Chapter 1

Speaking about sex for sale historically, spatially and politically

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Abstract

This chapter introduces the concept and content of the book to the readers. It describes the aim of the book to be to elaborate the contingency of how we understand prostitution, and argues that it is often taken for granted in debates and scholarship on what prostitution, sex work or sex for sale *are*, but rarely investigated further. It further describes some of the literature that offers insightful perspectives on this and that in different ways serves as an inspiration for the book. The chapter then describes the three parts of the book, ‘Historically speaking’, ‘Speaking from experience’ and ‘Speaking about control’, and how the chapters offers different inroads into the exploration of the meanings and moralities of sexual commerce.

CHAPTER TEXT

The aim of the book

Social anthropologist Marilyn Strathern argued that (1992: 2), “You can tell a culture by what it can and cannot bring together”. In this book we are interested in how definitions of and unease with prostitution, sex work or sex for sale¹ bring together sex and money. To us Strathern’s expression encapsulates the value of looking for the meanings and moralities that are applied to commercial sex. Debaters and others often take for granted what prostitution,

sex work or sex for sale *are*, often taking as their point of departure the definition in criminal law on paper, the types of acts towards which policies are directed and definitions in encyclopedias. Furthermore, they often take for granted that prostitution is a problem and a particular type of problem, even though prostitution, sex work or sex for sale take on different forms, consist of different acts and are regulated differently in different settings and times, and are thus contingent on our historical, spatial, temporal and political positions. Money and sexuality are related in many different ways, but some ways of combining them create an uneasiness that others do not. In a previous publication (Spanger and Skilbrei 2017) we explore epistemological and ethical issues in the production of knowledge about sex for sale. In this book we elaborate on some of the questions raised in that book about the contingency of how we understand sex for sale.

What prostitution *is* is often not problematised but is rather produced by political priorities at the time and taken for granted (Phoenix 1999: 5). In this book the aim is to confuse this picture or to tease out the *ontologies* on prostitution that are in circulation. We do this by focusing on the relationship between sexuality and money from the basic assumption that unease with and attraction to prostitution are related to cultural notions about what the relations between sex and money *should* be. Ideas about prostitution and the consequences of these are central topics in the literature on prostitution, sex work or sex for sale. But the question of what prostitution *is taken to be* in a particular context is often addressed in an indirect way. Deriving from different disciplines, empirical contexts and perspectives the chapters in this book taken together scrutinise and make visible that entanglements of sex and money and definitions that appear to be *natural* or taken for granted are indeed contested and contestable. In some way or another these chapters deal with how prostitution, sex work or sex for sale are defined, delineated, contested, understood and carry meaning. Either from the

point of view of the law and policy makers, by police and social workers or by sellers or buyers that are speaking from experience about sex for sale. Some of the contributions add more explicitly to our understanding of how prostitution, sex work or sex for sale are defined, delineated, contested and carry meaning, while other contributions propose more explicitly analytical tools to understand how prostitution, sex work or sex for sale carry meaning. Thus, the chapters in this book analyse the meanings that are ascribed to prostitution in a variety of empirical settings. Looking at how prostitution is defined and problematised at different times and in different places is a way to reveal the logics and discourses that influences what is taken for granted. Moreover, paying attention to problematisations of prostitution, sex work or sex for sale the chapters also illuminate what kind of consequences such problematisations results in when it comes to the everyday life of the involved actors and to how norms on sex and sexuality are produced. Below we present what we see as main contributions to the types of discussions this book addresses.

Developing the scholarly field of prostitution through the nexus of sex and money

Comprehensive ethnographic studies have taught us that prostitution looks, feels and is understood differently in different settings. The British sociologist Graham Scambler (1997) argues that prostitution is often represented via the most visible or spectacular examples, and he argues that what is lacking is representations of the mundane life of prostitution. However, a branch of ethnographic studies (see e.g. Prieur 1987; Hart 1998; Nencel 2001; Cheng 2010; Brents, Jackson and Hausbeck 2010; Shah 2014) demonstrate how people selling sex ascribe rather different meanings to their sale and how these activities become an integrated part of their complex mundane life. Such studies challenge predominant understandings of prostitution. For instance, the Dutch-American anthropologist Lorraine Nencel (2001) emphasises that the sex-money exchange is understood as a practice rather than forming an

identity or a profession for Peruvian women who sell sex. In her fieldwork in Peru, she experienced that the women do not verbalise their sex for sale as 'prostitution' or 'sex work'. Rather, the women understand the sale of sex as an activity - a way to earn money. Through her analysis of sexual labour in the Dominican Republic, the US anthropologist Denise Brennan (2004) explicates that sex work may be what creates the prospect of independence and a way out of poverty.

