccurring themes that seem to give partial answers to it. These themes are then placed into a larger thematic structure, which is in turn discussed as part of a discursive order. The main categories arrived at have all previously been used to delineate and describe prostitution or other social issues (e.g. Ryan, 1997; Hunt, 1999). Several categories, like 'disease' and 'public order', are even embedded in specific public institutions set up to address them. Although I have tried to keep an open mind to the material, my interpretations inevitably rest upon understandings and categories that I carry with me – both as an academic trained in the social sciences and humanities, and as a white, heterosexual male 'ethnic Norwegian'.

'THE FINNMARK PROSTITUTION' AND NORWEGIAN POLITICS OF PROSTITUTION

Only 16 relevant items were published between 1990 and 1995, and in most of them 'prostitution in Finnmark' was only a subtheme. The issue gained extensive national attention only in 1997, when local demonstrations took place at venues that were well-known for prostitution, and activists threatened to name the men who bought sex – or the 'whorecustomers', as they are commonly called in Norwegian. Neither selling nor buying sexual services is illegal in Norway, only different forms of pressure or financial gain by third parties: leading someone into or keeping someone inside prostitution, benefiting from other persons' prostitution, or renting out locations to such activities.[4] As local people in

Finnmark cried for public action, criminal law could therefore only be used if such forms of exploitation or organization existed, which turned out to be difficult to prove. It was then attempted to stop the activities more indirectly through other types of legislation.

One such attempt stirred the second upsurge of media interest, in early 1998, when a couple of Russian women were removed from Norwegian territory after having offered undercover policemen sex for money. The official reason was that these women did not have work permits. The removal was criticized in public for its Catch-22 approach to prostitution: no one would get such a work permit if they tried, since prostitution is not recognized as work. About a year later, in May 1999, removal due to lack of work permit was deemed illegitimate by the Norwegian Supreme Court. In a case where the police in Oslo had arrested and confiscated money from a Brazilian transvestite selling sexual services, the court judged that prostitution is not work and that police therefore cannot arrest or expel sex-selling foreigners for lacking work permits. Some weeks later, however, parliament amended the Alien Citizens Act to allow removal of foreigners from Norway if they disturb 'the public order', or if they are not convincing on the declared purpose of stay. These amendments were part of a general adjustment of Norwegian legislation to match the criteria of the Schengen Agreement, but in the committee report as well as in the plenary debate it was suggested to be applicable against Russian prostitutes in Finnmark (or 'the Russian whore traffic', as one MP put it).

Another suggested policy has been to follow the example of Sweden, where paying for (but not selling) sexual services was made illegal from January 1999. Such general customer criminalization was rejected in parliament in June 2000, when it was unanimously carried that such a measure should at least be postponed for two years, until possible unintended consequences from the Swedish experience were known. It was decided, however, to make the purchase of sexual services from adolescents between 16 (the age of consent) and 18 (the age of majority) illegal. The objections against customer criminalization in general were considered to weigh less than the need to protect this age group in particular. This specific criminalization was represented as being in line with the United Nations' focus on the sexual exploitation of children (defined as those under 18), as well as being in line with Nordic legislation: purchasing sexual services from someone under 18 is illegal in Finland and Denmark, as well as in Sweden.

There is no mention in the news reports of men in Finnmark being accused of buying sex from women under 18. However, there is a recent report (September 2001) on Norwegian men travelling to Murmansk, buying sexual services from 'children' down to 14 years old (which is the age of consent in Russia). This suggests that the effect of the Norwegian amendment, if any, has only been to relocate some of the activities. A

different approach, which has at least reduced the visibility, has been to apply legislation against infectious diseases to close down well-known venues of prostitution. In late 2000, a venue often referred to in the collected material (Tana Guesthouse), was closed 'for sanitary reasons'. Although prostitution apparently disappeared overnight, it has later been reported that Russian women still sell sex to Norwegian men in the area, but that it now happens in private homes.

In the following, I present and discuss some explicit portrayals of 'the Finnmark prostitution' and of its three 'main characters' (Pheterson, 1996): the prostitute, the pimp and the customer. The activities are not described in any detail, but either just referred to as 'the prostitution', or written about in economic terms as a 'trade'. As for prostitutes, most of the understandings fit under a general theme of 'deprived women'. There is less coherence about the images of pimps and customers, other than that they are men, and that they are more negatively portrayed than prostitutes are.

