

Working in the European Sex Industry

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Migrants who come to work in the European sex industry are of every class, colour, age, ethnicity and nationality, and they are not only women but men and transgender people as well.¹ They arrive via uncountable routes—alone, with friends, in couples or in accompanied groups. Some have money to spend, others arrive indebted. Their documentation may be true or false; some arrive with tourist visas. Many of these people have planned their trips personally over a long time, while others have been presented with an opportunity with little time for planning. Some of these potential travellers had already worked in prostitution in their own country. The great majority, agree sources from all over the world, have understood that their future work will either be prostitution directly or will have a sexual aspect. That is, they have opted for doing sex work.

Before going on I would like to point out that the subject of this essay is not to try to explain why prostitution exists, looking for its causes; nor is it to define or judge it within any theoretical framework such as feminism, postmodernism etc. Nor am I going to identify which groups or individuals are found more in this industry and how the involved migratory networks function. Above all I will not be dealing with the question of whether any human being can really ‘choose’ how he works, whether in prostitution or anything else.

I begin with the fact that many migrants doing sexual jobs do *not* describe themselves as ‘forced’ or without other options in life. They may have fewer options or fewer agreeable options than other people, but they have them. It is also important to point out that among those who suffer from poverty, bad marriages and the entire array of possible causing factors, *not all* opt for sex work, as not all opt to migrate. No type of determinism can explain completely the human phenomenon of choice. Every choice is intervened by questions of class, gender, ethnicity, economic level and the social conditions at the moment in their country (war, dictatorship, famine, violence, unemployment etc).

Migrants act inside these geopolitical and economic structures and dynamics. The ‘underdeveloped’ countries suffer from the well-known policy of ‘structural adjustment’ imposed by the International Monetary Fund. The feminisation of

¹The term transgender brings together all possibilities among transvestites and transexuals, whose appearances may appear masculine, feminine or ambiguous. The work intergender is also used. Current studies of sexuality avoid classic assumptions: in the case of prostitution the automatic assumption is that they are women.

poverty and migrations exists. Moreover, opportunities seem to be diminishing all the time, even for people with university degrees. However, within all this, migrants take actions and decisions motivated by the desire to live better. These are life-decisions they *take* when they uproot themselves from their homes, considering themselves brave and adventuresome, including when the future implies sex work.

While the majority of sex workers is female, increasingly they are men, transgenders and boy and girl children. Sexual services are desired also *by* women and transgenders, and not only by men. In an industry characterised by its ambiguities, it is better not to perpetuate the classical assumption of woman-prostitute/man-client. I will speak in neutral terms whenever possible.

Migrants more than once

These migrants play a transnational role within globalisation processes. Studies of migrations between, for example, the Caribbean and the 'first world' describe the powerful mentality of transnational migrants: the conviction of a Jamaican of the 1950s that London was his 'capital' the effort that migrants from Nevis make to conserve the island as their 'country' though they live in Brooklyn; the great capacity to exist in two places at once of 'dominican yorks' (Hall, Fog Olwig, Guarnizo and others). Businesses engaged in charter flights, messenger services, long-distance phone calls, Internet and electronic transfers of money have much to tell us about these phenomena.

The fact of having a job in the sex industry does not take his transnational role away from a migrant. Moreover, migrant prostitutes are a special phenomenon: It is normal for them not to settle in one place to live. They continue migrating, or, rather, they continue travelling. The sex worker you encounter today in Madrid you may find tomorrow in Paris, next month in Amsterdam and a year later in Spain again. And this is not solely the result of efforts to avoid police controls; there exists a culture in which people want to get to know Europe and which people have their preferred places. Although they are often poor and illegal, many travel in a cosmopolitan fashion.