In planning for this book we have been particularly interested in finding contributions that present empirical contexts which are different from those often represented in research. Even within national contexts, how prostitution is experienced and even defined may vary greatly (Pheterson 1996). Different market segments do not only entail that prices and veneer differ, but also that the sex is framed differently and that what is sold caters to different desires (Bernstein 2007). In her book *Temporarily Yours* (2007) about prostitution markets in San Francisco, Amsterdam and Stockholm, the American anthropologist Elizabeth Bernstein describes class divisions within sex work that have an impact not only on the level of safety and the clients' experiences, but also on the subjectivities of sex workers. Top-end indoor prostitution is indeed presented and experienced by clients to be very different from the life in street prostitution and in drug dependency described by Susan Dewey (2011) or Lisa Maher (2000). However, the question is whether sex work in different sectors is also experienced differently by the sellers. While some (Chapkis 1997; Koken 2010; Sanders 2005) argue that the sector and working conditions make all the difference, others claim that the harm caused by prostitution is the same, or even worse, in indoor prostitution than on the street because of expectations to deliver a more authentic performance (Høigård and Finstad 1992). Whether one is dedicated to evaluating what is worse or not, paying attention to differences is important for researchers in this field. And in this endeavour we, and several of the authors in

this book, take inspiration from Bernstein's (2007) ideas about authenticity and ways of interpreting and practising the combination of sex-money in sex work as related to broader societal developments and social hierarchies.

What prostitution, sex work or sex for sale is interpreted to be is important for why and how policy makers aim to regulate it. The French historian Alain Corbin (1990) demonstrates that for France, prostitution was repressed in response to prostitution as one, but not the only, form of dangerous female sexuality. It was not the economic exchange per se that was policed as prostitution; it was rather sexuality out of wedlock that was seen as threatening to the fabric of society. The British historian Judith Walkowitz (1980, 1992) has demonstrated the emergence and application of the category of 'the prostitute' historically and how this has been used to control women and reinforce inequalities relating to gender and class (see also McLeod 1982; Smart 1984).

While there are differences in how prostitution is delineated, experienced and regulated, there are some characteristics in how a woman involved in prostitution, 'the whore', is met by society, the US born social psychologist and activist Gail Pheterson (1996) argues in her book *The Prostitution Prism*. Here she describes how 'the whore stigma' is one that befalls not only women who sell sex, but also women who in other ways are not included in normative femininity. Thus, the association with prostitution and the fear of being stigmatised as 'a whore' regulate behaviours and thus contribute to establishing and maintaining gendered expectations.

Gendered aspects of prostitution are particularly central to both scholarship and political debate. These are also relevant to what is deemed to be prostitution and non-prostitution at

various times and in different places. Prostitution has been considered a 'Social Evil' since the 1850s, and the female sex seller was in such a framing presented both as a problem and as someone who needed to be rescued (Walkowitz 1980: 32). Sexual promiscuity, rather than the exchange of money for sex, was both the source of the problem they constituted for society and the reason why they needed to be rescued, and this points towards how sexuality associated with the public sphere is central to what makes prostitution per se a problem. Sexuality is understood as belonging to the private sphere and is associated with money in the public sphere (Zatz 1997: 294). But sexuality is not necessarily wholly interpreted as private. Sexuality is present in the public sphere all the time (see e.g. Brewis and Linstead 2000). So why is the sex-money exchange in prostitution a problem? Whether acts and relations are associated with labour or love, and whether they are deemed to belong in the public or the private sphere, is contingent on the gendered interpretations of these (Borchgrevink and Holter 1995). While it is debatable whether or not prostitution can be interpreted as an expression of the sexuality of the seller of sex, prostitution is often associated more with female sellers than with their (male) clients. Also, male prostitution disappears out of view as the female sex workers become the epitome of prostitution. Maybe male sexuality, and therefore also sexuality that explicitly links money and sex, can be accepted in the public sphere in a way female sexuality cannot?