PROSTITUTION, PROSTITUTE, PIMP AND CUSTOMER

Except from a very few mentions of 'sexual intercourse', the newspaper items refer to the activities in question simply as 'prostitution'. Moreover, much of the terminology used implies an understanding of the prostitution as a transaction: it is referred to as 'selling and buying sex / sexual services', to 'offer sex', 'girl / woman / sex trade', 'the business' and 'the traffic' (or combinations like 'whoretraffic', 'sextraffic', 'womantraffic', 'prostitution traffic'). The women are almost exclusively seen as selling something ('themselves', 'their bodies', or 'their pussy'), and not as 'workers' doing a profession. In a few cases, the activities are described in less commercial terms, such as 'intimate meetings', 'cosy occasions', or 'physical / sexual contact', especially when prostitution is spoken of as one of several types of meetings between Norwegian men and Russian women.

In one thematization, prostitution is tied to some disturbance in the local sexual economy (see Shrage, 1994), and explained in functional terms or in market terms of supply and demand. First, there are references to local demographic imbalances between the number of men and women, caused by women having moved from the region in much greater numbers than men have. Second, men are seen as more 'sex-hungry' than women are. In both cases, the result is a level of male demand that exceeds the female supply. Russian women are thus understood as satisfying some of this demand, by providing Norwegian men with the sex, comfort and intimacy they've longed for. As one customer is quoted: 'They're poor, I'm lonely. We find together.' In this thematization,

prostitution is seen as a legitimate and relatively symmetrical transaction or as a functional solution to a local female deficit.

A central character in many of the texts on 'the Finnmark prostitution' is the prostitute, or the 'whore', as she is also called. 'Whore' is one of the most foul words that you can utter in Norwegian, and it is quite striking how it is commonly used as a synonym for 'prostitute', not only by journalists but also by quoted politicians, police officials, medical doctors and priests. Furthermore, 'whore' is repeatedly highlighted through combinations with other words (grammatically correct in Norwegian), like for instance 'whoremoney', 'whorecustomer', 'whorewar', 'whoretraffic', 'whore-buses', 'Russian-whores', 'whore-section' and 'whore-combating'. There have been some efforts among advocates of prostitutes' rights to reclaim the word, in Norway as elsewhere (Pheterson, 1996; Zatz, 1997), but these efforts have not had any significant impact and cannot explain its frequent use in these texts. 'Whore' is commonly used in daily conversation, as a noun or as an adjective ('whorish'), as an abusive term to and about women in general (men are not called whores). In fact, 'whore' is more frequently used by Norwegians in this general, derogative sense than about women actually exchanging sex for money, which makes its undisputed use in these texts as an apparently neutral description look rather peculiar.[5]

A reading of the text material shows some reccurring images of the Russian women who sell sexual services. All in all, the general impression given is that they are not 'professionals'. Rather, they are women of all kinds and ages that try to escape the harsh social and economic conditions in northern Russia after the breakdown of Soviet society. Some are portrayed as seeking permanent geographical escape through getting married to a Norwegian man, and others as doing it for the fast cash – either because they need it to support their families, or because they want to afford a little extra. Many of the mentions can be put under the general theme of economic deprivation: relative poverty in Russia, in comparison to its own socialist past and to its rich Nordic neighbours, causes the cross-border trade in sexual services. This theme of deprivation is a common denominator for various subthemes, which can be placed on a scale from determinism to free choice. At the determinist end, these women are understood as victims, exploited by men as pimps and as customers. They are forced or deceived into prostitution (or exploitative short-term relationships and marriages), due to their foreign status and/or their lack of social and economic power as women. In a slightly less determinist version, they are victims not of evil men, but of life's necessities: being unemployed and poor, they sell sexual services to survive and to provide for their families. Finally, in a less common thematization, the women are understood as individual entrepreneurs, as seekers of happiness looking for a Norwegian man to marry or for money and western luxury.