The European press almost always presents the subject of these trips in terms of deceived victims. In this essay the subject is those who have chosen, inside their possibilities, for a trip 'arranged' for a Some have chosen arranged jobs also; they have actively searched for opportunities in their home countries. There are those who have searched for them as well, to sell them trips and jobs in Europe: in this group are agents (known by a variety of names, from empresarios and travel agents to *coyotes*, *snakeheads*, and tourist boy- and girl-friends who have met them during their vacations, as well as family members and friends. When these travellers feel deceived, it is usual for them to complain of the labour conditions they have to accept at their destination. Frequently they have signed a contract without understanding the extensive surveillance and little liberty that it implies. That is, someone who is familiar with a few kinds of prostitution in his own country (for example, dancing with clients

in a bar and having sex with two or three in one night cannot know beforehand how he is going to feel standing nude in a window in Amsterdam for twelve or fourteen hours a day, or standing next to a road in the Casa de Campo in Madrid). These are forms of prostitution which can be described as 'industrial'.²

We are already talking of prostitution as work.³ What does this work consist of? First it is necessary to ask: Which?

The sex market

A large sex industry exists in Europe. This term includes brothels, some clubs, bars, discotheques and cabarets, erotic telephone lines, virtual sex via the Internet, sex shops with private cabins, many massage parlours, saunas and other places for the development of 'physical well-being, escort services, some matrimonial agencies, many hotels, pensions and flats, commercial and semi-commercial announcements in newspapers and magazines and in small forms to leave or put up (like postcards), pornographic cinemas and rental videos, erotic restaurants, services of domination and submission and street prostitution: an immense proliferation of possible ways to pay for a sexual or sensual experience.⁴ It should be clear, then, that what exists is not 'Prostitution' but a great variety of different sex jobs.

The word prostitution may impede our understanding that there is a sex *market*, distract us from the *demand*—that is, the diverse desires of those who are looking for sexual services. A few years ago, an article in *El Mundo*, a Madrid newspaper, was called "Un millón de hombres al día va de prostitutas" ("A million men a day visit prostitutes"); it was speaking only of Spain. (Hernández Velasco 1996). This number surely did not attempt to include all the forms mentioned above within the sex industry. Though no one can ever know the total and correct numbers, this one is impressive. It must be remembered that they will not be the *same* men who go every day: there will be those who go once a week and others more or less, with a total much larger every *year* who look for sexual services in Spain. And they look for different services, because they are people of every kind, age, economic level, ethnicity, region

² Sex tourists speak of this difference this way: while in Europe prostitutes value efficiency and speed, in the 'third world' they take more time with the client, they give more services and they appear to become more involved. This would be a pre-industrial, perhaps 'craftsman' form.

³ Not as 'vocation' or 'profession', which might imply more intention.

⁴ The terms for these services vary from place to place. Migrants come with their own terms, in various languages, which mix and produce hybrid forms.

⁵ There are those who call themselves *sexoservidoras* (sex-servers, perhaps) en México.

⁶ Some people speak of the disgust or sadness they feel when they clean bathrooms or bodies. Many experience 'emotional' dangers when they work as live-in maids, living in situation with families who are not their own.

and taste. *Migrants are clients, also.* Clients are homosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals and women, also.

This means there are many and diverse opportunities to work in this industry. For migrants who find their other options disagreeable, difficult or badly paid (cleaning, domestic service, caring for old or sick people or children), finding a place in the sex industry may turn out to be worthwhile. Since often their papers are not all on the up-and-up, or since their work permits (for example, as a domestic) may be based on falsified documents, working in a world full of irregularities may not appear too risky. Those that come looking for a better life in Europe may have to begin in a situation in which they do not feel comfortable; as with all jobs, the first year is the most disconcerting. In this case, what often matters is not leaving the industry but changing for a different situation inside it.