The very existence of the institution of prostitution is also by some scholars analysed as a result and expression of gendered power relations in society. In her book *The Sexual Contract* (1988), the US political scientist Carole Pateman argues that sexual difference is political difference under modern patriarchy whereby a naturalised gendered order is established. When not explicitly addressing gender, but instead debating as if social relations are gender neutral, feminists only perpetuate this naturalisation. So when investigating social

phenomena, a gender analysis is necessary in order to identify how power operates and therefore how it can be resisted. This is why the focus on sexual contracts and gender neutrality is problematic, argues Pateman, as this presupposes equal parties. This is a central argument also in some feminist analyses of prostitution as a form of gendered violence, and not as an agreement between two consensual adults (e.g. Barry 1979). This thinking reflects the conflict between feminist abolitionist perspectives and the sex workers' rights movement, which advocates for the same right as that held by others to enter into contracts, seeing sexual exchange as a an exchange that can be contractual (Jenness 1993).²

There are other fault lines within this field than conflicts over the prospects of agency on the part of the female sex seller. A central argument in the critique of feminist abolitionism is that it universalises the phenomenon of prostitution and thus undermines how the phenomenon of prostitution is classed and racialised, and how various policies affect different groups of sex workers differently (see e.g. Doezema 2000; Kempadoo 2005; Agustín 2007). Women are condemned for sexual transgressions whether they charge money for them or not, argues Pheterson (1996: 24), but what counts as transgressions varies historically and across classed, racial and ethnic boundaries.

Feminist abolitionism takes female prostitution as a starting point and does not engage with issues of gender and power related to prostitution involving male sellers. While the application of a gender and power lens is self-evident in much of the literature on women, men who sell sex are often interpreted with a different lens, emphasising more cultural or individualistic interpretations (Siring 2008, Kaye 2010). Male clients have historically often been interpreted as acting on biological urges or on the basis of their patriarchal right. The power over women awarded to men in many periods and places constitutes an important part of what makes prostitution possible and buying sex desirable. However, the British

sociologist Julia O'Connell Davidson (1998: 207) urges us to acknowledge how clients operate and interpret their own actions in the frameworks of wider discourses about sexuality and gender.

Studies relating prostitution to other social relations

When we emphasise that prostitution, sex work or sex for sale are not fixed phenomena, we should also study whether it is easier to delineate this from other relations and situations at some times and in some places compared to others. The American sociologists Barbara Brents and Kathryn Hausbeck (2010) argue that processes similar to those in the sex industry are increasingly being mainstreamed, such as the commodification of relations, the sexualisation of culture, the increased importance of service work and the organisation of relations along the lines of global capitalism. Whether or not this is more common than previously, several scholars point to the need to understand sex for sale in its broader context and suggest investigating links with, rather than assuming a contrast to, other relations and situations (see e.g. McLeod 1982; Agustín 2005). Insisting that prostitution is not fixed but rather is in continuity with other relations and situations, does not entail that there is no continuity or core in what is termed prostitution. Rather, the point is to understand what is counted as prostitution in a broader context.

Some literature deals with the question of what is actually for sale in the prostitution exchange and how this relates to other relations and exchanges. The American sociologist Viviana Zelizer (2005) includes sexuality in her analysis of what happens when intimacy is connected to economic activities. In her description of the social science literature that analyses the relationship between intimacy and money, Zelizer (2005: 29-32) points out three traps contributions often fall into: being 'economically reductionist', 'culturally reductionist' or

‘politically reductionist’. Economic analyses often consider intimate relations as belonging to a sphere of economic rationality in which humans in all relations give in order to receive. Culturalist explanations represent intimacy as regulated by ideology and scripts, not taking into consideration material realities. Opposite, while a political interpretation of intimate relations makes it possible to identify how these are imbued with power and struggles, but one at the same time risks losing sight of the meanings these relations have to the practitioners. Zelizer proceeds to argue that neither economic nor cultural or political explanations suffice on their own, but that investigations that combine these spheres are necessary. She (1994) also argues that the meaning of money, and assumptions about how this impacts intimacies, too often remain unproblematised. While Zelizer recognizes that relations may be monetised and instrumentalised by the increasing power of money, she emphasises the human capacity for meaning-making and the importance of context.

