



The Real Impact of the Swedish Model on Sex Workers

Advocacy Toolkit



“The state restricts my demand for independence. It is offensive for you to force your morals upon me. I shall be protected to make decisions, as they are under the influence of the patriarchy. Earlier the view was that women couldn't make wise, independent decisions as they were seen as being impulsive, incapable and were incapacitated persons like children. Today it is the same, but they say the patriarchy is to blame. So the feminists become my custodians instead of my family or husband. Like with children under the age of 15, the view is that adult women cannot consent to be paid for sex.”

PETITE JASMINE

“Isn't it strange? What some feminists' calls slavery, we call freedom.”

PETITE JASMINE

“Playing the victim card is a well tried ace throughout the times and used to defend oppression of certain groups.”

PETITE JASMINE



PHOTO: ROSE ALLIANCE



Contents

Introduction	1
Acknowledgements	2
<hr/>	
#1 Sweden’s Abolitionist Understanding, and Modes of Silencing Opposition	#1
Introduction	1:1
How is sex work understood in Sweden?	1:1
Does everybody agree with this mainstream Swedish understanding?	1:1
Have these voices undermined Sweden’s consensus on sex work?	1:1
MODE OF SILENCING 1: False consciousness	1:3
MODE OF SILENCING 2: Lying and putting on a brave face	1:5
MODE OF SILENCING 3: An un/misrepresentative perspective	1:6
MODE OF SILENCING 4: Caricaturing and/or demonising testimony and the speaker of the testimony	1:8
Summary	1:9
Further reading on these topics	1:10
<hr/>	
#2 Impacts of the Sex Purchase Law: Street-Based Sex Work and Levels of Sex Work	#2
Introduction	2:1
Have there been negative impacts of the sex purchase criminalisation?	2:1
Have levels of sex work in Sweden decreased?	2:4
Summary	2:5
Further reading on these topics	2:6
<hr/>	
#3 Impacts of the Swedish Model’s Justifying Discourses on Service Provision	#3
Introduction	3:1
What is harm reduction and why is it needed?	3:1
If harm reduction is imperative, is there opposition to harm reduction?	3:2
Summary	3:6
Further reading on these topics	3:7
<hr/>	
#4 Impacts of Other Legislation and Policy – The Danger of Seeing the Swedish Model in a Vacuum	#4
Introduction	4:1
Does the Swedish model protect sex workers from state-sponsored harassment?	4:1
Laws and policies other than the sex purchase law	4:2
Summary	4:5
Further reading on these topics	4:6



Introduction

...NSWP MEMBERS STAND FIRMLY IN OPPOSITION TO THE CRIMINALISATION OF THE PURCHASE OF SEX, THE SO-CALLED 'SWEDISH MODEL'. THIS IS A LEGAL MODEL BASED ON IDEOLOGY, MISINFORMATION, MORALISATION AND A DISREGARD FOR THE AGENCY, HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF SEX WORKERS.

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) exists to uphold the voices of sex workers globally and connect regional networks advocating for the rights of sex workers of all genders. It advocates for rights-based health and social services, freedom from abuse and discrimination, and self-determination for sex workers. NSWP has a growing membership of over 200 member organisations spread over five regions – Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America and the Caribbean, ranging in size from less than ten to more than 65,000 sex workers. NSWP members are regional and national sex worker networks and sex worker-led organisations from all global regions. Almost all work on health issues. Some provide services, some focus on advocacy, some on mobilising to reduce vulnerability and address the human rights issues that affect sex workers' health and wellbeing. Some member organisations work with all genders and some with only female, male or transgender sex workers. A number of member organisations work with the children of sex workers. All NSWP members sign up to the core value that states opposition to all forms of criminalisation and other legal oppression of sex work (including legislative oppression of sex workers, clients, third parties¹, families, partners and friends).

Therefore, NSWP members stand firmly in opposition to the criminalisation of the purchase of sex, the so-called 'Swedish model'. This is a legal model based on ideology, misinformation, moralisation and a disregard for the agency, health, safety and wellbeing of sex workers.

