

An assessment of Gunilla Ekberg's account of Swedish prostitution policy

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Vincent Clausen

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*Abstract: Gunilla Ekberg's account of Swedish prostitution policy is frequently referred to in debates worldwide, and it is thus forming part of the basis of knowledge upon which strategies and approaches are discussed and constructed. It is therefore of increasing importance to make an assessment of the validity of the specific assertions made in Ekberg's article. This article is an attempt to make such an assessment. Eleven specific claims have been selected, and each of them is analysed with regard to reliability of the sources used, the specific utilization of those sources, and the overall function thereof in Ekberg's account. This article shows that inferior material is used as evidence in Ekberg's article, and in a number of cases the findings of reports and other sources have been distorted. Ekberg frequently draws conclusions that are directly contradicting or otherwise in conflict with the evidence in the sources used. This article argues that Ekberg's article should be seen as a political manifesto, rather than an attempt at accounting for the effects of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services.*

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In October 2004 *Violence Against Women* brought an account of the Swedish experience of criminalising the purchase of sexual services.¹ This account, *The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services*, was authored by Gunilla Ekberg.² Until late 2006³ she was a civil servant in the Swedish Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Division for Gender Equality. Her position was that of special advisor on issues of prostitution and trafficking in human beings. She is also a former coordinator of the Nordic Baltic campaign against trafficking in women.

Swedish prostitution policy is attracting international attention, because of the unique approach of the Swedish government. The policy on prostitution in Sweden is one of criminalisation. However, as opposed to international precedents of criminalisation, the Swedish law is specifically

¹ I wish to thank the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) and Sian Kilcommons for their kind assistance and comments on a draft version of this article. I also wish to thank the staff at the State and University Library, Aarhus, Denmark, and the staff at Malmö City Library, Malmö, Sweden, for their assistance during research.

² *The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services* in *Violence Against Women*, vol. 10, no. 10, October 2004. This article should not be confused with *The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of A Sexual Service: Best Practices for Prevention of Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings*. The latter is an updated version of the previous article, published in 2005.

³ The information service at the Swedish Government Offices has explained (January 9th 2007) that Gunilla Ekberg is at present no longer employed with the Division for Gender Equality (or any successor institution), her employment had ceased less than three months earlier. By December 6th 2006 she was "a former advisor to the Swedish government" (see Catherine Rolfsen: *How Do We Protect Sex Workers?*).

criminalising the *purchase* of sexual services. Offering sexual services is not subject to criminalisation. This law was adopted in 1998 and went into effect January 1st 1999.

In the years following the adoption of the law, there has been an urge internationally for an evaluation of the Swedish approach. In her article, Gunilla Ekberg draws up an account of the Swedish experience. Ekberg attends various conferences and hearings abroad. Her article is frequently referred to in debates worldwide, and it is thus forming part of the basis of knowledge upon which strategies and approaches are discussed and constructed.⁴ It may be claimed, that it is therefore of increasing importance to make an assessment of the validity of the specific assertions made in the article.

The present article is an attempt to make such an assessment. This article will not develop an evaluation of the Swedish strategy towards prostitution. The principles behind the Swedish law will not be discussed. The present article will focus on the justification of specific assertions made by Gunilla Ekberg in her account of the Swedish experience.

Ekberg's perspective

Initially, Ekberg draws up the principles behind the Swedish approach. After this initial paragraph, Ekberg's article sets out to explore the effects of the law, thereby providing an assessment of the outcome of the Swedish strategy, in the context of the principles behind it. We should therefore first of all examine Ekberg's perception of these principles.

According to Ekberg, prostitution reduces women involved in commercial sex to commodities.⁵ Prostitution is seen as a form of sexual violence, regardless the circumstances.⁶ It follows that these commodified women, subject to sexual violence, constitute an exploitable category of human beings, who are thus not entitled to enjoy the same measures of autonomy and dignity as others.⁷ Our focus should therefore first and foremost be to assist women involved in commercial sex in leaving prostitution.⁸

Prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes "[...] are seen as issues that cannot, and should not, be separated [...]"⁹. Ekberg does not explain clearly why it should be stressed, that these issues should not be dealt with separately. However, as the autonomy of all women in prostitution has been curtailed, prostitution and trafficking are apparently not fundamentally different in nature.

After having illuminated the violent aspects (or nature) of prostitution/trafficking, Ekberg goes on to comment on the concept of legalization. Ekberg argues, that we should be opposed to legalization, because such measures impose a juridical framework, with which the exploitation of

⁴ As of January 7th 2007, Ekberg's article (either of the two versions) was uploaded on at least six home pages, apart from that of the original publisher: CATW's home page (URL: <http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/Ekberg.pdf>), Melissa Farley's home page (URL: <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/EkbergVAW.pdf>), home page of the Government of New Foundland and Labrador (URL: <http://www.gov.nf.ca/vpi/conf2005/day1/b/D1B501.pdf>), the home page of Women's UN Report Network (URL: http://www.wunrn.com/news/02_05_06/020906_seden_prostitution.pdf), Kvinnefronten's (Norwegian feminist organization) home page (URL: http://www.kvinnefronten.no/Tema_politikk/Vold_mot_kvinner/1714/Gunilla_Ekberg.pdf) and Balder Mørk Andersen's (Danish political personality) home page (URL: <http://www.baldersf.dk/wp-content/uploads/GunillaEkbergomdensvenskelov.pdf>).

⁵ Ekberg 2004, p. 1188-89.

⁶ Ibid. p. 1189.

⁷ Ibid. p. 1189.

⁸ Ibid. p. 1189.

⁹ Ibid. p. 1189.

the subcategory of marginalized women can be controlled.¹⁰ Thus, Ekberg concludes, that the strategy of eliminating prostitution/trafficking all together through criminalisation is preferable.

Ekberg argues, that had there been no demand for commercial sex, there would be no market for commercialised sex (i.e. prostitution) either.¹¹ This, in combination with the concept of criminalisation, produces the principle, that the purchase of sexual services should be criminalised.¹²

It should be noted that the linking of each of the positions into the above ideological formula is largely *implicit*, rather than explicit. This means that the justification for the overall line of reasoning is left for her readers to judge.

Eleven specific claims examined

Ekberg's account is only in part a study of empirical evidence. Much of the article is a presentation of ideological positions. References to policy documents and empirical evidence is scattered throughout the article. We will now examine some of the specific assertions made in the text. For convenience, these assertions will be grouped in five themes.

In some instances Ekberg is referring to specific reports etc. as the source for the information she presents. In these cases, Ekberg's claims will be compared to the content of the sources specified. Special attention will be given to the nature of the sources used by Ekberg. In other cases Ekberg does not specify any sources. In this situation, and when the sources indicated are unpublished, the plausibility of the claims made by Ekberg will be discussed in the context of other research in the field, which was available at the time of the publication of Ekberg's article.

The list of controversial claims presented here is by no means considered to be a complete list. Especially in a number of cases where no source is indicated, and where the sources consist of 'personal conversations', priority has not been given in the list below.