As for pimps, their presence is often presupposed in the news reports, without much confirmation. Since 'the traffic' started in 1990, neither police nor press has found much proof of pimping in the forms made illegal by Norwegian law. Arrests have been made on two occasions, the first one in May 1999, of a woman and a man, both Russians, accused of organizing prostitution but released after a few days. The second arrest was made in November 2000, of four Norwegian men, accused of renting out locations to prostitutes. These men were recently indicted, but to this date (4 December 2001) no judgement has been pronounced.

Finally, there are the customers, or 'whorecustomers' as they are usually called. Whorecustomer is, like 'whore', far from a positive term. Its use is, however, strictly confined to those paying for sexual services. In general, the men who pay for sex are more negatively portrayed than the prostitutes in the press material. First, there is the complementary image of the 'prostitute as victim of male exploitation', namely that the customers are irresponsible men without scruples who benefit from the women's difficult material situation. Second, these men are portrayed as second class, old and a bit pathetic, not being able to associate with women in a 'normal' way. As an MP was quoted as saying, they are 'not exactly the pick of the bunch of Norwegian men'. Some of the customers contribute to this image in their own voice. For example, one man is quoted saying that the Russian women have given him new dignity: he was never able to 'get' Norwegian girls. Now he cleans the house and looks after his clothes, and pulls a comb through his hair from time to time. There is, also, another voice in the news reports saying that the customers make up a diverse group; men of all ages, many of them married, and also young boys.

THEMATIZATIONS OF 'THE FINNMARK PROSTITUTION'

Through reading the material with the structuring question of 'What is this text about?' in mind, five reccurring thematizations of 'the Finnmark prostitution' have been identified. The first is about public order, the second about health, disease and (moral) pollution, the third about social and moral breakdown, and the fourth about (contagious) stigma. These four thematizations are all problem oriented, and I comment briefly on some general linguistic features (especially dysphemistic imagery) that add to their problem status. The fifth thematization is about possible benefits of Russian-Norwegian relations, and partly emerges as a critique of the various problem focuses.

A prominent thematization of 'the Finnmark prostitution', present in articles across the whole decade, is one where it is seen as a problem of public order. The sex trade is associated with illegal trades, especially in

alcohol and to some extent in drugs, and the focus is on organized crime – notably the Russian Mafia. It is assumed that the traffic in women is organized from the Russian side, and there is an expressed fear of Mafia expansion westwards. Some reports tell about organized crime being very limited in Norway, and about local police statements saying that the Finnmark prostitution is a social problem, not a criminal problem of much importance to the police. However, even in these reports, the notion of a Mafia invasion from the east is kept alive as a future possibility that should be feared. Furthermore, prostitution is often commented and written about *as if* it were a crime, even though it is not (unless initiated by, organized by or benefited from by third parties). Sometimes prostitution is listed alongside smuggling, trafficking and 'other' criminal activities, and the vocabulary used is often associated to criminal offences (e.g. 'evidence', 'upright intentions', 'suspected of', 'innocent', 'prove' and 'expose').

A second common theme in the news reports is disease. From the outset, there has been a voice of alert, reporting increasing numbers of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Russia (especially HIV and syphilis), and warning against their spread westwards. Some of the more dramatic phrases used are 'ticking venereal disease bomb', 'explosion of HIV' and 'Russian syphilis'. There has in addition been a more moderate voice, expressing that there is no reason to dramatize the situation, since no increase in STDs has (yet) been registered in Finnmark, but that prostitution nevertheless represents a danger in general. During the last two years there have also been examples of explicit rejection of the disease theme as irrelevant to the prostitution, and claims that the image of Russians as spreaders of disease is wrong and unfair. Several of these articles are based on a report from Norwegian health authorities issued in early 2000, showing that only five cases of Russian women infecting Norwegian men (four cases of gonorrhoea and one of syphilis) were registered during the previous six years. According to two more recent articles, however, several instances of syphilis and HIV among Norwegian men have been linked to Russian prostitutes.