The criminalisation of sex workers' clients is claimed to be part of a new legal framework designed to eradicate sex work and trafficking by 'ending demand'. In 1999, Sweden criminalised sex workers' clients and maintained the already existing criminalisation of third parties. The individual selling of sex remained legal. Various referred to as the 'Swedish', 'Nordic' or 'End Demand' model, there is tremendous pressure in many countries to adopt this legislation. The damaging consequences of this model on sex workers' health, rights and living conditions are all too rarely discussed, with the voices of sex workers and sex worker rights organisations consistently and systematically silenced in the debate.

This advocacy toolkit serves to highlight the harms associated with this approach of criminalisation, both in relation to the simplistic and crude understandings of sex work and of sex workers that are used to justify the law, and in relation to the direct outcomes of the resulting legal framework of criminalising the purchase of sex. In contrast to claims that the Swedish model is a necessary and effective approach in protecting women from violence and exploitation, sex workers in Sweden note worrying consequences of the law in terms of their safety and wellbeing.

The advocacy toolkit will be an evolving set of documents. They will serve to continue to raise awareness of the outcomes of the law through the ongoing publishing of evidence-based fact sheets and advocacy tools, tools that will provide resources to sex workers, allies and researchers around the world to challenge widespread promotion of this detrimental legal and political approach to the regulation of sex work.

¹ The term 'third parties' includes managers, brothel keepers, receptionists, maids, drivers, landlords, hotels who rent rooms to sex workers and anyone else who is seen as facilitating sex work.



**SEX WORKERS WILL
NO LONGER STAY
SILENT IN THE FACE
OF THOSE WHO PUT
SEX WORKERS AND
OUR FAMILIES AT RISK,
DENY OUR AGENCY
AND UNDERMINE
OUR LABOUR, HEALTH
AND HUMAN RIGHTS.**

The first series of papers launched in the toolkit document the impact of the Swedish model on the lives of sex workers in Sweden. These papers provide a means with which to tackle attempts to silence criticism of the law; principally, they serve as an evidence-based tool with which to undermine assertions that the law has not had detrimental side-effects.

The first paper of this series discusses the disempowering generalisations that are made about sex workers and about sex work that justify the law. The paper goes on to explore the understandings that have been used to exclude the voices of sex workers from the debate in Sweden and internationally: tools that are referred to as ‘modes of silencing’.

The second paper highlights the direct outcomes of the law, stressing that the law has failed in its ambition to decrease levels of sex work, and has had negative impacts on the lives of sex workers in terms of exacerbating danger and risks to health and wellbeing.

The third paper focuses on the indirect outcomes of the law: on how the understandings that justify the law have affected the perspectives of service providers (particularly social workers), and how these perspectives have impacted service provision and harm reduction for sex workers.

The fourth and final paper of this series concentrates on laws and policies other than the Swedish model itself. It describes how these are used by the Swedish state and the police to directly destabilise the lives of sex workers in Sweden.

Further to this first series of papers, a second series will be added to the advocacy toolkit in early 2015. These will document the ways in which the Swedish model undermines and violates sex workers’ human rights.

Sex workers will no longer stay silent in the face of those who put sex workers and our families at risk, deny our agency and undermine our labour, health and human rights.

Acknowledgements

NSWP would like to thank Bridging the Gaps for financial support in producing this advocacy toolkit and for contributing to the publication costs.

The following people are also thanked for their contributions to the development of the project:

Global: Anastacia Ryan, Anelda Grové, Mitch Cosgrove, Nine, Pye Jakobsson, Carina Edlund (Rose Alliance) and; Dr Jay Levy.

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) is part of Bridging the Gaps – health and rights for key populations.

Together with almost 100 local and international organisations we have united under one mission: achieving universal access to HIV/STI prevention, treatment, care and support for key populations, including sex workers, LGBT people and people who use drugs. Go to www.hivgaps.org for more information.



The Real Impact of the Swedish Model on Sex Workers

#1

Sweden's Abolitionist
Understanding, and Modes
of Silencing Opposition

Sweden's Abolitionist Understanding, and Modes of Silencing Opposition

THE VOICES OF SEX WORKERS AND SEX WORKER RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY SILENCED IN THE DEBATE CONCERNING WHAT IS OFTEN CALLED 'THE SWEDISH MODEL'...