The above is a discussion of how prostitution *affects* people who are involved in prostitution and relationships between people. Power and harm are highly relevant in this respect. Central to both theorising and politics are discussions of whether prostitution is an expression of gendered power relations and even has an increasing effect on this. If prostitution is understood as a relation in which the person is the commodity and thus devalued as a person (see e.g. Pateman 1988), prostitution becomes an ‘unpure form of sex’ (Hubbard 2012: 36). In contrast, understanding prostitution as a form of work builds on a very different ontology, but still maintains a focus on power, i.e. economic power. The most notable contribution in this literature is the work by the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum. In her book *Sex and Social Justice* (1999) she investigates prostitution in relation to other forms of bodily service being performed for money, and she contests that prostitution is more worthy of condemnation or criminalisation than other ways of earning a living. She proposes that the

evaluation of whether prostitution is problematic or not, should be based on an evaluation of the working conditions, not its moral qualities. Returning to Zelizer (2005), we can here bring in how ideas about ‘authenticity’ are important to why some forms of exchanges including intimacy are considered legitimate, while others are not. Nannies, kindergarten staff and primary school teachers take care of children for pay. Why is the care for children for money not illegitimate in much the same way as prostitution in most settings she asks? Thus, she questions what is taken for granted regarding legitimate and illegitimate intimacy.

The organisation of the book

This book brings together chapters that offer very different inroads into the exploration of the meanings and moralities of sexual commerce. Its cases derive from many different vantage points such as the study of people who sell or buy sex, or authorities that regulate them. Empirically, settings include Canada, Denmark, Gambia, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, Sweden, the UK and the US. While many of the chapters build on empirical research conducted in a European context, they deal with issues relevant also outside of Europe in that they include the voices of migrants and reflect European citizens’ sexual-commercial engagements in the Global South.

This edited volume combines diverse academic traditions as its authors represent disciplines and subjects such as anthropology, criminology, gender studies, geography, history, migration studies, political science, sexuality studies and sociology. Including such elements as analyses of ethnographic fieldworks, policy and legal explorations and theoretically oriented texts, the book covers the phenomenon of sex for sale, not only in present contexts; it also offers a historical analysis of how the definition of prostitution and sex work has changed over time.

The book is divided into three parts, preceded by an introductory chapter. The first part *Historically speaking* focuses on how the definitions of prostitution, sex work or sex for sale have changed over time through regulation by the authorities. The second part *Speaking from experience* presents how sex workers and sex buyers rework, adjust to or resist the categorisation processes and the adjacent control and stigma they are subjected to. The third part *Speaking about control* presents some important contemporary definitional issues reflecting the different ways in which governments, the police and service providers define what is and what is not prostitution. A particularly pertinent part of these discussions is the delineation between prostitution and human trafficking.

Historically speaking

As described above, prostitution, sex work or sex for sale are not stable categories, but are rather contingent on contemporary understandings of the intersection between gender, sexuality and money. Few historical studies have engaged in the study of prostitution (Gilfoyle 1999). Yet historical studies are particularly valuable as they document that neither prostitution nor the societal response to this is fixed.

The first part of the book consists of three chapters that in different ways shed light on how prostitution and sex work have been contested fields at different times and describe the changes that have occurred as to how prostitution and sex work have been regulated and controlled by the authorities and through the priorities of civil society, especially the sex workers' rights movement. The two first chapters investigate the construction of the prostitute from a Foucauldian perspective on governance, whereas the last chapter in this part explores how prostitution has been regulated from a spatial perspective. Studies on prostitution in

former times have in different ways demonstrated the close link between sexuality and how authorities have regulated and controlled ‘the prostitute’ (see e.g. Walkowitz 1980, 1982; Corbin 1990; Svanström 1996, 2008; Harris 2010; Blom 2012). Likewise, the two first chapters investigate meanings ascribed to combinations of sex and money that in different ways construe the category of ‘the prostitutes’ and impact how people involved in prostitution are controlled. In investigating articulations of prostitution and the sources of these, the Canadian Australian historian Carol Bacchi offers valuable analytical tools (2009) to ‘go beyond’ or ‘look through’ policy proposals, instead analysing what is taken for granted. In their chapters Rydström and Spanger adopt Bacchi’s analytical strategy when exploring how boundaries for female and male prostitutes, respectively, were established through logics and articulations of sexuality.