When 'the Finnmark prostitution' became a national media issue in early 1997, it was first and foremost presented as an activity that seriously disrupts the normal social functioning of the local community. Since the scale is quite small, it is easier to get an overview of the sex trade than in a city, where prostitutes and especially customers can acquire some anonymity. In the local communities of Finnmark, it is apparently widely known who the men who buy sexual services are. According to the reports, the prostitution has thus caused suspicion, lies, floods of rumours, divided families and local communities, and harm to families, children and women. By extension to such social ills, there is also a theme of serious moral decay, where it is presented in an almost apocalyptic framework how a small community with solidly rooted good values has been 'raped', becoming a local

'Sodom'. One article tells about a mother and her children picking berries (in Norway this activity represents happy family life and innocent youth), finding condoms and empty liquor bottles in their way. All so-called good forces should mobilize to get rid of such evil, not least to save the decency of coming generations. There is also a subtler theme of moral pollution in the articles (see Douglas, 1966). Norwegians who buy sex are called 'dirty' and the prostitution traffic described as a 'social festering boil' or 'abscess', and a word like 'healthy' is applied to the local environment and to the 'normal traffic' across the border. Here hygienic and medical vocabulary is used in a metaphorical sense, where what is clean and healthy signifies the right and good, and the dirty business of prostitution, the wrong and evil.

The fourth and last problem-oriented theme that can be drawn from the material, is one where prostitution is ascribed an effect on 'innocent' people: non-prostitute Russian women travelling to or living in Norway, and children of Russian-Norwegian couples. People with Russian backgrounds are reported as being labelled as whores and shady characters, and exposed to mobbing, racism and violence. This problem is in turn used to argue for bringing prostitution to an end.

Many of these problem-oriented press items contain dysphemistic imagery (exaggerations) that associates the prostitution and Russian-Norwegian relations with crisis and disaster. The comments on prostitutes and/or Russians coming to Norway often imply a large and even threatening number, through the use of words such as flow, flood, wave, ocean, explosion, invasion, horde and swarm. Fear is expressed of a 'Mafia invasion' and of an 'explosion of HIV', and Russian buses 'filled' or 'packed' with women are reported to roll across the border 'every weekend', invading the 'small' Norwegian villages. One article even states that Finnmark is 'literally flooded' by Russians. It might be useful to see such imagery as part of a centre-periphery thematization, where small and idealized rural societies in a sparsely populated country are set in contrast to the supposed urban jungle and large population across the Russian border.

The fifth and last thematization identified from the newspaper material is different from the previous four, by its focus on commonality and possibilities rather than difference and problems. Russian presence in northern Norway is described as a colourful and pleasing phenomenon and as continuation of a long, pre-Communist tradition of trade relations, and Russian-Norwegian relations are understood in terms of neighbourliness. It is stressed that it was Russians who liberated Finnmark from the German occupation at the end of the Second World War. Themes from the negative thematizations are, furthermore, disregarded as rumours about Mafia, sex and booze, as fear of strangers, and as remnants of Cold War rhetoric. According to this 'good old neighbour' theme, the anti-prostitution activities result from an alliance between representatives of

the traditional Norwegian temperance movement and local storeowners eager to protect their businesses from cheap, Russian goods. The 1999 amendment to the Alien Citizens Act, making the removal of prostitutes from Norway possible if they disturb 'the public order' or if their declared purpose of stay is unconvincing, is criticized for being discriminatory, stigmatizing and even racist, and for only punishing the prostitutes. It is also argued that the restrictions on cross-border travel and business, which have been legitimated as a measure against Mafia expansion westwards, will only contribute to organized large-scale smuggling replacing the occasional bottle of vodka or pack of cigarettes. Moreover, an important reason for the prostitution traffic is held to be the lack of possibilities for Russians to earn money in less extraordinary ways, either at home or in Norway. Suggestions are made to open the border to trade, and to help women who sell sexual services to alternative careers.

The textual and co-textual categories discussed so far together form the most general parts of the thematic structure of the newspaper coverage of prostitution in Finnmark. Some of the coverage directly concerns the exchange of sexual services for money as well as its 'characters': prostitutes, customers and pimps. Furthermore, the prostitution is addressed through various links to other, more general themes, of which most are problem oriented. 'The Finnmark prostitution' is thus presented partly as sexual transaction, partly as a sociopolitical problem (of public order, health, social/moral breakdown, stigma), and partly as a symbolic issue used to legitimize stricter border controls. In the following I turn to the broader context of this thematic structure and discuss how the various local thematizations of the Finnmark prostitution are connected to discursive practices at national and global levels. Important elements in this discursive order are the oppositions between morality/immorality, Norwegianness/foreignness, normality/deviance and in-group/out-group. These oppositions are acted out through linguistic devices (such as categories, stereotypes and metaphors) and through the various thematizations, as well as through social institutions such as the police, the judiciary and the immigration authorities.

