

COST Action IS1209 Prospol meeting Zagreb - September 2016

Programme

Sunday 18th September 2016

2.00 – 5.30: Core Group meeting [Core Group members only], location: *tbc*

Monday 19th September 2016

Location: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Trg Marka Marulića 19 (<http://www.pilar.hr/>)

10: Registration opens

10.30 - 11.30: Management Committee meeting [MC members¹]

11.30 – 12.00: Tea and coffee

12.00 – 1:00 Management Committee meeting [MC members]

1.00 – 2.30: Lunch [all Action members invited to meet for lunch]

Location: Ribice i tri točkice, Preradovićeve ulica 7 (<http://www.ribiceitrockice.hr/>)

2.30 – 2.45: Welcome and overview

2.45 – 4.45: Plenary session

Keynote by Susan Dewey (University of Wyoming, USA):

‘Ethical Sex Work Research: Engaging Practicalities, Crafting Possibilities’

Followed by four short interventions by Prospol members: Stef Adriaenssens (KU Leuven), Isabel Crowhurst (University of Essex), Lorraine Nencel (Vrije University Amsterdam), and Paul Ryan (Maynooth University).

4.45 – 5.15: Tea, coffee and cake

5.15 – 6.00: Open discussion

8.00: Dinner: Restaurant, Vinodol, Ul. Nikole Tesle 10 (<http://www.vinodol-zg.hr/>)

¹Non-Management Committee members are welcome to join the MC meeting as non-participant observers

Tuesday 20th September 2016

Location: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science, Lepušićeva 6 (<http://www.fpzg.unizg.hr/>) 2nd floor

10.00 – 11.30: Two parallel sessions on:

‘Sex work and exploitation’ [room C] and ‘Sex work and old/new technologies’ [room D]
(more info below)

11.30 – 12.00: Tea and coffee

12.00 – 1.00: Continuation of the two parallel sessions

1.00 – 2.30: Lunch (provided by ‘Taste of home – a Kitchen run by Refugees’)

2.30 – 4.00: Two parallel sessions on:

‘Sex work and neoliberalism’ [room C], and ‘Sex work and human rights’ [room D]
(more info below)

4.00 – 4.30: Tea, coffee and cake

4.30 – 6.00: Book launch session (with Julia O’Connell Davidson’s and Lilian Mathieu’s short talks on their new books + Q&A)

8.15 – 10.00: Screening of documentary Straight A’s and Q&A with director Dana Budisavljević (more info below). Location: Multimedia institute, Preradoviceva 18 (MaMa: <http://www.mi2.hr/en/>)

Wednesday 21st September 2016

Location: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Trg Marka Marulića 19 (<http://www.pilar.hr/>)

10.00 – 12.00: Panel on prostitution policies in Croatia

12.00 – 12.30: Tea and coffee

12.30 - 1.15: Final plenary session for Action members

1.15 - 2.30: Lunch at Apetit city Restaurant & Bar, Masarykova ul. 18 (<http://www.apetit.hr/index.php?lang=EN>)

Plenary session, Monday 19th September 2016

Keynote by: Susan Dewey

Associate Professor, Gender & Women's Studies, University of Wyoming, USA

Ethical Sex Work Research: Engaging Practicalities, Crafting Possibilities

Abstract

Most social, behavioral, and biomedical scientists agree that ethical research comprises a set of norms that sanction or condemn particular types of conduct, procedures, and perspectives in the process of research design, analysis, and sharing results. Yet national, university, and discipline-specific ethical parameters often elide the fact that such decision-making in sex work research is often situational and constituted by the gendered cultural systems that undergird law and policy implementation. Globally, five major ideological frameworks surround the regulation and management of transactional sex: state, quasi-state, harm reduction, grassroots human rights organizing, and faith-based. These five frameworks, all of which impact sex work research, operate through selective implementation of legal statutes, distribution of funding, and reinforcement of prevailing sentiments toward sexual labor.