In the chapter *What’s the problem with prostitution? Shifting problematisations of men and women selling sex* Jens Rydström begins by discussing different notions of the relationship between sex work and sexuality *per se* from the medieval times up until the 20th century. Four articulations in particular have dominated the problematisations by the state and the church: prostitution as a moral problem, a public health problem, a social problem and a gendered problem in Europe. Using the example of soldier prostitution in Sweden, which flourished in larger European cities with posted military personnel until the middle of the 20th century, Rydström shows how, throughout history, different actors like the state, the church and the sex workers’ movement have problematised female and male prostitution differently.

The second chapter in this section is written by Marlene Spanger: *Surveillance of dangerous liaisons: sex and money*. Spanger looks at how Danish authorities defined and controlled the prostitute in the 1930s to the 1950s and she argues that the policies in place at that time

derived from eugenics articulated as sexually deviant in a medical sense. Giving the example of the Danish police vice squad's observations in what were considered 'public houses' and a Danish international medical study on prostitution, she suggests that during this period, 'the female prostitute' was positioned as dangerous due to her sexual liaisons with different strange men in the public space. In addition, the authorities' regulation of 'the prostitute' served as a power mechanism not just applied to women who sold sexual services, but to the sexuality of women in general. Spanger thus demonstrates that the definition of 'the prostitute' as dangerous and prostitution as something that should be surveilled and controlled, hinges not only on a definition of promiscuity as a problem, but also on the public display of promiscuity. Space is thus important as to whether sexual commercial acts are considered problematic, or even considered to belong to the category of 'prostitution'.

Patrizia Testai's chapter, *The production and transformation of prostitution spaces*, links well to this point, exemplifies how street prostitution markets are marked by gentrification processes. Her example focuses on how such processes have been fueled by different political and economic interests in the red-light district of Catania in Sicily. Testai analyses how different actors (local authorities, neighbourhoods and different Non-governmental organisations) have established, transformed and contested this prostitution space from the late 1950s up until the present day. Assisted by the concept 'the revanchist city', she highlights how the prostitution space was transformed by local politics and capital investments in poor urban areas. She further argues that a re-conquest of the inner city has taken place, caused by how it has been transformed into a neoliberal frontier for a consumer lifestyle at the expense of marginal groups such as sex workers, migrants and the poor.

Speaking from experience

The next part of the book draws our attention to the men and women selling sexual services. Studies from the last part of the 20th century and up until the present time investigate the experiences of sex workers and demonstrate rather different and disparate life trajectories of the sex workers as well as of their clients (Chapkis 1996; Skilbrei 1998; Kempadoo and Doezema 1999; Nencel 2001; Bernstein 2007; Sanders 2008; Dewey 2011; Spanger 2013; Shah 2014). Such studies reflect the variegated ways in which the links between sex and money is interpreted and experienced. In line with a burgeoning body of literature within sex for sale studies (e.g. Cabeza 2004; Bernstein 2007; Faier 2007; Cheng 2010; Jacobsen and Skilbrei 2010; Spanger 2013a; Groes and Fernandez 2017) the chapters in this part call into question the dichotomous thinking that still dominates the research field of sex for sale. Departing from the stereotypes of ‘the prostitute’ as ‘a female victim’ or the male client as ‘a predator’, the authors call attention to analytical tools that may be helpful in offering more nuanced analysis of the complex and often sensitive relations that constitute the exchange of sex and the money. Investigating the link between sex and money, this section scrutinises the suitable analytical tools of cultural scripting, authenticity, affectivity, agency and intersectionality.

As the chapters in this section demonstrate, what sex for sale *is* for people directly involved and how this links to the “social and material conditions in which they live” (Phoenix 1999: 3) are necessary inroads to understand prostitution. In her book *Temporarily Yours*, Bernstein speaks about the relevance of this and how we can engage in analysis of broader issues (2007: 4): “By detailing the relationship between money and sex on the “micro” level of bodies and subjectivities”. Inspired by this perspective, the chapters in the second part of the book investigate the experiences of women and men selling and buying sex as well as social workers by asking how the involved people in the sex trade ascribe meaning to relationships

that involved exchange between sex and money. Presenting rather different examples of meanings ascribed to the sex trade, this part of the book seeks to demonstrate the necessity of maintaining a nuanced understanding of sex for sale. The chapters take into consideration the particular settings in which the sexual commerce occurs based on empirical findings. These may be the tourist resorts in the Global South (see Heinskou Chapter 7), the red light district in Amsterdam (see Janssen Chapter 9) or on the streets in North America (see Brown, Dewey and Orchard Chapter 5). Moreover, Bertone and Ferrero Camoletto (Chapter 6), Brown, Dewey and Orchard (chapter 5) foreground the gendered logic that structures the meanings ascribed to the sale of sex, whereas Chimienti and Lieber (chapter 8) point out how gendered logic constrains and creates opportunities for the women who sell sex as they discuss how this should be conceptualized in the case of migration related prostitution.