Introduction

Sweden's sex purchase law, which criminalises the purchase – but not the sale – of sex¹, was introduced in 1999. Since the introduction of the law, other states have followed Sweden in adopting the legislation,² and there has been much in the way of activism, advocacy, and campaigning both for and against the legislation.

The voices of sex workers and sex worker rights organisations have been consistently and systematically silenced in the debate concerning what is often called 'the Swedish model', both in Sweden and internationally. This paper therefore serves to untangle how the voices of sex workers are silenced using various tools to undermine their testimony, which I will refer to as 'modes of silencing'.

Swedish understandings about sex work that feed into these 'modes of silencing' have also come to impact how Swedish service providers construct sex work and treat sex workers (these service providers, and the services they provide, are discussed in the third paper of this toolkit). This paper therefore aims to unpack and deconstruct the problematic understandings of sex work that justify the Swedish model.

How is sex work understood in Sweden?

In Sweden, sex work³ is constructed as a form of violence against women in and of itself; it is also argued that sex work is inevitably and unchangeably associated with violence, abuse, and exploitation. Sex workers' clients are seen to be men, sex workers as victimised women. This argument is based on a broader international

feminist perspective, termed variously as 'radical feminism' and '(neo-) abolitionist feminism' (with some variations and combinations such as 'radical abolitionist feminism', and so forth; NSWP uses the term 'fundamentalist feminist', though this is not used in mainstream Swedish discourse). Fundamentally, what is desired by these feminist writers and campaigners is an abolition of sex work, which is seen to be a blight on society and on efforts to undermine patriarchal subordination of women.

Does everybody agree with this mainstream Swedish understanding?

No, for several reasons. Firstly, not all sex work is violent or problematic (though that is certainly not to say that it never is). Sex work – like many other forms of work – is enormously variable, and this variability applies to the levels and rates of violence and harm that can be associated with sex work. Measurable violence is associated with the context in which sex work takes place – which can be changed – and so violence and other harm varies and can be challenged.

Furthermore, many sex workers do not identify as victims. Many stress agency and self-determination in the context of their sex work, and motivations for sex work are as variable as experiences in sex work. In addition, this fundamentalist feminist understanding tells us that sex workers are disempowered (cisgender⁴) women, and that their clients are men. This neatly invisibilises male and trans sex workers, and female and LGBTQ clients: not all sex workers are cisgender women; not all clients are straight men.

1 Due to its criminalisation of the purchase of sex, the sex purchase law should not be referred to as 'decriminalisation' (even though the sale of sex is technically decriminalised), as this term refers to a full removal of legislation peculiar to sex work. The law may therefore be referred to as 'partial criminalisation'.

2 Norway and Iceland have criminalised the purchase of sex, and this legislation has been proposed in countries including England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and France.

3 Though the terms 'sex work' and 'sex worker(s)' are used in this paper to emphasise the legitimacy of labour in sex work, these terms are almost universally absent from dominant discourse and political discussion in Sweden. Instead, the terms 'prostitution' and 'prostitute(s)' are used in Sweden by many key stakeholders, despite their being argued to be pejorative and reductive by many sex workers and sex worker rights organisations the world over.

4 'Cisgender' should be taken to mean individuals whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth, as opposed to 'transgender'.



Therefore, in the context of the above issues with abolitionist feminism's crude generalisations, many organisations (sex worker rights organisations and unions, as well as service and healthcare providers and academic, activist, and political stakeholders), internationally and in Sweden, have attempted to complexify engagement with sex work. They have tried to challenge a narrative that universally conceptualises sex work as a form of violence, that argues that sex work is inevitably surrounded by violence, a narrative that is reductionist and that eclipses variability and nuance.

Have these voices undermined Sweden's consensus on sex work?

No, despite the fact that it has been emphasised on a political level in Sweden that sex workers themselves should contribute to political debate and discussion; instead, sex workers have been systematically excluded and silenced.