Quotes from Swedish reports and other sources will be provided in abundance. First of all, this will hopefully make it easier for the reader to make an independent judgment. Secondly, some sources will be quite troublesome to obtain for non-residents of Sweden. It is the hope of the author of this article, that the quotes and translations provided will be useful to the reader.

Theme A: Reshuffling the markets for prostitution?

Claim no. 1 and 2

"It often takes many years after a law is enacted until the norm expressed in that particular law is firmly inscribed in a society. The Law in Sweden has been in effect for 5 years. During that time, street prostitution has declined in all parts of the country, and the majority of the prostitution buyers have disappeared."¹³

"From 1999 until today, the number of women involved in street prostitution has decreased by at least 30% to 50% [...]"¹⁴

In both instances, no source is indicated. The reduction in the number of buyers in street prostitution is described in the first passage as if it was an outcome of some moral or normative effect of the

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 1190.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 1189.

¹² Ibid. p. 1191.

¹³ Ibid. p. 1209.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 1193.

law. Actually, the police have been systematically intervening in street prostitution, the only prostitution arena that can be effectively monitored by the police. Predictably, the police have reported a dramatic decline in the number of prostitution buyers in street prostitution after criminalisation. As Ekberg asserts:

“[...] the number of buyers [in street prostitution] has decreased by 75% to 80% [...]”¹⁵

It is definitely correct, that the number of women in street prostitution has declined.

The figures in the second passage roughly correspond with estimates in a report issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare in June 2004. According to this report, the reduction in the number of women involved in street prostitution should be about 40%.¹⁶

By presenting these developments in the context above, Ekberg suggests that supply and demand, and thus prostitution overall, has diminished as a result of criminalisation. One of the controversial issues is, however, whether this decline in both supply and demand sides in street prostitution after police intervention should be interpreted as an overall decrease in the prostitution market, or it should be seen as a reshuffling and reorganization of the prostitution markets. In other words, that prostitution has moved from an arena (street prostitution), which is monitored by the police, to arenas that cannot be effectively monitored.

One other (frequently neglected) point should be made here. The fact that a number of individual persons have left prostitution entirely does not in itself testify to an overall reduction in prostitution. Individual persons have always entered prostitution at one point in time, and left prostitution sometime later. Some are entering and leaving prostitution consecutively. This point does not apply to street prostitution in particular, but to all prostitution arenas.

Conclusion. When speaking of street prostitution alone, rather than prostitution overall, it is correct to say, that there has been a decline. It is, however, misleading to describe this decline as if it was an outcome of some moral or normative effect of the law. By evading the discussion of ‘decline’ or ‘reshuffling’, Ekberg suggests that the developments in street prostitution reflect a new moral awareness, and an overall decrease in the supply and demand side.

Claim no. 3

“[...] the recruitment of new women [in street prostitution] has come almost to a halt”.¹⁷

It is not clear what the source for this information is. Street prostitution occurs in three cities in Sweden: Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. According to a report issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare in June 2004, the number of women involved in street prostitution in Stockholm and Gothenburg has stabilised, while there has been an increase in Malmö of an estimated 69 % since 1999.¹⁸ While it is true to say, that the number of women in street prostitution in Sweden overall has decreased since the law went into effect, it can hardly be claimed, that “[...] the recruitment of new women has come almost to a halt”.

Conclusion. It is not correct to say that the recruitment of new women in street prostitution has come almost to a halt. Also, it is not clear which source is being used.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 1194.

¹⁶ NBHW 2004, p. 23-26.

¹⁷ Ekberg 2004, p. 1193.

¹⁸ NBHW 2004, p. 25.

Claim no. 4

“There is no evidence that the sale of women has moved from the streets to the Internet [...]”¹⁹

The source indicated is a series of annual reports on prostitution, issued by the Stockholm county police, 1991-2002. These reports are not published. One report issued by the National Board of Health and Welfare finds that:

“There is also information from authorities and police districts asserting that other types of prostitution [other than street prostitution] have increased, such as Internet-mediated prostitution and prostitution in apartments and restaurants/hotels.”²⁰

“The majority [of the key informants] believe that many [street prostitutes] have moved to other arenas and modes of contact, such as the Internet and mobile phones. A number of prostitutes have gained a stable clientele and therefore do not need ever to be present in the street.”²¹

It is pointed out that factors other than criminalisation should be taken into account, such as the popularization of the Internet and mobile phones. Comparable developments were observed already in 1998 (i.e. before criminalisation).²² Thus, the increase in Internet-mediated and other forms of indoor prostitution may or may not be an effect of the new legal situation. Likewise, the National Board of Health and Welfare notes in a later report, that increased Internet prostitution is not an isolated Swedish phenomenon, similar developments are also observed in other countries, such as the United States.²³ Thus, according to the board it is debatable whether or not, or to what extent, the increase in Internet and mobile phone mediated prostitution noted in the former report is an outcome of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services.

Independent researcher Petra Östergren has conducted a qualitative study²⁴ involving the participation of fifteen women engaged in prostitution. The movement from the streets to the Internet is confirmed in the findings of this study:

“The informants considered it to be more difficult to get in touch with customers outdoors after the law of criminalisation. Therefore, the providers of sexual services to a higher extent have to rely on other channels of contact, such as the Internet and pimps, which some considered to be disadvantageous.”²⁵

Conclusion. Ekberg here touches upon the issue of ‘decline’ or ‘reshuffling’ of the prostitution arenas, although in the narrower context of street vs. Internet prostitution. According to the reports

¹⁹ Ekberg 2004, p. 1194.

²⁰ The present author’s translation. This is the original: “Det finns också uppgifter från både myndigheter och områden som gör gällande att andra typer av prostitution har ökat, exempelvis prostitutionen via Internet, i lägenheter och på restauranger/hotell.”. Source: NBHW 2000, p. 31.

²¹ The present author’s translation. This is the original: “Merparten menar att många har sökt sig till andra arenor och kontaktsätt, såsom Internet och mobiltelefoner. En del prostituerade har skaffat sig en fast kundkrets och behöver således aldrig röra sig i gatumiljön.”. Source: NBHW 2000, p. 32.

²² NBHW 2000, p. 31 and 33.

²³ NBHW 2004, p. 27.

²⁴ Östergren 2003.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 38. The above is the present author’s translation. This is the original: “Efter sexköpslagen ansåg informanterna att det var svårare att få direktkontakt med kunder utomhus. Säljarna måste därför förlita sig mer på andra kontaktkanaler som Internet och hallickar, vilket en del upplevde negativt.”.

of the National Board of Health and Welfare, a reshuffling has taken place, although it is not clear if, or to what extent, this is an outcome of criminalisation. Whatever the causes are, a decline in street prostitution and an increase in Internet (and other types of) prostitution did take place simultaneously. This is supported by other evidence (e.g. Östergren). Therefore, Ekberg is wrong in claiming that there is no evidence that prostitution has moved from the streets to the Internet.