As demonstrated in chapter 2 and 3, ‘Cultural scripting’ is one example of an analytical tool for analysing meanings ascribed to the sale of sex; this tool sensitises the researcher and reader to how the involved actors apply particular narratives in order to ascribe meaning to their selling or buying of sex. In chapter 5, *Intensive mothering as cultural script: Boundary setting among street-involved women*, Kyria Brown, Susan Dewey and Treena Orchard employ the analytical tool ‘cultural scripting of intensive mothering’. Throughout the chapter they use this tool to analyse the perspectives of street-involved women and the social service and healthcare providers that work with the group. First, they identify four framings among North American street-involved women with respect to their understandings of themselves as mothers: asserting maternal identity as their rightful status, claiming a ‘good mother’ identity, delineating between mother and sex worker roles, and acknowledging child custody loss as a result of conditions surrounding street involvement. Second, Brown, Dewey and Orchard show how social services and healthcare provision is a gendered domain in that it is

formulated as in line with women's needs. They argue that there are three ways of framing the social services and healthcare providers' narratives about their work with street-involved women to help them change their lives: modelling healthy behaviour, setting professional boundaries, and building lasting ties. All these ways of framing the women's needs and formulating services are related to the cultural script of intensive mothering and this demonstrates the complex identities of both the clients and professionals taking part in the interaction, the authors argue.

Bearing in mind the analytical tool of gendered cultural scripting, Chiara Bertone and Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto focus on masculinities. In Chapter 6 *Beyond the client: Exploring men's sexual scripting*, they analyse how Italian men in interviews narrate their heterosexual sexual biographies, which include the purchase of sex. According to Bertone and Ferrero Camoletto, sexual scripting theory is a powerful tool if we are to dismantle simplistic, classificatory and derogatory understandings of men as sex clients. In their chapter they demonstrate how cultural scripting allows them to explore how the process of making sense of paying for sex for the men is part of the men's scripting of heterosexual masculinity.

Chapter 7, *The Intimate Bazaar of Female Sex Tourism* by Marie Bruvik Heinskou, also investigates sex clients, but in the setting of tourism and focusing on female tourists from the Global North travelling to the Global South, in this case the Gambia. A burgeoning literature on sex tourism has contributed fruitfully to the research field of global prostitution by bringing in the concept transactional sex. This research suggests that romance and love are crucial aspects in how the exchange of sex and money is negotiated in a tourist setting (Cohen 1982; Kempadoo 1999; Brennan 2001, 2004; Cabeza 2004). Such exchange has been termed 'open-ended prostitution', stressing other components such as friendship, other services (tour-

guiding, cleaning etc.) in the sex sale. Heinskou brings affectivity to the fore and describes love and romance as crucial aspects in the exchange of sex and money. Inspired by Geertz' concept of the economic bazaar, she proposes the analytical concept *the intimate bazaar*, as this concept highlights the centrality of negotiation and fluidity. By framing what goes on in light of political economic asymmetry, racial hierarchies and gender relations, Heinskou demonstrates that the complex intimate encounters taking place are temporary ways of being, situated emergent authentic selves. The bargaining of the exchanges of intimacy, desire, favours, food, clothing and money is key in this. Inspired by Bernstein (2007), Heinskou draws attention to the microsocial setting since this perspective enables us to see the fluid modes of sexual sociability within female sex tourism.

The link between the Global South and the Global North is also examined in the next two chapters. Both investigate female migrants from the Global South selling sexual services in the Global North. In chapter 8, *A 'continuum of sexual economic exchanges' or 'weak agency'?*, Milena Chimienti and Marylène Lieber explore the empirical case of migrant sex workers in Switzerland, whereas in chapter 9, *The Fluidity of a 'Happy Ending'*, Marie-Louise Janssen examines the empirical case of Chinese female migrants in the Netherlands. By exploring how women experience the link between sex and money in sex work in a migration setting, both chapters challenge the predominant understanding of migrant sex workers as victims of human trafficking and subjects without agency.