If we look at the description of what constitutes the industry, we find possible jobs as a telephone worker, in which the client is not even seen. Or as a striptease artist, which in many places involves dancing nude and nothing more. Even if we talk about 'full sex', it isn't the same doing it for a pornographic film as in a brothel (or, for example, with clients of sexologists). Obviously, they are different jobs, some carried out in bars, others in houses, offices or examination rooms. In some the worker controls the situation and the hours more; in others he lacks control. Some are well paid, others not. Some services seem easy to perform to some people, while to others they seem difficult. The boss or owner of the place may be the most important element in some jobs. In short, everything depends on the specific situation.

It's the same if we look at the many forms of physical/sexual contact, of *servicing* the client.⁵ Obviously, performing oral sex on a client in a car or in an alley in the rain is not the same as spending a shift inside a club with heating, where you talk and have drinks as well as sex with clients. We can however point out some necessary abilities for carrying out these jobs well, that is, in the most efficient and less problematic manner. In general terms:

- The essence of the work is giving pleasure to others. He who doesn't want to or can't do this, no matter how good-looking he is, will fail. The client wants to feel some kind of pleasure.
 - As in other service work, the ability to relate to others is very important. To know how to listen 'actively', negotiate, encourage, read the body language of the other, sense what is *not* said and the psychology of the other. To judge when the other is *not* all right (and not to confuse this with physical appearance). Capacity to smooth situations and calm violent people, confronting or manipulating them. Also necessary for those who work over the telephone.
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- Ability to relate to and come to appreciate people from other cultures or ethnic groups or with values different from one's own. Diplomacy. Clients may be rejected, but income is lost. Being able to imagine the situation of the other, as much through what he wants to hide as through what he shows. Understanding more than one language.
- Knowing oneself well is extremely important in sex work. Knowing how to use the body sexually and how to take care of oneself, minimising infections, strains and exhaustion, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. It's necessary to know when one is tired or with little desire to work, because states of neglect often lead to danger. Self-esteem is essential.
- One needs a lack of shame about the body, whether one's own or others'. To be able to talk about sex, show sexual things. A good sense of humour helps.
- As with the jobs of nurses and stewardesses, it is essential to give the client the sensation that he really is desired, that giving him pleasure or taking care of him matters. This is also necessary for cultivating a loyal clientele, one that comes back.
- Often the client wants to talk about his life: problems in his marriage, with his children or at his job. He may have lost his wife or need counseling. The ability to satisfy this type of desire or to want to help to resolve the problems of others is part of sex work. Sometimes this kind of attention matters even more than sex to the client.
- Knowing how to put limits, control what happens and protect oneself from excessive demands. Being able to maintain boundaries with client, who may have many emotional needs.
- Knowing how to sell is key, including over the telephone and in written messages (electronic mail, chat, mobile phones). Seduction is an art that few command, which helps explain the high status of courtesans and geishas in the past. Nowadays transsexuals are those most famous for knowing how to seduce.
- For people who work on their own or have a business it is fundamental to know how to manage funds: keep track, accounting, taxes and investments. Knowing how to negotiate, decide on prices.
- The ability to manage, to organise and oversee a business is necessary in whatever level the worker works. Working freelance can be done successfully only by someone with the self-discipline to evaluate his efforts and manage his time.
- When one is employed in someone else's business, one needs the talent of being able to please the boss or owner as well as the client, who often demand contrary things (for example, to the boss it matters that the work is done rapidly, while the client wants more personal attention.)