Sweden is a modernist state that has a long history of social engineering and that has established consensus on many issues. What this means on the ground is that various groups who have threatened to destabilise Sweden's aspiration to become a homogeneous, unified welfare state have been subject to various methods of control and intervention. During the 19th and 20th centuries, these groups have notably included women, sex workers, gay men, people who use drugs, immigrants, and those considered

to be eugenically deficient. Methods of control have included the forced incarceration of people with venereal diseases/STIs (such as HIV; this continues to this day), the incarceration and forced 'treatment' of people who use drugs (again, this continues to this day), and the sterilisation of large numbers of people (this only ceased in the mid-1970s, and transgender people wishing to have sex reassignment surgery were sterilised until 2013 as a requisite for their surgery).

But overt force and segregation are not the only things used to exclude and control in Sweden. Methods of control have frequently included the silencing of groups considered to be socially deviant and disruptive. In the case of sex work, several tools are made use of in Sweden to silence the voices of sex workers so that broad consensus in understanding may be established without being successfully challenged. These tools – I term them 'modes of silencing' – derive directly from broader radical feminist understandings of sex work, similarly to broader social constructions of sex work in Sweden.

Modes of silencing can be complex, and can cleverly serve to weaken perspectives that threaten to undermine Sweden's crude conceptions of sex work. However, knowledge of what they involve can be potent in undermining these disempowering tools.

Ways of silencing opposition have notably included the following four methods (though there is certainly crossover between them). Example quotations will be given for each by way of illustration.

IN THE CASE OF SEX WORK, SEVERAL TOOLS ARE MADE USE OF IN SWEDEN TO SILENCE THE VOICES OF SEX WORKERS...



MODE OF SILENCING 1

False consciousness

'False consciousness' is an old idea (coined by Friedrich Engels in the 19th century) that asserts that certain groups cannot fully comprehend their own situation or their motivation. In short, it is claimed that certain people are not 'objectively' self-aware. Because the group or individual in question has had their self-awareness undermined, their subjective perspective and testimony is undermined in turn as not being indicative of the 'truth' of their situation.

Various reasons are given for this lack of self-awareness, and this tool has been used to silence various groups whose perspectives threaten to undermine widely held views. Groups that have been undermined in such a manner internationally have included working class people, those perceived to be ethnically/racially inferior, people who use drugs, LGBT people, and sex workers.

An idea that sex workers are speaking from a position of false consciousness is routinely used in radical feminist writing and in Sweden, and is justified by several primary assumptions, which are outlined below:

Traumatisation undermining self-awareness and choice

Sex workers are seen to be so traumatised by their experiences in sex work – or by the abuse that they are seen to have experienced that has acted as a precursor to their sex work – that they are unable to properly engage

with their situation, with this abuse also argued to be re-enacted through sex work (which is constructed as necessarily abusive). The view is well-summarised (in critique) by an advisor regarding prostitution at the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*):

“(It is argued that) if you see your situation in this way (as voluntary sex work, not as abuse), then it’s because of, you’re reacting on previous trauma, or you’re traumatised and reacting from previous sexual abuse... or you’re suffering from false consciousness”.

(Interview, 2010, Senior Advisor Regarding Prostitution – *Socialstyrelsen*)⁵

This mode of silencing does not stand up when analysed in the context of individual experience. As noted above, experiences in, and motivations for, sex work are incredibly variable. As critiqued by the above-quoted senior advisor at the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, people with hugely divergent experiences and motivations are therefore simply lumped ‘in the same category’:

“people, you put in the same category, and you say that well, ultimately, it’s all the same, it doesn’t matter if you make €5,000 a month, you sell sex without intermediaries, independently... you’re in the same position as someone who is forced by third parties”.

(Interview, 2010, Senior Advisor Regarding Prostitution – *Socialstyrelsen*)⁶

AN IDEA THAT SEX WORKERS ARE SPEAKING FROM A POSITION OF FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS IS ROUTINELY USED IN RADICAL FEMINIST WRITING...

5 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

6 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)



Desperation undermining true choice

Sex workers are seen to have their agency constrained to such an extent that even if they assert that they undertake sex work out of 'choice', their options are so limited as to undermine this assertion. Things that are argued to limit choice include generalisations of sex workers as impoverished, destitute, mentally unsound, and dependent on drugs/alcohol.