Claim no. 5

“By contrast, since the Law came into force, there is no notable increase in the number of Swedish men who travel to other countries as sex tourists.”²⁶

No source is indicated. A population-based study²⁷ of the sexual habits of Swedish citizens, conducted in 1996 at the request of the National Institute of Public Health, found that:

“Almost 80% of all sexual contacts for payment took place abroad.”²⁸

It is further asserted that:

“Many men have only experienced the sex trade abroad, and are seldom or never purchasers on the Swedish market.”²⁹

Note that this study reflects the situation *before* criminalisation.

Actually there has been an increase in Swedish sex tourism to neighbouring Finland. The Swedish customer goes to Finland, picks up a woman providing sexual services, and takes her back to the Swedish side of the border. Subsequently they will spend one or more days together. One report issued by the National Criminal Investigation Department (NCID) in 2003 states:

“More and more purchasers of sexual services in the county of Norrbotten are today inviters of the girls that they have previously met in for instance Kemimaa, Torneå and in other places in Finland. Some of the purchasers of sexual services/inviters regularly visit different women in Murmansk that they have previously met in Finland. The networks between the purchasers of sexual services/inviters, the women and the persons in charge of the transports of them are constantly being developed.”³⁰

At the point in time when Ekberg’s article was published, there were also indications of some increase in Swedish sex tourism to neighbouring Denmark. For instance, an increase in the number of Swedish cars has been noted in areas in Copenhagen, where street prostitution takes place.³¹ The image was not very clear at the time, though.

Conclusion. As only about 20% of the total number of prostitution contacts took place in Sweden, one might question whether there was any basis for an increase in sex tourism at the time of criminalisation: the Swedish prostitution users were *already* travelling abroad at the time. Given the situation before criminalisation, the potential for an increase in sex tourism must have been rather meagre. In spite of this, there is in fact an increase in Swedish sex tourism. Thus, Ekberg’s

²⁶ Ekberg 2004, p. 1197.

²⁷ NIPH 2000.

²⁸ Ibid. s. 243.

²⁹ Ibid. s. 244.

³⁰ NCID situation report no. 5, p. 22.

³¹ Polistidningen no. 3, 2003.

assertion, “there is no notable increase in the number of Swedish men who travel to other countries as sex tourists”, misrepresents the existing knowledge in the field.

Theme B: The poster campaign

Claim no. 6

“Three posters were displayed in 2,215 public locations around the country, including bus shelters, subway stations, and streetcars. The posters illustrated several themes and were designed with messages and graphics. Poster #1 depicts a well-dressed man in a business suit and displays a prominent wedding band on his hand. It asserts: “Time to flush the johns out of the Baltic.”³²

The slogan on this poster is (in Swedish):

“Nu går torsken till runt Östersjön”³³

The correct translation is: *The john is now roaming through the Baltic Sea*. The poster in question does not say anything about ‘flushing’ or otherwise get the johns ‘out of’ the Baltic. Rather, the poster asserts, that sex tourism is now taking place across the Baltic Sea.

Conclusion. Ekberg is here deliberately distorting the translation, probably in order to cover up the obvious contradiction to the claim made elsewhere in the same article: “[...] there is no notable increase in the number of Swedish men who travel to other countries as sex tourists.” (claim no. 5). This is blatant misinformation.

Theme C: Confusing ‘prostitution’ and ‘street prostitution’

Claim no. 7

“In the beginning of the 1990s, approximately 2,000 women were in Danish street prostitution, compared with 5,500 to 7,800 in 2004 [...]”³⁴

“5,500 to 7,800” is an estimate of the total number of women in prostitution in Denmark. The figure does not refer to street prostitution. Ekberg’s source, an article³⁵ on Danish TV2 news on the Internet, says:

“In Sweden, which has restrictive laws, there are 2,500 women in prostitution, compared to between 5,500 and 7,800 in Denmark.”³⁶

³² Ekberg 2004, p. 1202-1203.

³³ Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, 2002.

³⁴ Ekberg 2004, p. 1193-94.

³⁵ TV2 May 6, 04.

³⁶ The present author’s translation. This is the original: “I Sverige med restriktive love er der 2.500 prostituerede mod mellem 5.500 og 7.800 i Danmark.”

Conclusion. Ekberg's statement is obviously wrong and also inconsistent with the source indicated. This statement serves to give the reader an impression of Sweden being overwhelmingly more successful than its neighbouring countries. Also, Ekberg utilizes a rather inferior source.

Theme D: Reducing the market for prostitution?

Claim no. 8

"It is estimated that the number of women in prostitution has decreased from 2,500³⁷ in 1999, before³⁸ the law came into force, to no more than 1,500 women in Sweden in 2002 [...]"³⁹

Ekberg provides us with no less than seven sources:

- 1) "Parkrun (2004)".
- 2) "'Sexkopslagen biter, Prostitutionen minskar i Sverige,' (2004)".
- 3) "Otiz (2001)".
- 4) "Gripenlöf, 1991-2002".
- 5) "T. Ekman, Director for the Anti-Trafficking Group at the Police Authority in Gothenburg [...], personal conversation, January 16, 2004".
- 6) "S-A. Månsson, School of Social Work at Gothenburg University, personal conversation, January 12, 2004".
- 7) "M. Sjöstrand Persson, Director for the Prostitution Group at Social Services in Malmö, personal conversation, January 16, 2004".

It is not clear from Ekberg's presentation of her sources where exactly we might find anything that can sustain the claim made by Ekberg: from 2500 to 1500. It is clear, that three of the sources are non-written material (personal conversations). For an international audience, it will require some research to figure out what the nature of the written material is. 'Parkrun', 'Sexkopslagen' and 'Otiz' are newspaper articles, while 'Gripenlöf, 1991-2002' is a series of twelve annual reports issued by the County Police of Stockholm.

"Parkrun (2004)" is a small article⁴⁰ in *Göteborgs-Posten* by Eva Parkrud⁴¹. Parkrud claims that the number of women involved in street prostitution has decreased by about 25%.⁴² She further claims:

"About 2,500 women in *street prostitution* were providing paid sexual services before the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services became effective, January 1st

³⁷ The 2,500 figure is from a 1995 report (Socialdepartementet: *Könshandeln* (SOU 1995:15), Stockholm, 1995). This estimation was by some considered to be too high (see Hedin/Månsson, p. 315-316, note 9).

³⁸ The law went into effect January 1st, 1999.

³⁹ Ekberg 2004, p. 1193.

⁴⁰ Göteborgs-Posten, Jan 7, 04.

⁴¹ The latter spelling is correct (just in case anybody would care to retrieve the original article).

⁴² Göteborgs-Posten, Jan 7, 04: "The number of women offering sexual services in the streets in Sweden has now decreased by about one fourth." The preceding is the present author's translation. This is the original: "Cirka en fjärdedel färre kvinnor säljer i dag sex på gatorna i Sverige."

1999. Today, five years later, the number of women in prostitution has decreased by 500 to 1000 women.”⁴³ (emphasis added).