THE PROSTITUTION COVERAGE AS PART OF DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

Under the notion of discourse, these newspaper texts should be located historically and sociopolitically. For instance, it is not coincidental that the press coverage tends to focus on themes like public order and disease. There is a long history in Norway and elsewhere of sexual relations outside marriage being illegal (with interventions by police and the legal system), as well as of prostitution being approached as a public health

problem (with interventions by medical authorities). These discursive practices, embedded in institutions as well as in people's minds, structure much of today's thinking and acting around the issue of prostitution in Finnmark. The thematic structuring of the issue through text and talk, in this article shown on the basis of published newspaper material, guides and constrains the imagined political measures taken.

One of the most specific thematizations of the prostitution is one where it is understood as an economic transaction. Male sexual and/or emotional 'needs' as well as female economic 'needs' are postulated (see Shrage, 1994; Outshoorn, 1998), and sexual and economic capital is seen as exchangeable. In this discursive framework, the exchange of sexual services for money is seen as a free exchange between equals. Such a 'free contract' view on prostitution has been strongly criticized by feminist scholars for disregarding society-wide structural power asymmetries between men and women (Pateman, 1988). In the case of 'the Finnmark prostitution', there are additional problems to the contract framework due to the Russian women's foreign nationality. Large differences between Norway and Russia when it comes to living standards, and the different status of the Norwegian men as citizens and the Russian women as foreigners, create structural inequality between 'seller' and 'buyer', and increase the risks of 'structural coercion'.

The three variations of the 'deprived women' thematization of the prostitutes (victims of male exploitation, victims of tough transition to market economy and entrepreneurs trading in sex) roughly correspond to what is sometimes called radical, Marxist and liberal feminist frameworks on prostitution (Zatz, 1997). On a different level, these subthemes share the assumption that prostitution is caused by unequally distributed material resources, and that women would not sell sexual services if it were not for the inequalities between men and women and between Norwegians and Russians. Prostitution is not portrayed as an attractive or legitimate profession, as it is sometimes in film and literature and in news stories about young, beautiful women working as luxury escorts. The demand for criminalization of customers could furthermore be seen as the discursive extension of the 'prostitute as victim of male exploitation' thematization: men, being in a structurally superior position, must have their ability to exploit women (in this case Russian women) curtailed. On the other hand, criminalization in this field should be seen on the basis of a long practice of various kinds of sexual deviance, however understood through history, being regulated by law as well as by moral codes. As for the 'pathetic male image' of the customers, it corresponds, on the one hand, to traditional stereotypes of primitive men living in a rugged, outback country like Finnmark (the 'Wild West' of Norway). On the other hand, the image fits well with an understanding of prostitution as an activity for men outside relationships, which might seem less threatening than one

incorporating husbands, boyfriends and sons. Prostitution is thus placed somewhere else, among the socially and morally deviant.[6]

As for the discursive aspects of the various thematizations, focusing on 'public order' fits well alongside common assumptions about an ongoing criminalization of Russian society over the last decade, and alongside a long history of crime-oriented problematizations of prostitution and sexual activity in general (Hunt, 1999; Ryan, 1997). Defining and understanding something as a problem of public order furthermore opens the way for certain political strategies, usually involving legislative and law-enforcing institutions. For instance, two of the openly applied public measures against the prostitution, encouraged by the Ministry of Justice, have been the increased presence of uniformed police at prostitution venues ('good old traditional police work') and the videotaping of customers, to 'stress' the trade and thereby scare prostitutes and customers away. These are measures that probably would not have been the easiest to defend if prostitution were not *in fact* seen as a criminal activity, an implicit view that is seldom questioned in the news articles.