- If one dances or performs, it's essential to stay in good shape and good health and act with confidence. Knowing how to take advantage of one's own good points. Knowing how to dress and make up according to the situation.
- Much of sex work is performance: it's necessary to know how to present oneself, project oneself and play roles. An example: the stereotype exists of the 'passive' Asian women; thus for an Asian woman knowing how to play the passive role may be a key talent. If one works in domination or submission, one needs to know how to create scenes, act, involve and convince the client. Knowing how to flirt.
- The client to whom services are offered is not necessarily of the same gender or 'sexual orientation' as the worker wants for his own partner. Thought of another way, the worker's personal taste does not have to match what he does at work: a lesbian can work with men, a heterosexual with gays, a transsexual with heterosexuals, a homosexual man with women and so on. In the world of the sex industry one finds flexibility and ambiguity in terms of tastes and desires; binary visions (like masculinity/femininity or passivity/activity) stop being very useful.
- Since it's a market, one needs the ability to compete, create new services and change with the times. Inventing new ways to make money, using new technologies and trying to match services to desires.
- Sexual knowledge is fundamental to carry out the work. Knowing how to stimulate bodies to produce pleasure, delay or precipitate orgasms, judge the sexual capacity of the other. Moreover there are many tricks that make the job easier for the person who knows them: put condoms on without clients' realising it, feign penetration and many others. Often it's necessary to teach principles of sexual health to improve the client's experience: masturbatory techniques, self-control of permitting oneself 'forbidden' acts. It's important to point out that not every client is the confident man of the machista stereotype; many feel shy, ashamed or incapable. There are prostitutes who specialise in therapeutic services with disabled people. As for education to avoid sexual illnesses, being able to convince clients that they can enjoy sex with condoms is an important talent.
- One can choose the services one wants to offer, whether oral or manual sex or vaginal or anal penetration. The worker decides. Moreover, in times of 'safer sex', less 'classical' forms are being accepted, such as mutual masturbation.
- Being able to offer massage, reflexology and other therapies offer more possibilities to make money.
- If one works in the production of pornography, there is the possibility of learning techniques of photography, rodaje, video, etc. Si se trabaja en la producción de pornografía, hay posibilidad de aprender técnicas de fotografía, de rodaje, de video, etc.

- If one works via the Internet, one needs knowledge of computers, e-mail, chat, databases and the construction of webpages.
- If one becomes a supervisor or even owner of a club or agency, one learns to deal with the necessities of the personnel, encouraging them to work well.

The above list (which will never be complete) summarises useful abilities for working in the European sex industry. In other cultures the industry has other facets, so the work may require other abilities. In Japan, for example, there is work as a hostess at bars where groups of men who work in the same company come to spend the evening with their boss. They spend their time talking and joking, with the goal of relaxing with the boss, something which is prohibited inside the company. The woman's job is to be there, light cigarettes, make sure that glasses are always filled and encourage the men to feel good. For those clients, making sexual commentaries about the women allows them to feel good. Clients do not ask for other services; this is done in another kind of place. (Allison 1994).

In the city of Nairobi during the colonial period (into the 1960s) a common form of sex work consisted in a woman setting up a house and offering domestic services to migrants from the countryside. The migrant could request that his clothes be washed and ironed, that food and teas be prepared for him and that the woman slept with him. He could sleep in the house as well. Women charged for each service separately (White 1990). This phenomenon occurs in many parts of the world where there is a masculine migration living in rented rooms without domestic facilities (or they without domestic knowledge). Around them arrive people to sell them domestic and sexual services.

And that's just the beginning; the possibilities are infinite. Keep in mind that if these forms are not well known in Europe, those that come from other continents do know them. It's always possibility that they will combine some of these customs with what is usual here in sex jobs. Many times one notices in conversations with prostitutes that concepts of prostitution, or of sex work, or of *work* itself or of *sex* do not mean the same to everyone. Often there are confusions when 'westerners' seem to see *only* sex in these jobs, while migrants don't experience them that way.

Work conditions for migrants

When 'migrant prostitutes' are mentioned in Europe it's automatic to think that their only option is 'the street', a stereotype well reinforced by the press with its eternal photos of women talking to men in cars. For personal reasons, some migrants do prefer to do street prostitution. However, many others consider it better to be in clubs, flats or less visible places than the street (or than central bars) where they are less exposed to the public gaze. When they are more controlled by entrepreneurs, these also may prefer prostitutes to work inside and in more anonymous places, such as highway clubs. Moreover, it's been demonstrated in numerous studies that the street proportion of prostitution isn't even a fourth of the total

Another stereotype is thinking that there are only two possibilities: either being free or being semi-enslaved. Instead, there is a wide range of states between the two extremes. Among people who work on their own, some have ‘pimps’ and others no. Many give money to a girl- or boyfriend freely, as many men do to their partners or spouses. There are families who share flats and income and friends who work together. There are people under contract to work in clubs who have scarcely any life outside, sometimes they are even moved around from place to place without being consulted. However, some of these go along with this situation because they save more money that way and feel safer. Others are truly trapped. It’s essential to talk about specific situations.