Parkrud does not indicate any report or document, which can sustain the claim of a reduction of 500-1,000 (or any other number) women in prostitution.

Parkrud fails to realize, that the number 2,500 refers to the total number of women in prostitution, not to street prostitution alone. Exactly the same mistake is made by Parkrud once again, when referring to Danish street prostitution. According to Parkrud, Denmark has between 6,000 and 7,000 women in street prostitution. The number actually refers the total number of women in prostitution in Denmark.

It seems, that what Parkrud has done is 1) finding that street prostitution has decreased by 25%, 2) erroneously claiming that the number of women in street prostitution before 1999 was 2,500, and 3) calculating that one fourth of 2,500 is 625, i.e. between 500 and 1,000. Parkrud’s article is poorly researched and based on erroneous data.

““Sexkopslagen biter, Prostitutionen minskar i Sverige,” (2004)” is an article⁴⁴ in *Hufvudstadsbladet* (a Finnish paper), by Stefan Lundberg. Lundberg’s article basically reproduces the content of Parkrud’s article in *Göteborgs-Posten*. Lundberg’s article was published one day after Parkrud’s article. Lundberg claims:

“Göteborgs-Posten has explained how the law bites in Sweden. The Swedish law went into effect January 1st 1999. At that point in time it was believed that 2,500 women in the country were involved in prostitution. Now, five years later, there has been a reduction of 500 – 1,000. The information comes from the police and social authorities.”⁴⁵

As opposed to Parkrud, Lundberg does not confuse ‘prostitution’ and ‘street prostitution’. But he does retain the figure 500-1,000, which is clearly reproduced from the article in *Göteborgs-Posten*.

When claiming that “The information comes from the police and social authorities”, the reader will be even more confused. This particular sentence is reproduced from *Göteborgs-Posten*, where professor Sven-Axel Månsson explains that the figures regarding street prostitution are based on information from the police and social authorities.⁴⁶ When Lundberg claims that “[...] there has been a reduction of 500 – 1,000. The information comes from the police and social authorities”, this gives the reader the impression that the 500-1000 figure can be sustained by “the police and social authorities”, which is not the case. Parkrud presented this figure at her own expense, but in Lundberg’s version “the police and social authorities” are involuntarily lending legitimacy to Parkrud’s statement.

⁴³ The present author’s translation. This is the original: “Cirka 2500 kvinnor sålde sexuella tjänster på gatan innan förbudet mot köp av sexuella tjänster trädde i kraft 1 januari 1999. I dag, fem år senare, har antalet prostituerade sjunkit med mellan 500 och 1000 kvinnor.”

⁴⁴ *Hufvudstadsbladet*, Jan 8, 04.

⁴⁵ The present author’s translation. This is the original: “Göteborgs-Posten har utrett hur lagen bitit i Sverige. Där trädde den i kraft den 1 januari 1999. Då räknade man med att det fanns 2500 prostituerade i hela landet. Nu, fem år senare, har de minskat med 500 – 1000. Uppgifterna kommer från polisen och socialmyndigheterna.”

⁴⁶ *Göteborgs-Posten*, Jan 7, 04: “It is clear that street prostitution has decreased since the law went into effect, although the figures are not precise, they are based on information from the police and social authorities, says Sven-Axel Månsson, professor of social work at the University of Gothenburg.” The preceding is the present author’s translation. This is the original: “Det är tydligt att gatuprostitutionen har minskat sedan lagen trädde i kraft även om siffrorna inte är exakta, de bygger på uppgifter från polis och socialtjänst, säger Sven-Axel Månsson, professor i socialt arbete vid Göteborgs universitet.”

“Otiz (2001)” is an article⁴⁷ in *Dagens Nyheter* by Caspar Opitz⁴⁸. As the headline (*Street prostitution decreases*) suggests, the article is about *street* prostitution. There is also an inconclusive discussion whether or not the reduction in the number of women on the streets is paralleled by an increase in indoor prostitution. Opitz’s article confirms the well-known reduction in the number of women in street prostitution, more specifically prostitution in Malmskillnadsgatan in central Stockholm. But his article does not sustain any claim of a reduction from 2,500 to 1,500 women in prostitution.

“Gripenlöf, 1991-2002” refers to twelve consecutive annual reports, issued by the County Police of Stockholm, 1991-2002. It is not clear from Ekberg’s article whether a) the reduction from 2,500 to 1,500 is to be found in any particular formulation in the Gripenlöf reports, or b) it is Ekberg’s opinion, that the overall developments presented in these reports combined point towards such a reduction. In the first instance, we may wonder why there is no reference to a specified page in a specified report – and also why the reports of 1991-1998 (before criminalisation) are relevant. In the second instance, Ekberg would have to present her analysis explicitly, so we may have a chance to follow her line of thinking.

We should note, that the Gripenlöf reports are not published. Thus they are not publicly available. Anders Gripenlöf, co-author of the reports, has personally stated in April 2003, that it is not known whether criminalisation has had any effect on the total number of women in prostitution in Sweden:

“The criminalisation of the prostitution users has contributed to a reduction in street prostitution in Sweden. The number of women in prostitution in Malmskillnadsgatan⁴⁹ has been reduced by more than 50%. On the other hand, we don’t know whether it has had any effect on prostitution overall, says criminal inspector Anders Gripenlöf from the prostitution group at the investigation department of the metropolitan police.”⁵⁰

The remaining three sources are all ‘personal conversations’. If these conversations should serve as any kind of evidence, we should know who said exactly what, and – more importantly – which reports, material or analysis their statements are based on. None of this information is provided by Ekberg.

As pointed out earlier in this article, the observation of a number of individual persons leaving prostitution entirely does not in itself testify to an overall reduction in prostitution (see *claim no. 1 and 2*).

Conclusion. Ekberg does not succeed in presenting any documentation for any reduction in the number of women in prostitution overall through the Gripenlöf reports and the three personal conversations. The Opitz article on street prostitution is irrelevant.

This leaves us with the Parkrud article in *Göteborgs-Posten* and the Lundberg article in *Hufvudstadsbladet*. As explained above, the Parkrud article is poorly researched, confused and based on the wrong data. And the Lundberg article is reproducing the Parkrud article. *This means that Ekberg does not succeed in specifying even a single piece of documentation for any reduction in the total number of women in prostitution.*

As pointed out above, Parkrud’s claim (a reduction of 500 – 1,000) is based on erroneous handling of data. Lundberg radicalizes Parkrud’s writings when he claims that the information

⁴⁷ Dagens Nyheter, June 29, 01.

⁴⁸ The latter spelling is correct (just in case anybody would care to retrieve the original article).

⁴⁹ Malmskillnadsgatan is the site of street prostitution in Stockholm.