Researchers working within these frameworks face ethical challenges related to socio-political and institutional gatekeeping, mutual mistrust generated by fraught yet enduring ideological silos, and under-acknowledged academic, sex industry, and policy hierarchies. Socio-political and institutional limitations on meaningful, long-term collaborative partnerships between sex workers and researchers undermine and even sabotage the potential for empirical inquiry that could inform evidence-based law and policy. Fraught socio-legal and prevailing moral stances on sex work force researchers, sex workers, and other concerned parties into ideological silos which complicate and even undermine the establishment of sustainable trust and rapport relationships as well as possibilities for social change-oriented dialogue. In academic, sex industry, and policy or services provision circles alike, socioeconomic hierarchies that regard particular institutions, sex work venues, or approaches as more prestigious or enlightened can replicate the exclusionary forces their members purport to contest. Fortunately, carefully designed projects can overcome these challenges through critical engagement with the conditions and actors through which socio-legal and ideological regimes shape the design, conduct, and results of sex work research. Conveying sex workers' diverse perspectives and experiences on their own terms remains a political act, as research findings do not always correspond with state law or policy and may even indicate the need for significant socio-legal and political change. In this and myriad other ways, engaging or participating in sex work research requires courage, fortitude, and, above all, a willingness to speak the truth to power.

Parallel Sessions, Tuesday 20th September 2016

Session on: 'Sex work and exploitation/ Exploitation Troubles'

In 'standard' debates on prostitution, activists and feminist/queer scholars often counter the radical feminist claim that female prostitution is always and necessarily exploitative by emphasizing the agency exercised by adults working voluntarily in the sex sector. Employing the term *sex work*, they stress that this is a form of earning actively chosen above other available options by most of those who sell sexual services. Though the stress on choice and self-determination offers an important counterweight to radical feminist analyses of prostitution (and the wider social stigma that attaches to it), it does not provide an easy starting point from which to address questions about labour exploitation within the sex sector. In this workshop, we aim to consider the particular and thorny definitional and political problems that talk of 'exploitation' in sex work presents. We aim to consider the variety of ways in which the concept of 'exploitation' is and could be operationalized in policy and activism around sex work; discuss the legal and conceptual problems surrounding terms such as sexual exploitation, consent, violence; and – drawing on workshop participants' knowledge and experience of different regulatory regimes - ask whether and how being legally constructed as 'self-employed', or 'employed', or as actor in a criminalised market, or as victim of criminality (as in the Nordic model) limits or opens possibilities for resisting/challenging exploitation.

The workshop will open with a talk by Katie Cruz, University of Bristol, titled 'Theorizing Exploitation in UK Based Sex Work: Towards a Materialist Feminist Theory and Politics'. With brief introductory remarks from Lorraine Nencel, Ine Vanwesenbeeck, and Julia O'Connell Davidson, the **second half of the workshop** will be structured around the dilemmas for sex worker rights activists and researchers surrounding talk of:

- 1) Exploitation and sex work research
- 2) Sexual exploitation
- 3) Labour exploitation

Session on: 'Sex work and old/new technologies'

- 10.00** Welcome – Chair Rosie Campbell (University of Leicester, United Kingdom)
- 10.00 – 10.25** 'The sex industry in Slovenia on the web: between oligopoles of organizers and powerlessness of sex workers', Dr. Mojca PAJNIK and Dr. Iztok ŠORI
- 10.25-10.50** 'Webcamming: what happened when Gyorgy Gattyan crossed the path of radical feminism', Rachel Stewart (PhD Researcher, University of Kent, United Kingdom).
- 10.50-11.15** 'Clients digital interventions: rating, blaming, caring', Nelli Kambouri Senior Researcher, Centre for Gender Studies, Panteion University, Athens Greece.
- 11.15-11.30** Questions for all presenters & discussion
- 11.30 – 12.00** Tea and coffee
- 12.00 – 1.00** Continuation of the two parallel session
- 12.00-12.25** 'Using internet data to model prostitution transactions and economic value of sex work in the Belgian economy' Stef Adriaenssens & Jef Hendrickx (KU Leuven, Faculty of Economics & Business, Belgium)
- 12.25-12.50** 'Online sex work & issues of safety/privacy in the UK: introducing 'Beyond the Gaze' & sharing some initial findings'. Rosie Campbell (University of Leicester, UK) & Stewart Cunningham (University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom)
- 12.50-1.00** Questions for all presenters & discussion

The sex industry in Slovenia on the web: between oligopoles of organizers and powerlessness of sex workers (10.00-10.25am)