This mode of silencing falls down when we engage with the fact that agency and 'choice' is constrained in many situations, and is not only bisected by issues that relate to sex work, gender, and so forth. Crucially, in a context of capitalism, it can be argued that very few people actually make an entirely 'free' choice in selecting their means of income. Moreover, it should be stressed that many sex workers choose sex work from amongst (or in addition to) other means of making money, and for many reasons; many sex workers do not sell sex out of desperation.

Patriarchal conditioning undermining objectivity

Due to conditioning in the context of patriarchal oppression, sex workers are assumed to be unable to see through the blinders of their oppression/

subjugation. They are assumed to be unable to see the 'truth' of their situation. Therefore, sex workers are asserted to erroneously deproblematise their sex work. This is used to explain away the voices of sex workers who may claim to exercise agency in their work, who emphasise that they undertake it freely, who claim to enjoy their work, and/or who claim that their work is not problematic or detrimental. This view is deeply patronising and (ironically, given that it is a view espoused by some feminists) paternalistic, since it serves to silence the voices of some women whilst allowing for others – those who purport to see through the apparent infrastructure of patriarchal oppression – to speak in their place.

A model of false consciousness, then, tells us that only some sex workers' views are admissible: those that conform to the broader abolitionist understanding of sex work as inherently violent, abusive, and problematic. Those perspectives that do not construct sex work in such a way do not count. Therefore, since understandings of sex work in Sweden are informed by abolitionist feminist rhetoric, sex workers in Sweden are belittled when speaking about their own experiences, unless they buy into mainstream perceptions of sex work and/or unless they have ceased their sex work *and* have come to regret it.

...IT SHOULD BE STRESSED THAT MANY SEX WORKERS CHOOSE SEX WORK FROM AMONGST (OR IN ADDITION TO) OTHER MEANS OF MAKING MONEY, AND FOR MANY REASONS; MANY SEX WORKERS DO NOT SELL SEX OUT OF DESPERATION.



MODE OF SILENCING 2

Lying and putting on a brave face

Further to 'false consciousness' as a mode of silencing, there is an idea that sex workers actively lie or put on a brave face when they speak about their own opinions, experiences, motivations, and lives. This assertion is made in the context of the claim that sex work is universally problematic and traumatising, resulting in sex workers wishing to conceal the 'true' nature of their work.

Stakeholders in Sweden, such as members of the Stockholm Prostitution Unit – a state-sponsored organisation that provides social services to sex workers – as well as members of the Swedish police force, have asserted that to speak to sex workers directly (and therefore to grant sex workers' testimony credibility) would therefore result in a distorted and inaccurate testimony. As with a model of false consciousness, this mode of silencing serves both to undermine the narratives of sex workers, and also the validity of research and writing that places sex workers' voices as active in discussion and analysis.

The Stockholm Prostitution Unit has indeed asserted on more than one

occasion (including in communication with the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare) that they themselves hear the genuine testimony of sex workers. A respondent from the Unit noted that if interviewed directly, sex workers would 'play a role' and 'put on a brave face', thus serving to undermine their testimony:

"if someone interviews me, if I'm a sex worker... most of us put on a brave face, and to be frank, who wants to buy a sad whore? I mean prostitution is about playing a role, I am being what you want me to be, I am horny, I am happy... they would never get any buyers if they were crying in the streets right, but it's all an act. And that is the difficult thing about interviewing people who are active in prostitution and everything".

(Interview, 2009, Social Worker, Stockholm Prostitution Unit)⁷

Such stakeholders thus position the direct voices of (certain) sex workers as passive in contribution to debate and discussion, whilst promoting their own voices as reliable.

...THIS MODE OF SILENCING SERVES BOTH TO UNDERMINE THE NARRATIVES OF SEX WORKERS, AND ALSO THE VALIDITY OF RESEARCH AND WRITING THAT PLACES SEX WORKERS' VOICES AS ACTIVE IN DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.

⁷ Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)



MODE OF SILENCING 3

An un/misrepresentative perspective

Alongside assertions that sex workers' testimony stems from a position of false consciousness or from withholding the truth, there is an assertion that a perspective that diverges from mainstream understanding is not representative of sex workers generally.