⁵⁰ Polistidningen no. 2, 2003. The above is the present author’s translation. This is the original: “Kriminaliseringen av sexköparna har bidragit till en minskning av gatuprostitutionen i Sverige. Antalet prostituerade kvinnor på Malmskillnadsgatan har mer än halverats. Däremot vet vi inte om den fått någon effekt på den totala prostitutionen, säger kriminalinspektör Anders Gripenlöf vid prostitutionsgruppen i Citypolisens spaningsrotel.”

comes from the police and social authorities. Lundberg's version is radicalized once more when ending up in Ekberg's article, the reduction is now supposed to be totalling 1,000. This is a hoax, beginning its life in Gothenburg (*Göteborgs-Posten*), then passing on to Helsinki (*Hufvudstadsbladet*), then to Ekberg's article, and then from this English language article on to the world community via the Internet. These newspaper articles are not only of inferior quality, they are a source of misinformation.

Theme E: Effects on the level of trafficking in human beings

A few remarks should be made here about Swedish conceptions of trafficking. This is necessary in order to improve our understanding of statistical information provided by the National Criminal Investigation Department (NCID).

From the outset, the reports of the NCID defined the act of trafficking in human beings in accordance with the Europol definition.⁵¹ The UN had not yet adopted its Palermo protocol⁵² at the time. This protocol contains the first internationally accepted definition of the act of trafficking in human beings. Developments regarding the level of trafficking have been systematically monitored since 1999.⁵³

In Sweden, a specific legislation on trafficking in human beings was adopted in 2002. This was amended in 2004, in order to achieve compliance with the UN Palermo protocol. As such, the current Swedish legislation⁵⁴ on trafficking in human beings is inspired by the Palermo protocol. The revised legislation of 2004 shifts the focus from the *transnational* dimension to the condition of *control*⁵⁵ being exercised over a victim.⁵⁶ It was pointed out by the (NCID) that the amendment of the definition would to some extent affect the status of criminal activities, with regard to whether or not they fall under the legal definition of trafficking.⁵⁷ In the subsequent annual NCID trafficking reports, issued in 2005 and 2006, no estimation of the extent of trafficking is provided.⁵⁸

The trafficking issue is frequently subject to discussions of definition. There is a strong tendency in Swedish debate towards the notion that prostitution generally speaking is violent and exploitative *per se*. From this perspective, prostitution across borders tends to be perceived as trafficking *per se*, regardless of the circumstances.

⁵¹ NCID situation report no. 1, p. 3. The Europol defines the act of trafficking as "Subjection of a person to the real and illegal sway of other persons by using violence or menaces or by abuse of authority or intrigue with a view to the exploitation of prostitution, forms of sexual exploitation and assault of minors or trade in abandoned children. These forms of exploitation also include the production, sale or distribution of child pornography material." (Source: Europol, p. 13).

⁵² United Nations, 2000.

⁵³ The monitoring in this field was requested by the Swedish government in a decision of 1997 (see Regeringens proposition 1997/98:55, appendix 12, section 3.2).

⁵⁴ See *lag (2004:406) Brottsbalken 4 kap 1 a §*.

⁵⁵ Assuming control ('att ta kontroll') is a Swedish extension to the 'criminal acts' category (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons) of article 3 of the Palermo protocol. The condition of control is achieved when the trafficker is in charge of the victim through 'criminal acts'. These acts might be such as confinement or permanent threat, but they may also be of a "rather subtle nature" (see Regeringens proposition 2003/04:111, p. 49-56 and 64-68).

⁵⁶ NCID situation report no. 7, p. 11 in the English version, p. 12 in the Swedish version.

⁵⁷ NCID situation report no. 7, p. 34-35 in the English version, p. 33 in the Swedish version.

⁵⁸ NCID situation reports no. 7 and 8.

Indeed, it is not entirely clear how, and if, the NCID are distinguishing between trafficking and organized transnational prostitution to Sweden.⁵⁹ In the first NCID report (published in 1999) it is stated that “One problem with regard to establishing the extent of the problem of trafficking in women is that it is very difficult to estimate the dark number. In the nature of the case, all implicated parties, the organizers, *the women* and the customers, have no interest in [the authorities’] insight into the activities.”⁶⁰ (emphasis added). The sixth NCID report⁶¹ on trafficking (published in 2004) states: “According to the assessment of the National Criminal Investigation Department between 400 – 600 women may have been *brought to Sweden to be used in prostitution* in 2003.”⁶² (emphasis added) and “The National Criminal Investigation Department has made the assessment that between 400 – 600 women have been *victims of trafficking in human beings* in Sweden in 2003.”⁶³ (emphasis added). This raises a few questions. Regarding the excerpt from the first situation report: If ‘victims of trafficking’ includes women who “have no interest” in the authorities gaining insight into these criminal activities, how does the NCID distinguish between ‘trafficking’ and ‘illegal immigration’? The excerpts from the sixth situation report suggest that no distinction between ‘trafficking’ and ‘organized transnational prostitution’ is made at all.

It has been noted in a report issued by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice that the above mentioned popular perceptions of trafficking - so commonly encountered in Swedish debate *and* government policies – in combination with the confusion of definitions, may lead to an overestimation of the number of victims of trafficking wherever the transnational aspect is present, and a comparable underestimation of regular transnational prostitution.⁶⁴

To sum up, the legislation was amended in 2004 to achieve compliance with the UN Palermo protocol. The demarcation between trafficking in human beings, organized transnational prostitution and illegal immigration is not clear, at least in the reports published prior to the 2004 amendment. Apparently, the definition applied by the NCID (at least until 2004) is different from the UN definition, i.e. it seems to be extended to include some proportion of non-trafficking-related⁶⁵ prostitution, including regular transnational prostitution and illegal immigration. In the subsequent annual NCID trafficking reports, issued in 2005 and 2006, no estimation of the extent of trafficking is provided.

Ekberg’s account of the Swedish policy of criminalisation deals only with developments in the level of trafficking activities *before* 2004, so the amendments do not directly affect her article.

We will leave this subject aside, as it is not within the scope of this article to deal with it in any further detail.

Claim no. 9

“In Denmark, 5,500 to 7,800 women are prostituted every year. It is estimated that 50% or more of these women are victims of trafficking in human beings”⁶⁶

⁵⁹ According to the definition in the UN Palermo protocol, trafficking and organized transnational prostitution is not the same.

⁶⁰ NCID situation report no. 1, p. 27. The above is the present authors translation. This is the original: “Ett problem i mätningen av problemet med handel med kvinnor är att mörkertalet är mycket svårt att beräkna. Det ligger i sakens natur att alla involverade parter, organisatörerna, kvinnorna samt kunderna, inte är intresserade av insyn i verksamheten.”

⁶¹ NCID situation report no. 6.

⁶² Ibid. section 7.1.

⁶³ Ibid. section 2.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Justice and the police, note 299.

⁶⁵ I.e. trafficking in the sense of the Palermo protocol.

⁶⁶ Ekberg 2004, p. 1199.