Presenters: **Dr. Mojca Pajnik** and **Dr. Iztok Šori**, The Peace Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Abstract: This presentation is based on research findings obtained within the project MIG@NET - Transnational Digital Networks, Migration and Gender (<http://www.mignetproject.eu/>) and examines the sex industry in the online environment in Slovenia, which has not yet been the subject of research. The complexity of the sex industry is recognized as an intersection of various forms of sex work, from prostitution to dance, striptease, escort services, erotic massage, Internet services. Marketing strategies and their effects on the sex industry, especially on sex workers, and networking of organizers, clients and sex workers are analysed. We aim to show the role of information and communication technologies in the organization and representation of sex work, and consider particularly the questions of gender relations, inequalities and power distribution. Findings are based on the analysis of 44 websites, obtained with the method of web crawling, which comprises the majority of Slovenian sex industry on the web. Features of the sex industry are also examined with a more detailed analysis of two prominent online actors in this field in Slovenia (Sloescort and Zavod 69), above all of their networking with other actors, but also organization, functioning,

content and representational strategies. The analysis shows that the organizers and clients of the sex industry in Slovenia use a variety of online tools for marketing and promotional purposes, and that their use and representational strategies reinforce commodification and stereotypization of sexuality and women working in the sex industry. Also, the analysis reveals oligopolistic positions of power held by the organizers and clients in relation to (especially female) sex workers.

Webcamming: what happened when Gyorgy Gattyan crossed the path of radical feminism (10.25-10.50)

Presenter: **Rachel Stewart**, PhD Researcher, University of Kent, United Kingdom.

Abstract: The development of the internet has seen the evolution of a form of sexual commerce that straddles both pornography and prostitution. Performing via webcam offers the visually explicit content of pornography while supplying the customer focus and interaction that is generally associated with prostitution. (Jones 2015a, 560). The feminist discourse around victimization which has dominated the perception and legislation of other forms of sex work is currently missing from the discourse that surrounds webcamming. The lack of radical feminist discourse that has attached itself to webcamming as a form of sexual commerce maybe because it lacks an immediately apparent victim. A victim whose “injured identity” has been identified by Burton (1998, 338) as central to radical feminist campaigns to abolish prostitution and pornography. More critically academic literature has been too ready to accept the notion of ‘injured identity’ when examining forms of sex work. The study of webcamming provides an opportunity to explore how women experience a mediated form of sexual commerce that has yet to attract the “helping gaze” of radical feminism. Balanced research of webcamming provides the opportunity to challenge what Bathes (2009) has described as the myths which he claims that bourgeoisie ideology creates in order to adapt an historical representation of the world. In this case that women in the sex industry are always victims, in need of rescue and who have turned to sex work as a last resort. I wish to explore these notions in depth at the presentation.

Clients digital interventions: rating, blaming, caring (10.50-11.15am)

Presenter: **Nelli Kambouri** Senior Researcher, Centre for Gender Studies, Panteion University, Athens Greece.

Abstract: The paper explores the discourse used by participants in a clients' website (www.bourdella.com) focusing in particular on the ‘processes of evaluation of sex workers' performance, style and body description. The aim of the paper is first to address the invisibility of sex workers themselves in the production of this discourse, second to analyse the ways in which this digital production is made possible in the legal framework for prostitution in Greece and third the diversity of client users digital interventions ranging from degrading and offensive comments to caring and poetic descriptions of sex for money.

Using internet data to model prostitution transactions and economic value of sex work in the Belgian economy (12.00-12.25pm)

Presenters: **Stef Adriaenssens** & **Jef Hendrickx**, KU Leuven, Faculty of Economics & Business

Abstract: Probably this is stating the obvious: **compared to mainstream academia**, prostitution research has to overcome more difficulties. The problem we will focus on in this contribution, is the data problem: gaining access to what is actually happening in commercial sex. As an informal and sometimes even illegal phenomenon, with strong social stigma attached, data collection is at best toilsome. There is a broad consensus that the internet altered prostitution profoundly for its participants. At the same time it also allows for new ways of data collection and analysis. More in particular we will illustrate how a combination **of internet and classical** sources of data can help to get a more complete and reliable insight into the world of commercial sexual exchange.

We show an empirically informed measure was developed of the economic weight of prostitution in Belgium. The aim of the estimate was inclusion of turnover and added value of prostitution in the Belgian national accounts. The starting point is a set of traditional sources of information (observations) in one locational and visible segment of the prostitution market: window prostitution. These elements were then combined with 'big data' from the internet. The internet helps to generalize this segment benchmark to transactions in other segments (such as brothels or escort services). This allows for a consolidated estimate of turnover in prostitution in Belgium.

Online sex work & issues of safety/privacy in the UK: introducing 'Beyond the Gaze' & sharing some initial findings (12.25-12.50pm)

Presenters: **Rosie Campbell**, University of Leicester, United Kingdom, **Stewart Cunningham**, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom.