Again, this comes back to an idea that there can be an objective 'truth' of what sex work involves. This mode of silencing is utilised predominantly where the preceding two cannot convincingly be used; this is in instances where sex workers have proved impossible to silence, where their empowerment and activism has gained recognition and standing in the debate. Fundamentally, it cannot be convincingly claimed that these sex workers are not self-aware or that they are lying, and so it is asserted that their testimony is not indicative of the experience of the vast majority of sex workers.

A 2013 quotation from Kajsa Wahlberg of the Swedish National Police in *The Guardian*⁸ illustrates how this mode of silencing is used:

"We have a small group of pro-prostitution lobbyists that are very powerful. The sex purchase act was not passed for them; it was passed for the majority of women who suffer from prostitution".

Here, Wahlberg – a proponent of the sex purchase law – asserts that those sex workers who are heard are a small and powerful lobby. The testimony of sex workers who wish to speak about their lives and experiences in Sweden are thus silenced using the claim that they are not representative: they are not "the majority". Those who are felt to be 'truly' indicative cannot speak for themselves – as they are argued to be either suffering from false consciousness or will lie/put on a brave face – and certain stakeholders therefore promote themselves as their spokespeople. We can see how greatly this perspective draws from international radical feminist theory from an assertion made by feminist writer Sheila Jeffreys – who advocates a criminalisation of the purchase of sex. The below quotation is made along the same lines, where Jeffreys simultaneously undermines the voices of some sex workers whilst selectively promoting other perspectives:

"Despite the efforts of some prostitutes' rights organisations to put a positive face on prostitution, as soon as women speak out about their experience it becomes clear that many women want to condemn the oppression of prostitution rather than celebrate it".
(Jeffreys 1997: 79)⁹

THIS MODE OF SILENCING IS UTILISED PREDOMINANTLY WHERE THE PRECEDING TWO CANNOT CONVINCINGLY BE USED; THIS IS IN INSTANCES WHERE SEX WORKERS HAVE PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO SILENCE, WHERE THEIR EMPOWERMENT AND ACTIVISM HAS GAINED RECOGNITION AND STANDING IN THE DEBATE.

8 Thompson, H., 2013, "Prostitution: Why Swedes Believe They Got It Right", in *The Guardian*, 12 December, available online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/dec/11/prostitution-sweden-model-reform-men-pay-sex> (last accessed 24 December 2013)

9 Jeffreys, S., 1997, *The Idea of Prostitution* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press)



SINCE THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SWEDISH MODEL DEFINES SEX WORK AS A FORM OF MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, TRANS AND MALE SEX WORKERS ARE EFFECTIVELY INVISIBLISED.

This is paralleled by a claim made by the Swedish National Coordinator Against Prostitution and Trafficking, who similarly emphasises that those whose direct testimony comes to be heard are the 'wrong' people to listen to:

"you have to find the right people... if you put an ad in the paper saying 'If you are a prostitute, or in the sex industry, please answer this question', it's the wrong people who is answering".

(Interview, 2009, Stockholm Länsstyrelsen)¹⁰

In addition, this mode of silencing is used to silence sex workers who are not cisgender women. Since the justification for the Swedish model defines sex work as a form of male violence against women, trans and male sex workers are effectively invisibilised. Their voices are seen by default to be unrepresentative of the vast majority of sex workers. This is despite the fact that some stakeholders in Sweden, including members of the Malmö Prostitution Unit in the south of Sweden, have highlighted that there could be more men selling sex in Sweden than cisgender women.¹¹

¹⁰ Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

¹¹ This correlates with a recently conducted study. See AFP/The Local, 2012, "More Men in Sweden Sell Sex Than Women: Study", available online at: <http://www.thelocal.se/20121113/44386> (last accessed 1 February 2014)



MODE OF SILENCING 4

Caricaturing and/or demonising testimony and the speaker of the testimony

This fourth mode of silencing is a process whereby individuals who do not tally with radical feminist constructions of sex work have their perspectives exaggerated or distorted as being liberal, actively pro-sex work, and/or promoting promiscuity, for example. Criticisms of the sex purchase law in Sweden have had this very result of being attacked and demonised, and it is not only sex workers who are accused of endorsing or supporting 'the sex industry': members of LGBT organisations, service providers, researchers, and social workers have all experienced such claims when criticising the sex purchase law and its ideological justifications.