‘Every year’ suggests a sequence. The number 5,500-7,800 is an estimate of the number of women in prostitution, it does not refer to the number of women entering prostitution ‘every year’. The ‘every year’ phrase allows for comparison with another claim on the same page i Ekberg’s article:

“The NCID estimates that between 400 and 600 women are trafficked into Sweden every year [...]”⁶⁷

Comparing ‘50% or more of 5,500-7,800’ in Denmark to ‘400-600’ in Sweden suggests that Sweden is overwhelmingly successful in combating trafficking, compared to Denmark. First of all, this is a comparison of incomparable numbers, and secondly, it does not tell us whether or not the situation in Sweden has changed for the better since criminalisation.

In asserting that “It is estimated that 50% or more of these women are victims of trafficking”, Ekberg reproduces a claim which is presented in public debate, but not founded in scientific research or police investigations. Ekberg specifies two sources, of which only one is a written document: a newspaper article in *Göteborgs-Posten*.⁶⁸ In this article⁶⁹ by Britt Ledberg it is stated that:

“There are an estimated 5,500 to 7,800 persons in prostitution in Denmark. Two years ago 30 per cent of them were foreign citizens, this year the figure is over 50 per cent.”⁷⁰

We will not discuss the figures presented here, particularly so the comparison of 30 per cent to 50 per cent. Also, it would be more correct on the part of *Göteborgs-posten* to speak of ‘persons of foreign descent’ rather than ‘foreign citizens’.⁷¹

We will, however, note that the Ledberg article does not provide any data that can justify Ekberg’s assertion – that half (or more) of the women in prostitution in Denmark are victims of trafficking. There is a gross difference between being of ‘foreign descent’ and being a ‘victim of trafficking’. This is an example of the common conflation of ‘transnational prostitution’ and ‘trafficking’.

The Ledberg article deals primarily with street prostitution, rather than prostitution in general. A comparison of Swedish and Danish prostitution policies should not be made on the basis of street prostitution alone. Information and views presented in the reports of the NCID is reiterated, but no independent evidence is provided. ‘Prostitution’ and ‘street prostitution’ is confused.⁷²

Conclusion. Ekberg presents these data in a way that suggests to the reader, that the figures from Sweden and Denmark may be compared to each other. This facilitates an invalid conclusion: that Sweden is overwhelmingly successful in combating trafficking, compared to Denmark. (For specific examples of such an invalid comparison inspired by Ekberg’s article, see Annelise Ebbe:

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 1199.

⁶⁸ The other source is a personal conversation with Dorit Otzen, director for Reden (an NGO in Denmark). Ms. Otzen is known to be heavily biased on the issue.

⁶⁹ Göteborgs-Posten, Sep 30, 2003.

⁷⁰ The present author’s translation. This is the original: “Det finns uppskattningsvis mellan 5500 och 7800 prostituerade i Danmark. För två år sedan var 30 procent av dem utländska medborgare, i år är siffran över 50 procent.”

⁷¹ A notable proportion of ethnically non-Danish women in prostitution in Denmark are in fact, from a legal point of view, Danish citizens or otherwise permanent legal residents of Denmark.

⁷² “It was asserted some years ago that 600 women from Asia alone were among the street prostitutes of Copenhagen [...]”. The preceding is the present author’s translation. This is the original: “För några år sedan uppgavs att 600 kvinnor bara från Asien fanns bland Köpenhamns gatuprostituerade [...]”. This figure refers to women in prostitution, not street prostitution in particular.

*Skal vi have svenske tilstande?*⁷³ and Agnete Strøm: *Erfaringer med den svenske loven om kjøp av seksuelle tjenester*⁷⁴). Ekberg conflates ‘transnational prostitution’ and ‘trafficking’. On the basis of this conflation, she presents the extreme notion of half (or more) of the women in prostitution in Denmark being victims of trafficking, a claim that cannot be supported by any evidence. Overall, it may be questioned whether a newspaper article confusing ‘prostitution’ and ‘street prostitution’ is relevant as any kind of evidence at all.

Claim no. 10

“The NCID estimates that between 400 and 600 women are trafficked into Sweden every year, mainly from Eastern European countries such as Estonia and Lithuania, as well as from Russia. This number has remained fairly constant during the past several years [...]”⁷⁵

The source indicated is the sixth situation report of the NCID. What this report actually says about the development in the number of victims of trafficking is this:

“That the information concerning trafficking in human beings is steadily increasing does *not necessarily* mean that the number of crimes increases but *may* be caused by the fact that the police and others see this crime and understand it in another way than previously. [...] The assessment made by the National Criminal Investigation Department of the number of victims of trafficking in human beings *may* have been too low in previous years.” (emphasis added)⁷⁶

The report does not state that the number has remained ‘fairly constant’.

In both the fifth and the sixth annual reports on trafficking issued by the NCID, it is asserted that there is an increase in information and tips received regarding the development in the number of women subjected to trafficking.⁷⁷

In the fifth report, it is pointed out, that some of the information and tips has turned out to have nothing to do with trafficking, but perhaps other forms of crime or prostitution.⁷⁸ Accordingly, the NCID draws the following conclusion about the developments in 2002:

⁷³ “It is hard to say exactly how many prostitutes we have in Denmark, but the number is an estimated 5450 to 7800 – of which about half are women that have been traded across the border. In Sweden the number is estimated at about 400 – 600 traded women – this in spite of the fact that Sweden has a population of about 9 million.”. The preceding is the present author’s translation of an excerpt from: Annelise Ebbe: *Skal vi have svenske tilstande? i Rød-Grønne Linjer* no. 3, Copenhagen, 2006. This is the original: “Det er svært at sige præcis, hvor mange prostituerede vi har i Danmark, men tallet skønnes at være mellem 5450 og 7800 – heraf er cirka halvdelen, kvinder der er blevet handlet over grænsen. I Sverige skønnes antallet at være omkring 400 – 600 handlede kvinder – dette til trods for, at befolkningstallet i Sverige er ca. 9 mio.”.

⁷⁴ “Sweden: 400 – 600 women arrive in Sweden every year as victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation Denmark: 2,750 – 3,900 women are believed to be victims of trafficking”. The preceding is the present author’s translation of an excerpt from: Agnete Strøm: “Erfaringer med den svenske loven om kjøp av seksuelle tjenester”, Bergen, 2006. This is the original: “Sverige: 400 – 600 kvinnor kommer hvert år til Sverige som offer for menneskehandel for seksuelle utnyttning Danmark: 2.750 – 3.900 kvinner antas å være offer for menneskehandel”. Strøm’s paper is heavily dependent on Ekberg’s article.

⁷⁵ Ekberg 2004, p. 1199.

⁷⁶ NCID situation report no. 6, section 7.1.

⁷⁷ The fifth annual report: “There is a continued increase of the flow of information and the number of received cases at the National Criminal Investigation Department.” (NCID situation report no. 5, p. 29). The sixth annual report: “The information to the police authorities about suspected trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes has increased in 2003.” (NCID situation report no. 6, section 2).

⁷⁸ NCID situation report no. 5, p. 29.