Chimienti and Lieber ask whether the Italian anthropologist and feminist Paola Tabet's 30-year-old concept '*A continuum of sexual economic exchanges*' is still valid today for understanding the situations of female migrant sex workers. Tabet (1987) emphasises that the category of prostitution is fluid and that there is no clear and universally shared definition.

Bringing in different situations and relations where sex and money enter into exchange in different ways (marriage, prostitution etc.), Tabet argues that the stigma attached to prostitution follows the same logic as stigma imposed on every woman who transgresses social and dominant norms based on patriarchal structures. Based on interviews with female migrant sex workers in Switzerland, chapter 8 shows this complexity: While sex work and other sexual-economic exchanges can constitute ‘migratory resources’ for some female migrants, the combination of migration and sex work is often problematic as it limits the autonomy of women, confining them to a stigmatised economic sector. Chimienti and Lieber argue that Tabet’s concept fails to grasp the complexity of the lived experience of female migrant sex workers for two interrelated reasons. First, focusing on the gendered logics of constraints and resistance, this concept does not include an intersectional perspective. Second, as such it does not capture the various negotiations sex workers initiate and enters into. Chimienti and Lieber suggest that the concept of ‘weak agency’ offers a way to address such limitations. As is evident from the chapter by Chimienti and Lieber, the definition and identification of what prostitution *is* does not only reflect how this is defined in laws, but are also based on stereotypes and norms.

While their chapter contributes to an ongoing discussion on how we may understand the lives of female migrant sex workers in a more nuanced way, Marie-Louise Janssen’s chapter, *The Fluidity of a ‘Happy Ending’*, illustrates how this is reflected in practice among in the relationship between Dutch trafficking policies and Chinese female migrants working as masseuses in the Netherlands. Based on fieldwork in massage parlours and interviews with masseuses and their clients, Janssen analyses how we may discern what human trafficking is and what sex work is from contextual understandings of how and why sexual services are being offered by this particular group. As the provision of sexual services in unlicensed

massage parlours is officially illegal in the Netherlands, Dutch authorities consider this service as a sign of exploitation or human trafficking. For the masseuses, this service is an important source of income due to their poor salaries as masseuses. The narratives of the women reveal how sexual acts are implicitly and explicitly negotiated and delineated (or not delineated) from 'normal' massage. Janssen suggests that the agency of many Chinese masseuses is understood within a vision of a long-term migration project and of social mobility. Although the opportunities of the Chinese masseuses are constrained, agency is still present in the different ways in which their expectations and hopes are constructed and how they apply an instrumental approach to sexuality.

Speaking about control

In the last part of the book, part three, we move our gaze to the policy domains of prostitution and human trafficking and how they inform each other by asking: how is prostitution given meaning and delineated from other phenomena by institutions and people who are designated the task of defining and controlling this? The three chapters in this part of the book point particularly to how struggles over meaning as expressed in global policy agendas, national laws and local regulations impact the lives of both citizens and migrants involved in prostitution.

The section starts with the chapter *The 'Normal' and the 'Other' Woman of Prostitution Policy Debates: New Concerns and Solutions* by May-Len Skilbrei. Taking as her point of departure the case of Norwegian debates on prostitution the years before the introduction in 2009 of a law that criminalised the purchase of sex. Skilbrei analyses conflicting logics in prostitution policy debates at the time as they increasingly became entangled with concerns over migration and human trafficking. She demonstrates how debates about Nigerian women

selling sex in urban spaces in Norway was explicitly gendered and racialized and simultaneously produced sex sellers generally as victims of prostitution and Nigerian sex sellers as a nuisance and a threat to the fabric of society.

While Skilbrei sheds light on how the figure of the black female sex seller disturbs the public urban space, the next chapter by Kerwin Kaye pays attention to the silence of male victims within the policy domain of human trafficking. Together, the two chapters demonstrate how the entangled debates over prostitution and human trafficking are highly gendered; in particular as regards identification of 'the rightful victim'. The discussion of sex trafficking has been notable for the way it generally has excluded any significant mention of male victims.