Labour advantages

What labour advantages can sex work offer? First, flexibility: one can work full-time, part-time or occasionally, which makes it convenient to many mothers. It can be a second job. In the case of street prostitution, it is one of the few ways to make money, buy food and take it home the same day; also the place of work may be chosen, either close to or far from home. It is work that can be tried and left if it isn’t liked; if it suits it may be the path to independence. Many sex jobs do not require formal training or education. These are advantages characteristic of the ‘informal sector’ in general, where migrants have the possibility of being beneficiaries as well as natives. Many migrants point out the opportunities that the work offers to ‘see the world’ and meet Europeans; also that they don’t feel as alone as in other jobs.

The usual assumption is that the migrant is going to be in the lowest rung of any industry, but they are found at all levels of the sex industry. Moreover many migrants do have formal training, even university education. If they are students in Europe, the work may be a way to pay their way. As in every job, the worker has more chance to choose, control and move up after being in the business a certain amount of time and finding his preferred level, always depending on his individual capacities. It’s a period of apprenticeship, perhaps of a year.

Migrants may also enjoy some advantages within the industry, where their phenotypes make them more exotic—perhaps more exciting—to some Europeans. If they know how to take advantage of this, it could give them more or better clientele. It’s also possible that migrants have more willingness to work with migrant clients, of their own or other ethnicities. And it’s possible that that willingness gives them a niche within the market, in some times and some places. In the case of transgenders, the fact of having ‘different’ bodies, equipped with organs of both sexes, gives them a clientele that is looking exactly for this ambiguity.

Labour disadvantages

The worst of the labour disadvantages of sex work is its clandestine character. Labour protections do not exist: neither contracts, nor benefits, nor social security nor the

unions to demand them. Since the industry isn't legal in itself, almost everywhere (although the bars, clubs, restaurants, agencies etc are), its workers with few exceptions do not receive some of the most basic social services, such as police protection, even when they are raped, robbed or coerced. In this situation, the boss or owner of the business has the freedom to impose any unjust condition on his employees, and if they protest they may simply be dismissed. It is common for the employees of massage parlours to say that the boss watches over them too much, or that they don't have the right to reject clients they don't like. In exotic-dance bars, the complaint is often of overly long shifts with little time to rest.

These commentaries are heard as much among migrants as among natives, with the further aggravation that they are even less likely to lodge a complaint or claim labour rights while they lack basic permission to earn money in Europe. In research carried out in many countries, the most common complaint concerns the abuses of the *police*, that they carry out raids only to fulfill their necessities to show a certain number of arrests, that they blackmail prostitutes and coerce them into giving sexual services free, that they persecute foreigners, or blacks or transsexuals. Prostitutes complain much more about the police than about clients or 'pimps'.

It would seem that the worker lives through a process of 'apprenticeship' during which he is more exposed to rapes, beatings and robberies; later he has learned to avoid or manage problematic clients. Working in couples, for example an older or more experienced person with a younger, may help during this learning process. However, given the lack of police protection, the possibility of violence from clients always exists.

Another important disadvantage is the difficulty of maintaining a healthy emotional state of mind. Many prostitutes feel guilty of having sinful relations; others describe a great weight on their heart. About the sex itself, many say they 'don't feel anything' when they are with clients, while others feel disgust, fear, loneliness or sadness.⁶ Since they enjoy no police protection, they are exposed to all kinds of deceit, confusion, danger and problems. Despite the fact that the worst does not always occur, preserving a positive state of mind is a great challenge.