“In spite of the fact that the number of reports on trafficking in human beings from the police departments has increased, there are not enough facts to make it possible to state that the actual existence of trafficking of human beings to Sweden has increased. But there is nothing that is indicating that trafficking in human beings has decreased. According to the assessment of the National Criminal Investigation Department [...] between 200 and 500 women were subjected to trafficking in Sweden.”⁷⁹

This figure (200-500) is the same as the one in the previous annual report. In the sixth annual report this figure has increased to 400-600:

“The National Criminal Investigation Department has made the assessment that between 400 – 600 women have been victims of trafficking in human beings in Sweden in 2003.”⁸⁰

“The number is based upon the increased information flow, and experiences made by the Trafficking Team in Gothenburg, and investigations made in the county of Stockholm.”⁸¹

However, this does not necessarily represent an increase, as explained in the previous excerpt from the sixth report.

When it comes to figures, the image is not clear. Much depends on the interpretation of the increased flow of information. Is this an expression of the reporting in vain of perceived, but non-existent, cases of trafficking (as suggested in the fifth report), or does it reflect the realization of an actually extant, but hitherto unknown, number of trafficking cases (as suggested in the sixth report)? Or does it represent an actual increase in trafficking overall? The answer is not clear as expressed above.

Conclusion. The sixth report of the NCID expresses uncertainty as to whether or not there is an actual increase in the number of victims of trafficking. When claiming that the “number has remained fairly constant during the past several years” Ekberg’s statement misrepresents the findings of the report. It is not clear whether the increase in information flow and figures represent an actual increase in the level of trafficking, or it represents an increasing knowledge about a rather stable situation. Therefore caution should be applied. It is not necessarily so that the number of victims of trafficking has remained fairly constant.

Claim no. 11

“In her [Kajsa Wahlberg, National Rapporteur for Trafficking in Women] reports published in 2003 and 2004, she noted that there are clear indications that the Law [against the purchase of sexual services] has had direct and positive effects in limiting the trafficking in women for prostitution to Sweden.”⁸²

The reports referred to here are situation reports no. 5 and 6, issued by the NCID.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 4.

⁸⁰ NCID situation report no. 6, section 2.

⁸¹ Ibid. section 2.

⁸² Ekberg 2004, p. 1199.

⁸³ NCID situation report no. 5 and NCID situation report no. 6.

First of all, we must keep in mind, that the NCID reports do not indicate any reduction in the level of trafficking.

Wahlberg does argue, that the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services has had certain effects. Regarding the situation after criminalisation, Wahlberg points out that:

“The women must be escorted to the purchasers and then they do not have time with as many purchasers as they would have had in a brothel or in street prostitution.”⁸⁴

“To carry on the activities indoors it is necessary to have several apartments or other premises available and that the activities are not carried on too long at the same place.”⁸⁵

Accordingly, the criminals complain about:

“[...] the fact that the activities in Sweden must be more organised to be profitable.”⁸⁶

Thus, operating in the Swedish market poses a greater challenge to criminals. Indeed, Wahlberg argues that some trafficking business, which could potentially have taken place in Sweden has been diverted to other countries:

“The National Criminal Investigation Department is of the opinion that the Act relating to purchase of sexual services continues to function as a barrier against traffickers of human beings establishing themselves in Sweden. They rather go to other and more attractive and lucrative markets like Norway and Denmark.”⁸⁷

This diversion of activities is easily explained. As Ekberg notes herself:

“Traffickers and pimps are businessmen who calculate profits, marketing factors, and risks of getting caught when they decide in which countries they will sell women into prostitution.”⁸⁸

Conclusion. Ekberg’s claim, that criminalisation has had positive effects in limiting the trafficking in women for prostitution *to Sweden* is consistent with the conclusions of the NCID reports. However, according to the NCID, the activities are to some extent being diverted to other countries because the Swedish market is less profitable, unless the operations reach a higher level of organization. From Ekberg’s version, the reader is left with the impression that the law of criminalisation is a contribution to the combat against trafficking overall, which cannot be sustained. It would also have been relevant for Ekberg to consider whether or not “the fact that the activities in Sweden must be more organized to be profitable” tends to curb or to fuel the trafficking business.

⁸⁴ NCID situation report no. 5, p. 34. Likewise, Ekberg notes that “The presence of foreign women in street prostitution has come almost to an end [...]” (Ekberg 2004, p. 1194).

⁸⁵ NCID situation report no. 5, p. 34.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 34.

⁸⁷ NCID situation report no. 6, section 8.3.

⁸⁸ Ekberg 2004, p. 1200.

A few remarks on the rhetoric and discourse of Ekberg's article

Discussions of rhetoric and discourse are not within the scope of this article. Yet, a few remarks should be made, in order to complete the picture.

The rhetoric itself contributes to a particular perception of the issues discussed in Ekberg's article. This is perhaps most clearly seen in certain rhetorical *clusters*, scattered throughout the article. One such cluster is "women and children", implying that we should not distinguish between the prostitution of women and that of children. Another one is "prostitution and trafficking", implying that we should not distinguish between these issues either. "Women and children [or girls]" occur 67 times, and "prostitution and trafficking" 36 times in this 32 page article.

Women in prostitution are described as passive victims, prostitution is *imposed* upon them by men. E.g.:

"[...] women and girls who are induced and kept in prostitution [...]"⁸⁹

Accordingly, the law of criminalisation rightfully

"[...] dispels men's self-assumed right to buy women and children for prostitution purposes and questions the idea that men should be able to express their sexuality in any form and at any time."⁹⁰

We are told that

"Therefore, prostituted women and children are seen as victims of male violence who do not risk legal penalties. Instead, they have a right to assistance to escape prostitution."⁹¹

Some commentators in Sweden ask: do they also have a right *not* to be assisted in leaving prostitution?

When discussing the criticism raised against the Swedish legislation, Ekberg sidesteps the most important criticism: reduced security for women in prostitution, increased violence, increased stigmatisation, prostitution has become less transparent, and it has become more difficult for social outreach programmes to operate. Some critics claim that the fact that a number of women offer sexual services is not a problem in itself, while violence, rape, drug addiction, poverty, lack of autonomy etc. most certainly are severe problems. Therefore, the focus should not be on the *number* of women in prostitution, but on the *conditions* under which prostitution takes place.

A nationalist vein can also be identified in the article. National legislation in Sweden is presented as an example for others to follow. The fact that the Swedish model tends to export these problems to other countries is seemingly not considered to be a problem. Combat against trafficking is profoundly seen in a *national*, rather than an *international* perspective. The policies advocated by Ekberg do not transcend national boundaries, even if the Swedish national model is exported to other nations.

Conclusion

Ekberg's article is presenting facts (spurious or not) and a normative, ideological programme at one and the same time. Given the size of the article, the 'hard facts' part is not substantial.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 1191.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 1205.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 1189.