This is an ad hominem ('to/against the person') argument: instead of engaging with content of the argument, the person making the argument is undermined in order to discredit their perspective. This mode of silencing

appears to be the one that is used when all else fails to undermine testimony: when a perspective cannot be convincingly undermined, the speaker themselves is attacked.

This mode of silencing has not only been made use of in Sweden, but also internationally, where individuals and organisations that focus on a rights-based approach towards sex work (as opposed to abolitionism), for example, have been accused by abolitionist radical feminists of being pro-sex work, and even of being in cahoots with pimps and traffickers in order to discredit their perspective.

"Convinced that no one could ever choose to work in prostitution, CATW [the Coalition Against Trafficking, an abolitionist organisation] feminists perceive sex worker rights advocates as being in league with 'pimps' and 'traffickers'".

(Doezema 2010: 134)¹²

...INSTEAD OF ENGAGING WITH CONTENT OF THE ARGUMENT, THE PERSON MAKING THE ARGUMENT IS UNDERMINED IN ORDER TO DISCREDIT THEIR PERSPECTIVE.

¹² Doezema, J., 2010, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters – The Construction of Trafficking* (London: Zed Books)



Summary

As with all claims as to a universal 'truth' in relation to any community or social group, generalisations in Sweden relating to sex work are inherently flawed. In order to maintain crude mainstream understandings, four key modes of silencing are used by abolitionist radical feminists to undermine the testimony of sex workers and of those critical of the sex purchase law:

- 1 a model of false consciousness;
- 2 an assertion that sex workers lie and/or put on a brave face;
- 3 a claim that sex workers who are critical of the law are un/misrepresentative;
- 4 caricaturing/exaggerating testimony and attacking the individual in order to undermine and distract from their argument.

These modes of silencing are powerful tools: they can be used interchangeably, in tandem, and there is a tool of silencing for most situations where sex workers, sex worker activists, their allies, academics, and so on, make arguments that conflict with fundamentalist feminist assertions. Since several modes of silencing are used to side-line the voices of sex workers who diverge from mainstream understandings of sex work in Sweden, proponents of the law have been able to advocate in favour of its apparent successes in something of a discursive vacuum.

Through dissecting and deconstructing these modes of silencing, they may be more comprehensively challenged and dismantled when contesting the understandings that justify the 'Swedish model'.

THROUGH DISSECTING AND DECONSTRUCTING THESE MODES OF SILENCING, THEY MAY BE MORE COMPREHENSIVELY CHALLENGED AND DISMANTLED WHEN CONTESTING THE UNDERSTANDINGS THAT JUSTIFY THE 'SWEDISH MODEL'.



Further reading on these topics

The four papers of this toolkit stem from research undertaken by the author, Dr Jay Levy, in Sweden between 2008 and 2012. This research is presented in full in:

- Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Abingdon: Routledge)

In addition to this book, several key texts provide useful further reading.

For a Swedish government overview of the legislation and the justifications and understandings that underpin the law, see:

- Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, 2004, *Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings* (Stockholm: Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications), available online at: http://myweb.dal.ca/mgoodyea/Documents/Sweden/prostitution_fact_sheet_sweden_2004.pdf (last accessed 6 July 2014)

For an overview of the Swedish debate that preceded the sex purchase law, see:

- Svanström, Y., 2004, "Criminalising the John – A Swedish Gender Model?" in *The Politics of Prostitution – Women's Movements, Democratic States and the Globalisation of Sex Commerce*, ed. Outshoorn, J.: 225–244 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

For examples of abolitionist feminist analyses of sex work, as are used to justify the Swedish model, see:

- Dworkin, A., 1992, "Prostitution and Male Supremacy", Presented at *Prostitution: From Academia to Activism*, University of Michigan Law School, 31 October
- Ekberg, G., 2004, "The Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services – Best Practices for Prevention of Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings", *Violence Against Women* 10, 10: 1187–1218
- Jeffreys, S., 1997, *The Idea of Prostitution* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press)

The Real Impact of the Swedish Model on Sex Workers

#2

Impacts of the Sex Purchase Law: Street-Based Sex Work and Levels of Sex Work

Impacts of the Sex Purchase Law: Street-Based Sex Work and Levels of Sex Work

Introduction

In the first paper of this toolkit, it was described how voices critical of Sweden's sex purchase criminalisation, and critical of the ideas that justify it, have come to be silenced, undermined, and excluded from the debate in Sweden and internationally. It is this silencing process that has facilitated the success of ongoing lobbying in favour of the sex purchase law, alongside claims that the law has been successful and has not had negative impacts on the lives of sex workers.