As has been pointed out in various studies of prostitution worldwide (Hunt, 1999; Pheterson, 1996; Ryan, 1997; Sullivan, 1997; Zatz, 1997), restrictive official policies have often been legitimized as health measures necessary to protect prostitutes, their customers or the public against the spread of STDs. The main focus has been on the spread of disease from prostitutes to customers, despite the clinical fact that STDs are much more easily transmitted from men to women than the other way around (King, 1990; Pheterson, 1996). It has, correspondingly, almost exclusively been prostitutes and not customers who have been subjected to various forms of control routines, for instance compulsory medical examinations (Outshoorn, 1998; Walkowitz, 1992). The disease theme has been especially prominent where some migration of either prostitutes or customers has taken place, which is relevant also in the Finnmark context.

The small number of traceable incidents of Norwegian men getting STDs from Russian women indicates that the frequency of disease as a central theme in the press material has been out of proportion, even when considering possible positive effects of the media's disease focus on customers' willingness to use condoms. This does not mean that paying for unprotected sex with a Russian woman cannot, statistically, be more risky for Norwegian men than having unpaid sex with a Norwegian woman. The seemingly disproportionate focus on diseases which, except from HIV, are easily curable nevertheless indicates that what is really of concern here is social and moral health, not medical health. Disease as a thematization of prostitution has for a long time been intertwined with medical discourse on sex in general (see Foucault, 1990). Medical discourse is furthermore intertwined with moral discourse, in the sense that some diseases (e.g. cardiac disease, lung cancer, cirrhosis and STDs) are to

some extent seen as resulting from 'immoral' conduct (usually lack of restraint when it comes to food, intoxicants and sex). As for the expressed concerns about social and moral decay, they belong to a discursive tradition including sexual morality laws that goes back a long time, covering issues such as pornography, birth control, homosexuality and extramarital sex. The argument for the protection of the young is an important ideological element in this tradition, frequently used to defend restrictive sexual morality (Hunt, 1999; Sullivan, 1997).

The focus on stigma and the possible mobbing of 'innocents' is another discursively interesting thematization, since it has an important function in the definition of in- and out-groups. It is striking how the noun 'mobbing' is used instead of the verb 'to mob', making agency impersonal and obscure. There are no accounts of 'the mob' under this thematization, and mobbing appears as a naturalized, background force that is released by the buying and selling of sexual services. The prostitution thus appears to be the direct reason why 'innocent' children and Russian wives and women are mobbed, which gives legitimacy to the strategy of doing away with prostitution – and not with mobbing as such or the stigma attached to prostitution. The thematizations thus imply, on the one hand, a division between people from Norway and from Russia, and on the other, a division between decent and indecent Russian women. As the Norwegian Minister of Justice is reported saying in June 1999, it is important not to stigmatize 'all' Russian women. It is thus not necessarily wrong to stigmatize *some* Russian women, i.e. those selling sexual services: the concern with innocents has a discursive contrast in the prostitutes as guilty.

Such a division between 'the innocent' and 'the guilty' can, with some variation, be observed in a number of fields. Within social theory the phenomenon is often referred to in Foucauldian terms, as 'dividing practices'. For instance, there is a long discursive tradition in welfare politics of distinguishing between 'the deserving' and 'the undeserving' poor, with consequences for the allocation of benefits (Hunt, 1999). Similarly, there is a common distinction in immigration politics between 'false' or 'fake' and 'real' refugees (van Dijk, 1993a), with consequences for who are allowed entry or prolonged stay in a country. Gail Pheterson (1996) has argued that, within sexual politics, an important such distinction goes between 'chaste' and 'unchaste' women, and that the prostitute is merely the prototype of the unchaste (and thus stigmatized) woman. The category 'unchaste', defined in a dictionary as 'indulging in unlawful or immoral sexual intercourse; lacking in purity, virginity, decency (of speech), restraint, and simplicity; defiled (i.e. polluted, corrupted)' (cited in Pheterson, 1996: 65), has a disciplining effect on all women. To avoid 'the whore stigma', women constantly have to convince others and themselves that they are chaste, decent, honourable and pure, and in the process their range of possible actions is constrained. Transferred to the

issue of prostitution in Finnmark, this perspective locates the stigma thematization within a discursive tradition that not only concerns prostitution, but also sexual conduct and constructions of gender more broadly. One can imagine how the question of who is a prostitute and who is not, inflicts on the lives of all women in Finnmark, and not only those with Russian backgrounds. The discursive structure of the prostitution forces women to position and defend themselves against the whore stigma, if they want to avoid social or (for Russian women) territorial exclusion.