Abstract: In this presentation we will introduce 'Beyond the Gaze' the largest study to date of the working practices, safety and regulation of internet sex work in the United Kingdom. We will overview the methodology being adopted and the progress to date of this significant three year participatory action research project which is just entering its second year. We will reflect on the transforming impact which online & digital technologies have had in the UK on sex work. Whilst acknowledging a continuum of use, knowledge, skills and preferences regarding online and digital tech amongst online sex workers we observe how our initial research findings show that digital technology is mainstream for the majority of sex workers in their daily work. We will flag issues identified in initial findings relation to privacy and safety, highlighting 'new' types of crimes experienced by online sex workers facilitated through digital technologies such as text, email and social media harassment and the concept of 'doxing'.

Session on: 'Sex work and human rights'

In this panel we will discuss the relationship between human rights and prostitution policies and practices. We will start by introducing the controversy of using human rights arguments when talking about prostitution, and examine how they have been used by the different camps, and in particular what meaning sex workers ascribe to the human rights values of dignity, autonomy and equality. We will then examine human rights implications of different prostitution policies, and why decriminalisation is the most supportive of the human rights of sex workers. Finally, we will talk about different concrete human rights violations under different regimes, and how those could be addressed through the human rights system.

Panellists are: **Luca Stevenson**, ICRSE coordinator, **Stewart Cunningham**, co-chair of SCOT-PEP, **Marjan Wijers**, human rights lawyer, **Catherine Murphy**, Amnesty International, and **Ivana Radačić**, senior research associate at Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences Zagreb (chair).

Session on: 'Sex Work and Neoliberalism'

Organized by Jenny Künkel

Presenters:

Susan Dewey: *"Workin' It: Ways of Hustling, Advocating, and Getting Things Done Among U.S. Criminal Justice-Social Services Alliance Professionals"*

Abstract: Governmentality takes on new forms in what I articulate as the criminal justice-social services alliance, which positions itself as a punitive-therapeutic partnership between U.S. law enforcement agencies and state, municipal, or independent non-profit social services entities that police or otherwise regulate women involved in street-based sex trading and illicit drug use. Such policing and regulation relies on an interventionist discourse that positions the women's decision-making as the product of traumatic interpersonal encounters rather than the exclusionary socioeconomic realities that frame their lives. Drawing on five years of Denver, Colorado-based participant observation, interviews with over 100 street-involved women and dozens of alliance professionals, and subsequent fact-checking as a staff member at a transitional housing facility, this paper explores how alliance professionals' workplace cultures and personal subscriptions to particular ideological frameworks impact their everyday interactions with U.S. street-involved women.

May-Len Skilbrei: *"Is 'agency' a neoliberal construct?"*

Abstract: In the last 10 years I have done research among women who have experiences that fit the legal definition of human trafficking. In writing up this research, I have aimed at striking a balance between representing how outcomes have been restricted by global and local inequalities on the one hand, and how the women represents themselves as free and choosing individuals on the other. As in all interview-based studies, and in life in general, notions about the self and characteristics of proper personhood impact on the ideals we apply and how people account for their experiences. The balancing of structural inequality and personal choice is important also in prostitution policy debates. In this paper I will describe and discuss how 'agency' and 'choice' is made relevant in such debates.

Lilian Mathieu: *"Framing abolitionism as an anti-neoliberal struggle: the case of France"*.

Abstract: I will examine how the contemporary French abolitionist movement mobilises anti-neoliberalism frames in order to define the alleged growth in prostitution as related to globalisation processes and denounce it as a commodification of women's bodies. This is mainly due to the fact that old catholic abolitionist organisations have recently privileged alliances with left-wing feminist groups and with anti-globalisation movements (such as Attac). However, this anti-neoliberalism is limited and selective, as it never integrates its effects on work markets, on zero-tolerance ideology or on welfare, urban and migration policies. It also tends to assimilate sexual liberalisation and economic liberalism in a global denunciation.

Session outline: Sex work and Neoliberalism

Admittedly, neoliberalism is a fuzzy concept. As a political *process* the neoliberal project is necessarily undergoing change. What is more, neoliberalism has been studied from multiple theoretical perspectives. Marxist perspectives stress the extension of market relations and the accumulation of dispossession as a crucial direction of neoliberalization processes. Foucauldian perspectives add an emphasis on changing subjectivities, not least via responsabilization. Assemblage approaches remind us of the incoherence and instability of the multiple neoliberalisms experimented around the globe. The different perspectives have sometimes been characterized as incompatible, and some scholars have even gone so far as to abandon the concept altogether. This session takes a different approach. It asks how the different theoretical perspectives contribute to a better understanding of the changes that prostitution discourses, policies, markets and working conditions are currently undergoing.