Sources used. Some of the sources used by Ekberg are of inferior quality. When claiming that “It is estimated that the number of women in prostitution has decreased from 2,500 in 1999, before the law came into force, to no more than 1,500 women in Sweden in 2002 [...]”, the only specified written evidence Ekberg can point to is two inferior, poorly researched and erroneous newspaper articles (Parkrud and Lundberg). When claiming about women in prostitution in Denmark, that “It is estimated that 50% or more of these women are victims of trafficking in human beings” the only written evidence Ekberg presents is another inferior and erroneous newspaper article (Ledberg). Also ‘personal conversations’ are used as source material rather extensively (e.g. claim no. 8 and 9). If these conversations should serve as any kind of evidence, we should know who said exactly what, and – more importantly – which reports, material or analysis their statements are based on. None of this information is provided by Ekberg. Also Danish TV2 news on the Internet is used as source material (claim no. 7). Frequently, no sources are indicated at all (e.g. claims no. 1, 2 and 5).

When it comes to ‘hard facts’ (as opposed to sociological or linguistic studies) the use of sources of this nature should generally be discouraged. A newspaper article *can* be a useful source, but one must critically examine the sources, content and quality of the article. Two of the three newspaper articles mentioned above do not even succeed in distinguishing ‘street prostitution’ from ‘prostitution’. If newspaper articles are used indiscriminately, almost any claim can be justified, just by selecting the appropriate set of newspaper articles.

Apart from using inferior sources (or no sources at all), Ekberg frequently draws conclusions that are directly contradicting or otherwise in conflict with the evidence in the sources used.

Reshuffling the markets for prostitution? Ekberg claims (claim no. 4) that “There is no evidence that the sale of women has moved from the streets to the Internet [...]”. (Ekberg refers to a series of unpublished reports). According to the reports of the National Board of Health and Welfare, a reshuffling has taken place, although it is not clear if, or to what extent, this is an outcome of criminalisation. Whatever the causes are, a decline in street prostitution and an increase in Internet (and other types of) prostitution did take place simultaneously. This is supported by other evidence (e.g. Östergren). Therefore, Ekberg is wrong in claiming that there is no evidence that prostitution has moved from the streets to the Internet. Neither is it correct to say, (claim no. 3) that the recruitment of new women in street prostitution has come almost to a halt. (It is not clear which source is being used in this case). Ekberg’s assertion (claim no. 5), “there is no notable increase in the number of Swedish men who travel to other countries as sex tourists”, misrepresents existing knowledge. (No source is indicated). Before criminalisation only about 20% of the total number of prostitution contacts took place in Sweden. Thus, one might question whether there was any basis for an increase in sex tourism at the time of criminalisation: the Swedish prostitution users were *already* travelling abroad at the time. In spite of this, there is in fact an increase in Swedish sex tourism. When speaking of street prostitution alone, rather than prostitution overall, it is correct to say (claim no. 1 and 2), that there has been a decline. (No sources are indicated). It is, however, misleading to describe this decline as if it was an outcome of some moral or normative effect of the law. By evading the discussion of ‘decline’ or ‘reshuffling’, Ekberg suggests that the developments in street prostitution reflect a new moral awareness, and an overall decrease in the supply and demand side.

The poster campaign. When describing one of the posters in the 2002 poster campaign (claim no. 6) Ekberg is deliberately distorting the translation of the slogan on the poster (“*The john is now roaming through the Baltic Sea*”), probably in order to avoid contradicting another claim made elsewhere in the same article. This is blatant misinformation.

Confusing ‘prostitution’ and ‘street prostitution’. Ekberg claims that (claim no. 7) “In the beginning of the 1990s, approximately 2,000 women were in Danish street prostitution, compared with 5,500 to 7,800 in 2004 [...]”. (The source indicated is Danish TV2 news on the Internet).

Ekberg's statement is obviously wrong and also inconsistent with the source indicated. This statement serves to give the reader an impression of Sweden being overwhelmingly more successful than its neighbouring countries.

Reducing the market for prostitution? Ekberg claims that "It is estimated that the number of women in prostitution has decreased from 2,500 in 1999, before the law came into force, to no more than 1,500 women in Sweden in 2002 [...]" (claim no. 8). (Seven sources are indicated: three newspaper articles, a series of unpublished reports, and three personal conversations). In spite of referring to no less than seven sources, Ekberg does not succeed in specifying even a single piece of documentation for any reduction in the total number of women in prostitution. At least two of the newspaper articles are of inferior quality, while the third one is irrelevant.

Effects on the level of trafficking in human beings. It is not true that the sixth report of the NCID says that the number of women trafficked into Sweden per year "has remained fairly constant during the past several years" (claim no. 10). In fact, the report expresses uncertainty as to whether or not there is an actual increase in the number of victims of trafficking. When claiming that the "number has remained fairly constant during the past several years" Ekberg's statement misrepresents the findings of the report.

Ekberg's claim (claim no. 11), that criminalisation has had positive effects in limiting the trafficking in women for prostitution *to Sweden* is consistent with the conclusions of the NCID reports. (NCID reports indicated as source). However, according to the NCID, the activities are being diverted to other countries because the Swedish market is less profitable, unless the operations reach a higher level of organization. From Ekberg's version, the reader is left with the impression that the law of criminalisation is a contribution to the combat against trafficking overall, which cannot be sustained.

Ekberg claims (claim no. 9) that it is estimated that 50% or more of all women engaged in prostitution in Denmark are victims of trafficking (a newspaper article and a personal conversation indicated as sources). Ekberg does not provide any evidence that may support this extreme notion. She conflates 'transnational prostitution' and 'trafficking'. Also, Ekberg presents these data in a way that suggests to the reader, that the figures from Sweden and Denmark may be compared to each other (Sweden then emerging as the successful one).

Promoting a hoax. Ekberg also brings a Scandinavian newspaper hoax on to an international audience. The hoax (claim no. 8) began its life in Gothenburg (*Göteborgs-Posten*), then passed on to Helsinki (*Hufvudstadsbladet*), then to Ekberg's article, and then from this English language article on to the world community via the Internet. These newspaper articles (and as a consequence also Ekberg's own article) are not only of inferior quality, they are a source of misinformation.

As regards the factual aspects of Ekberg's article, the basic tenets have all been touched upon in the present article. The normative aspect remains, of course. All in all, in a number of key issues inferior material is used as evidence, and in a number of cases the findings of reports and other sources have been distorted, in some instances grossly so. We should note that the utilization of this inferior material and these distortions are always in support of Ekberg's own tenets. These tenets are further emphasized by the use of a rather extreme rhetoric throughout the article. Rhetoric substitutes documentation. Numerous reports have been published on the developments in prostitution in Sweden. Ekberg's government has long been eager to prove any positive developments.

The presentation of factual information in Ekberg's article has been subordinated to the ends of presenting a coherent normative formula to be applied in prostitution policy. The role of facts, spurious or not, is that of providing a footing for this ideological formula. As such, Ekberg's article should be seen entirely as a political manifesto, touting the principles behind Swedish prostitution

policy world wide, rather than an attempt at accounting for the effects of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services.

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