Chapter 11 *The gender of trafficking, or, why can't men be sex slaves?* by Kaye looks at how the protective mechanisms of governments and civil society do not include boys and men who are subjected to harm. There is a link between this chapter and the chapter by Jens Rydström above. While Rydström's chapter 2 sheds light on the way in which historical processes in understandings of sexuality and commerce have left men who sell sex out of the control sphere, Kaye's chapters shed light on how this is also relevant today, as is the response of the state and the civil society regarding the protection of male victims. Kaye discusses how the exploitation of boys and men who sell sex in the present time is articulated differently than that of women within the policy domain of anti-trafficking, asking why it is so difficult for society to acknowledge male victimhood. Kaye argues that the anti-drama of male rape generally results in a story that is 'better left untold,' one whose disturbing emotional content differs dramatically from the melodramatic and significantly eroticised narrative of 'female sexual slavery.'

As the chapters by Spanger and Testaí demonstrate, space is central to whether prostitution is recognized at all as a problem and as an issue that the police and others should deal with. In this last section of the book, which goes more into detail regarding the question of control, we have included a chapter by Alexander Kondakov dedicated to the disjuncture between the ways in which prostitution is integrated in the urban sphere and how it is regulated by law and is policed. The chapter's title, *Spatial Justice: How the police craft the city by enforcing law on prostitution*, encapsulates the process whereby the relationship between laws, their policing and the developments of targeted individuals and acts take central stage. Recently, pavements in the city of St. Petersburg in Russia were covered in colourful advertisement for prostitution to attract clients. Departing from the more usual analysis of the cityscape, in this chapter, Kondakov investigates how this expression of prostitution is made possible, particularly as Russia has a strict criminal law on prostitution. The place and visibility, and thus the meaning, of sex for sale is produced by how it is both prohibited and accepted, and, not least, by how this is continually remade by how the police operates in lieu of this ambivalence. Kondakov analyses sex workers' narratives of spatial justice as a reaction to the injustices that emerges by the way the practices of the city police and the prostitution law is combined, and therefore how they problematise the ambiguous landscape they operate in.

Questions about what prostitution *is* and what it *does* to participants and society are essential to debates on how and why this should be regulated. But this should not make these questions relevant only insofar as they help us to choose between policies. The types of research presented above and in this book investigate how prostitution, sex work or sex for sale is defined, delineated, contested, understood and carry meaning. Our intention is to move beyond the kind of knowledge about this phenomenon that is often considered useful for

policy makers, social workers, police, stakeholders and others, such as answering questions about what criminal justice policies work best or what kinds of health problems sex workers have and need help with. Instead, we aim to explore issues we find to be under-explored as they are concerned with what prostitution, sex work or sex for sale *is* and how this relates to broader societal issues to do with sexuality, gender, migration and power. The aim is not to end the discussion by answering important questions once and for all, but to take part in steering the ongoing discussion in new directions and, hopefully, to open up for new understandings and perspectives.

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¹ There are fierce debates in international scholarship and organisations on what term to apply to relations and situations where money or goods are exchanged with sexual acts and how to term the agents involved. For the purpose of this book it is exactly the diverse interpretations of what these relations and situations *are* that is in focus. Our aim is not to narrow down the analytical potential. We use these terms interchangeably. Some chapters investigate explicitly the meaning ascribed to the term prostitution whereas other chapters explicitly clarify how prostitution and sex work are applied in the individual chapter. The term 'sex work' often refers to much broader situations and relations (see e.g. Cohen, Hardy, Sanders and Wolkowitz 2013). In this book prostitution and sex work both refer to the exchange of sex and money, but the terms have different historical meanings (Doezema 1998). For a critique of the continued use of the term 'prostitution', see Koken (2010). When we in the title of this book applies the term 'sex for sale', this is to circumvent some of these issues and to ensure that the book and the thinking of the authors and readers are not bound by a particular analysis of what the object of study is, but instead is rather descriptive.

² The position that prostitution is inherently violent is often pitched in opposition to seeing prostitution as a form of work. This dichotomy is often the starting point of debates (see e.g. Pateman 1988; Overall 1992; Doezeema 1998, Agustín 2005), but in our opinion many contemporary scholars operate with an understanding of prostitution as exploitative, without that implicating that it cannot be interpreted as work and also something that sex workers choose to engage in.