The images of crisis and disaster observed in the material are well known from discussions of other issues. For instance, those in favour of strict (or stricter) limits on the number of refugees and immigrants often use such imagery. Dysphemistic lexical choices pave the way for authorities to legitimate stricter border controls, thus appearing to be the bulwarks and dams against the threatening hordes from the east. In this sense there are nationalistic overtones in the newspaper coverage. There is also a nationalist side to the discursive tradition where vice and disease is said to be coming from abroad (Hunt, 1999). Crime, disease and illicit sex are all associated with 'the Other', that is, the Russians. In Norway, as in many other countries, there is a strong discursive tradition of seeing 'foreigners' as more criminal, as a greater health risk and (for those 'foreigners' living in Norway) as a larger burden on public budgets than 'Norwegians'. Within this self-understanding, Norway is a tranquil oasis in a world of violence, disease and poverty. An important institutional element of this discourse is to restrict or survey border crossings, which to some extent has also been done when it comes to 'the Finnmark prostitution', thereby trying to expel the alleged troublemakers – Russian women – from Norwegian territory.

On another level, several of the perspectives in the articles can be seen as part of larger social processes of defining normality and deviance. For one thing, associating prostitution with crime and disease puts it in a category of deviance. Second, prostitution is seen as the deviant activity that causes disturbance to the normal social and moral functioning of the local communities. Third, the concern with stigmatization of 'innocents', the non-prostitutes and children affected by 'the whore stigma', and not with stigmatization and mobbing as such, has to do with defining the border between normality and deviance. An implicit effect of defining the prostitution as deviant is to normalize traditional 'romantic' relationships between men and women, based on love and affection instead of financial transaction. Of the main characters, it is above all the customer who is seen as deviant, either morally (he is a cynic taking advantage of poor women) or socially (he is a failure at having 'normal' relations with the opposite sex, and he lives a rural life). The normality / deviance framework seems to be relevant also for the prostitute, but in a different way. Here the discourse is more one of material inequality, and her activity is understood

as an economically rational strategy given her material situation. This would probably have been different in comments on Norwegian prostitutes, who might have been understood more in terms of individual pathology (e.g. drug addiction or childhood sexual abuse). Maybe such individualized explanations are held less relevant for Russian prostitutes, if they are basically seen as members of an outsider group, whose behaviour results from its defining properties (being Russian and poor).

CROSSING BORDERS

Discursive frameworks are important because they constrain the possible answers to the question of 'What is the problem?' and thereby structure political strategies. If the issue of prostitution in Finnmark is thematically linked to problems of lawlessness and disorder, disease and excessive border crossing, it is at the same time linked to the established institutions for dealing with such problems, that is the police and the judicial system, health authorities and border control. It is also important that these institutions are commonly understood as non-political, in the sense that most people take for granted that they represent a general public interest. Measures directed against Russian women or Russians in general thus appear necessary or natural, and therefore relatively uncontroversial.

'The Finnmark prostitution' involves border crossing in the specific sense of crossing the Russian-Norwegian border. It also involves more abstract senses of crossing borders between intimate relationships and economic transactions, between moral and immoral conduct, and between the clean or healthy and the unclean or unhealthy. Concerns about transgressions of socially established borders, common to thematizations of prostitution in many other contexts as well, are central to much of the newspaper coverage. The great differences in living standards across the Russian-Norwegian border, combined with the reversal of the more common rural–urban exchange pattern, nevertheless make 'the Finnmark prostitution' a rather special case (Larissa Remennick's [1999] study of 'women with a Russian accent in Israel' shows some parallels). According to recent reports, as many as one in four marriages in Finnmark as a whole, and even one in two in some of the eastern municipalities, now take place between a Russian woman and a Norwegian man. There are, consequently, probably extensive overlaps between prostitution, arranged marriages and 'normal' relationships, something that is also mirrored in the news reports' portrayal of the Russian women as 'non-professionals'. If this portrayal is correct, 'the Finnmark prostitution' should be approached differently, both politically and academically, than organized trafficking of Eastern European and Third World women to locations elsewhere in Western Europe. As a suggestion for

further research, it could be useful to broaden the focus to cross-border interaction between women and men in general, and to include Russian points of view. It might then be possible to get beyond some of the negative discursive frameworks around the prostitution issue, and thereby obtain sociologically better understandings of the situation in this area after a decade of increased border crossing.