The session starts from the observation that sex work is curiously positioned with regard to neoliberalism. On the one hand, it seems that sex work is strongly affected by neoliberal policies at different scales. In many countries of the Global North, labour market restructuring and austerity policies in conjunction with altered migration regimes contributed to a risen supply of sex work, not least of street prostitution, and accompanying processes of market restructuring within the sex industry. Entrepreneurial urban politics have grappled with such an increased visibility of prostitution. Neoliberalizing cities often addressed the most noticeable forms of sex work with zero tolerance while normalizing only small parts of it within the landscapes of gentrification and a supposedly tolerant creative class. What is more, policies addressing sex work itself have been analysed to carry neoliberal elements, not least a responsabilization with regard to disease prevention.

On the other hand, sex work is arguably the least neoliberalized institution. Around the globe, hegemonic prostitution policy discourse stresses de-commodification – and this is quite at odds with the efficiency, competitiveness and performance orientation emphasized with regard to other sectors. Anti-trafficking and neo-abolitionist discourses push for criminal laws to prevent exploitation. Such discourses follow the liberal logics of criminal law, and fail to address the underlying processes of precarization that foster the sex industry's role to absorb the reserve army of labour. Against the background of diminishing social security systems and blocked access for certain groups of migrants, the stigmatized industry more and more serves as a "net" for labour released from other sectors of the economy. Therefore, neo-abolitionist calls for a criminalization of the demand-side of prostitution as well as those trafficking discourses that normalize precarious jobs beyond the sex industry have been interpreted as legitimizing neoliberal labour market restructuring and the accompanying turn towards "adult worker" model of family.

However, while the popularity of the neo-abolitionist “Nordic Model” has been explained by its close fit with neoliberal state policies, the – quite contrary – New Zealand model of prostitution regimes (often discussed as “decriminalization”) is also sometimes considered to dovetail nicely with the dominance of neoliberalism since it promotes a normalization of sex markets. Abolitionist scholars and activists have sometimes even criticized any notion of prostitution as “sex work” as “neoliberal”. The latter argument is certainly unfounded where it criticizes nuanced scholarly analyses that include a critique of labour or where it paints over all sex work activism with one brush, rather than distinguishing more anti-capitalist strands of activism from those that are largely rooted in liberal discourses of civil rights and market consent. Nevertheless, it does seem worthwhile to explore possible neoliberal tendencies even within our own research and activism. For it seems that – at least in countries with regulationist prostitution regimes such as Germany – the rise of neo-abolitionist voices is related to a silence of sex work activism regarding the deterioration of working conditions in parts of the sex industry in neoliberal capitalism.

Several scholars have addressed certain aspects of such different ways in which prostitution and neoliberalism intertwine. However, the above sketched contradictory trends and discourses are far from fully understood. Competing interpretations remain, and they cannot be explained by different theoretical or political positions (e.g. abolitionism vs sex work; Foucauldian vs Marxist) or by the contradictions of neoliberal market rationality that promotes both sexual liberalization and the carceral/workfare state alone. The session therefore aims at a better understanding of the entanglements of sex work and neoliberal restructuring, while at the same time paying attention to not stretching the concept of neoliberalism into meaninglessness or misusing it as a word to bash any unwanted development or as a signifier

Documentary screening Tuesday 20th September 2016, 8.15 pm

Made with a lot of passion and subtle humor by **Dana Budisavljević**, award winning Zagreb-based producer and director, **Straight A's** is a documentary about Lidija Šunjerga, a Croatian woman who moved to Amsterdam at the age of 19, worked there as a sex worker for 15 years and then returned home, facing numerous challenges. More information available at: [http://factum.com.hr/en/films and authors/all films/straight a s](http://factum.com.hr/en/films_and_authors/all_films/straight_a_s)

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the director Dana Budisavljević.

Panel on prostitution policies in Croatia Wednesday 21st September 2016, 10 am

The panel will discuss Croatian prostitution policies, their implementation and effects on sex workers' lives. It will be attended by **Dr. Ivana Radačić** (Ivo Pilar Institute of Social Sciences), who will give an overview of Croatian policy and legislative framework on prostitution, **Branka Žigante** (Judge of the High Misdemeanour Court), who will give an overview of judicial practices of the High Misdemeanour Court, **Dean Savić** (Head of the Organised Crime Department), who will give an overview of prostitution markets, statistics and police work, **Dr. Aleksandar Štulhofer** (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), who will talk about his research on the risk of STDs for female sex workers, **and an activist** who will discuss the consequences of Croatian prostitution policies on the lives of sex workers.