Ambiguous jobs

Domestic service is considered one of the jobs that can *lead* to prostitution. Live-in domestics share intimate situations with families who are not their own; they care for children and old or sick people; they have little privacy of their own. They are in the house in the morning, when family members get up, and at night, when they go to bed. Some have sexual relations with someone in the family, through coercion or out of loneliness, love, desire or to obtain advantages, benefits or some extra money. Some domestics also do sex work in another place, as a second source of income. Of course, many domestics have none of these experiences. It's better not to think that there's a

clear dividing line between domestic service and sexual service. Here exist many ambiguities.

The same is true of matrimonial agencies of the type 'mail-order brides'. Some arrange conventional marriages; there are people satisfied to have found their spouse this way. At the same time, some agencies use the same techniques to 'sell' people to others that sex businesses use. Many women are married fairly straightforwardly to do domestic/sex work, that is, to carry out the role of 'traditional' wives, which leads to the common marriage between a 'first world' man with a 'third world' woman. Authentic disasters happen in these situations, but successes occur as well. Many women married through agencies reject the label often given them of 'poor victims'.

In many studies of prostitutes, evidence demonstrates that there does not always exist a clear line between work and client, on the one hand, and love and lover, on the other. That is, a commercial aspect may coexist with feelings of love or affection. Since this can present as many advantages as disadvantages, I don't include it in either category. Some workers feel confused, others enjoy the confusion.

With the exception of people who feel they have a 'vocation' for sex work, migrants now working in the industry almost always say it's temporary. Many leave the industry and return later. Whether they like the work or not, the majority don't *identify* themselves as prostitutes or sex workers. Again we find ourselves in equivocal situations, in which the desire to 'get everything clear' doesn't get us anywhere. Questions asked to migrant sex workers such as if they like being prostitutes or why don't they leave prostitution may receive strange answers. It's possible that they don't consider themselves prostitutes. Or that, since the situation is temporary, it doesn't matter so much. Or that when they see pained faces on those asking the questions they prefer to say anything but the truth. Once the questioners have left, someone always comments that when people say one is victimised and miserable as a prostitute one has certainly never had to clean public toilets or had to suffer the sexual harassment that goes along with a lot of domestic work—the jobs supposedly more dignified than prostitution.

For those who can only imagine feeling disgust at doing sex work, it would be a terrible choice. It turns out that this is not the universal reaction; or that 'disgust' is only one component or moment among many, some neutral or positive. Looked at that way it's like every other job in the world.

For those looking for statistics

It isn't useful to divide this industry by country. If there are still typical characteristics in any particular country, there are many more that are shared among all countries. The European market enjoys high-quality telecommunications and transport networks as well as the incomplete but still extensive policy of 'open borders'. Everyone agrees that the sex industry has grown impressively, but quantifying it is difficult: What it is that has to be counted, exactly? The income of

sex-business owners? The number of people employed in *all jobs* related to the industry [ie, the person who takes you to the place by taxi, the person who takes care of your car, the person who brings your drink, the person who watches the door, the person who accepts your money, the person who cleans the place]? Shouldn't one include also those who produce the necessary 'tools' of the trade such as clothing, makeup, hair products and wigs, drinks, food, cigarettes and condoms? Any why not then the lawyers who arrange contracts and closings and every kind of permit, the accountants, the doctors who perform check-ups on the employees and those who rent rooms by the hour?

The International Labour Office [ILO] has published statistics on Thailand which indicate that of a total of 104,262 employees in 7,759 establishments where sexual services could be bought, 64,886 people sold these servicios while 39,376 were 'support personnel', a term which includes owners, managers and go-betweens/procurers. More than a third of the employees then were not sex workers but *they live because of the industry* (Lin Lean Lim 1998).