NOTES

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1. For general introductions to CDA, see Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard (1996), Fairclough (1995a), Fairclough and Wodak (1997), Titscher et al. (2000), and van Dijk (1993b). For news analyses in particular, see Fairclough (1995b) and van Dijk (1988a, 1988b, 1991, 1993a).
2. 'A-tekst' is a service of *Aftenposten*'s information centre. It includes all edited material by the selected papers, and should therefore be fully representative of the printed editions (except when it comes to layout and photographs). The following search string was used: '(prostitution OR prostitute OR whore OR sexsale) AND (Russia OR Northern Norway OR Finnmark)'.
3. A comparison of press coverage of 'the Finnmark prostitution' with press coverage of other instances/types of prostitution might indeed have brought an interesting dimension to the analysis. I have nevertheless chosen to dedicate this article to the prostitution in Finnmark exclusively, since it represents a much less common type of prostitution in a western setting than for instance drug-linked street prostitution or city-based organized trafficking of women from poor countries. Moreover, a practical reason for restricting the data material to texts referring explicitly to prostitution in Finnmark is to keep it within manageable limits. For instance, substituting the second part of the search string, 'Russia OR Northern Norway OR Finnmark', with 'Russia OR Norway', increases the number of hits from 413 to 2522.
4. Until recently it was also illegal for a man to live off a prostitute's earnings. This section passed into law in 1963, as a measure against pimping. It was repealed on 13 June 2000, however, when it was argued that it was too far-reaching since it could be used against men who were close to the prostitute but who did not function as her pimp.
5. These two applications of 'whore', in a narrow sense about women who exchange sex for money and in a wide sense about women in general, should be well known from languages other than Norwegian, for instance English and French. In *The Prostitution Prism* Gail Pheterson (1996) elaborates on the practical consequences of the extensive use of the whore label and what she terms 'the whore stigma' attached to it, not only for prostitutes but also for migrating women and women in general.
6. According to Carole Pateman (1988: 190), about three-quarters of prostitutes' customers (presumably in Australia, the UK and the USA) are in fact married

men. In a Norwegian study from the 1980s, prostitutes in Oslo reported that the customers are 'ordinary men', and that the typical one is married and middle-aged (Hoigard and Finstad, 1992). Similarly, a more recent study from Britain finds that customers represent 'a mainly British, white, married and employed group of men with an average age of 39' (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997: 130). Barbara Sullivan (1997) has written about changing images of customers in Australian society. During the 19th century, prostitution was seen as inevitable, due to a large male surplus whose sexual needs were taken for granted, and even desirable, due to the imagined dangers of leaving those needs unattended (for instance homosexuality and sexual crimes). Men seeing prostitutes were thus considered to be perfectly normal. After the Second World War, however, customers were increasingly seen as deviant according to Sullivan. It was assumed that 'normal men' no longer needed access to prostitutes, due to the increased availability of non-married, sexually active women. Prostitution thus came to be seen as an outlet for sexually and/or socially deviant men. In her recent study on prostitution and trafficking in Greece, Gabriella Lazaridis states that, in the Greek context, there is 'hardly any moral stigma attached to men for consorting with "prostitutes" '. Her explanation is that men's sexuality is regarded as stronger and more natural than women's sexuality, and that Greek women until recently have been strongly discouraged from expressing sexual desires (Lazaridis, 2001: 76). The general conclusion that might be drawn from the Norwegian, Australian and Greek examples is that the dominant image of men seeing prostitutes seems to depend less on how one perceives male heterosexuality (in all three countries there is a strong tendency to see male sexual needs as stronger and more natural than female sexual needs), than on how one thinks it can be satisfied through marriage or other non-commercial sexual encounters with women (see Ryan [1997: 30–2], on 'functionalist approaches within sociological discourse').

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