Almost always the intent is to count only the number of sex workers, but this doesn't give very trustworthy or comparable data either. Given the 'irregular', criminalised, undocumented or stigmatised nature of the industry, each project of counting prostitutes has counted a different way. For example, one cannot compare the statistic "23% (412) and 14% (117) of women with visas to work as dancers in Switzerland were from the Dominican Republic and Brazil" (International Office of Migrations) with that of "75% of foreign prostitutes in Germany are from Latin America and the Caribbean" (AGISRA—Arbeitsgemeinschaft Gegen Internationale Sexuelle und Rassistische Ausbeutung). One cannot even compare their methods of counting.

A study of the TAMPEP project (Transnational AIDS/STD Prevention Among Migrant Prostitutes in Europe Project) offers statistics on the percentages of migrants among prostitutes in European countries. The numbers are very schematic, since they come from participating projects that have not used the same methodology for counting, that don't all have the same type of contact with prostitution (many for example know only street workers, or only people who use certain health services), who don't speak all the languages necessary to communicate with all the migrants or who operate only in big cities. Also, we know that asking a migrant personal details about his life does not assure a true response. On top of all that, since the lifestyle of these migrants is to move a lot, counting them by country is of temporary usefulness.

The statistics of the percentage of migrants among prostitute populations are: 90% in Italy, 25% in Sweden and Norway, 85% in Austria, 62% in the north of Germany and 32% in the south, 68% in Holland and 45% in Belgium. The Spanish number of 50% includes only street prostitution in Madrid (Tampep 1999). Since 1997, when the last study of this kind was done, the percentage of migrants in the sex industry has increased in all European countries.

Labour proposals related to the sex industry

The report published by the ILO in 1998 (*The Sex Sector*) recommends the inclusion of the sex industry in official government accounting. The ILO believes that the recognition will mean enormous contributions to regional and national economies in terms of taxes and sales of permits, but also that this is the only way to improve the situation of those who are employed as sex workers. If governments recognise the sex sector, they will be obliged to extend labour rights and protections to the people who work in it. In the case of the four countries of the report (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand), the recognition of the sector would improve the lives of between 800,000 and a million people who receive payment for sexual services.

Although the ILO report is based on research in the industry in countries of Southeast Asia, it warns that these, rather than having a worse problem with prostitution, are 'illustrative' of a global phenomenon. The ILO's proposal is highly pragmatic, centred in labour matters. Nowadays, Holland is the country which pays most attention to the matter of 'legalisation' of sex businesses, in search of the situation which does least harm to the employees. Holland's new law permits and regulates the functioning of brothels in the same way as other businesses, with the goals of legalising the organisation of voluntary prostitution and increasing the penalisation of the organisation of involuntary prostitution (via violence, force, coercion or fraud and with minors). Since the law allows the details to be decided by municipalities, there may be differences from place to place. The situation is improving for thousands of sex workers but not for 'illegal' migrants, who continue working without labour protections.

Although Germany has a system in which sex workers 'register', work legally and pay taxes, they do not receive normal labour benefits such as social security. Germany is now in the process of changing over to a model such as the Dutch, in which prostitution will be recognised as work so that the workers can receive labour rights and equal treatment before the law.

Abolitionist proposals do not have the intention of improving the *labour* situation of prostitutes. The new Swedish law criminalises the client, tending to push him to seek sexual services in less visible spaces. As happens with police raids, when the business goes into hiding, the worker may run more risks.

Systems of 'sanitary regulation' usually concentrate on enforcing medical checkups and tests of the workers, stigmatising them as 'sources of contagion' of sexually transmitted diseases. Some regions of Germany still impose frequent checkups. I do not label this proposal as 'labour', because it has been clear for two hundred years that the goal of this type of regulation is not to care for the health of the worker; on the contrary, it blames him for illnesses that can never be transmitted without the participation of two persons—one of these, the client.

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