This paper therefore highlights some of the impacts of the sex purchase law on the lives of sex workers. Street-based sex work is of specific focus, and it is stressed that those sex workers who have come to be most significantly impacted by the sex purchase law are those who are resource-poor and most in need of service provision, protection, and assistance. Instead of support, they have experienced oppression and criminalising legislation. Whether the law has been successful in its aim to abolish (or at least decrease) levels of sex work is also discussed in this paper.¹

This paper serves as a tool with which to challenge those who claim that the sex purchase law has been a success without negative repercussions.

Have there been negative impacts of the sex purchase criminalisation?

One of the most important things to consider in the context of increasing international moves towards an adoption of the Swedish model is whether the law has had negative impacts.

When the law was introduced in 1999, there had been voices in the debate in Sweden that expressed concern that sex work may move underground, and that sex work could become more dangerous. In order to allay such concerns, it was stressed that there would not be negative impacts of the law. In fact, it was emphasised that since the law criminalised only clients, sex workers themselves would be shielded from harm.

This has certainly not been the case. Sex workers and other stakeholders in Sweden note that sex workers face increasing difficulties in a context of increased competition, and that sex workers now have decreased power when negotiating with clients. Concerns voiced prior to the law's introduction have been realised.

THIS PAPER SERVES AS A TOOL WITH WHICH TO CHALLENGE THOSE WHO CLAIM THAT THE SEX PURCHASE LAW HAS BEEN A SUCCESS WITHOUT NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS.

¹ The indirect outcomes of the sex purchase law, in terms of the impact that it has had on the views and policies of service and healthcare providers, are discussed in the third paper of this toolkit. Additionally, there are other laws and policies that are used to target sex workers. These are discussed in the fourth paper of this toolkit.

Greater competition in street sex work

In enforcing the sex purchase law, the Swedish police focus heavily on street-based sex work, and suspected sex trafficking (which is often based only on suspicion that a sex worker is ‘foreign’). Since the police focus on street sex work, when the purchase of sex was criminalised in 1999, clients became more nervous about buying sex in public. This resulted in a drop in clients willing to buy sex publicly.²

Given that fewer clients are willing to buy sex on the street due to the fact that police enforce the sex purchase law particularly in terms of street sex work, those sex workers remaining on the street are left with fewer clients to sell sex to. These sex workers, who have not moved to selling sex via mobile phone and the internet, are often those who do not have the resources, the time, and/or the money to establish themselves off-street, and often need the money from their sex work urgently, to support children and/or to buy alcohol/drugs, for example. They continue to sell sex in a context where money can be made immediately.

This therefore leaves these sex workers in a position where services that they may not have provided previously may

now have to be provided in order to make enough money; sex workers are additionally less able to reject clients they would have rejected before, and sex workers are not able to charge the same amount for their work, as summarised by this social worker from the Malmö Prostitution Unit, in the south of Sweden:

“fewer clients on the streets, and the women still need the money to get the heroin, so the customers are able to offer less money for more... no condom, for an example... And if they really do need the money, and they have been standing there the whole night, and they need their fix... then maybe you say ‘Yes’”.

(Interview, 2010, Social Worker, Malmö Prostitution Unit)³

Therefore, the sex purchase law has handed more power to sex workers’ clients, and has disempowered street-based sex workers. And for those sex workers who have moved to selling sex in more hidden spaces in order to continue making money in a context where street sex work is more heavily policed due to the sex purchase law, the hidden nature of this sex work serves to increase the distance of sex workers from health and social service providers and the authorities.

...SERVICES THAT THEY MAY NOT HAVE PROVIDED PREVIOUSLY MAY NOW HAVE TO BE PROVIDED IN ORDER TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY; SEX WORKERS ARE ADDITIONALLY LESS ABLE TO REJECT CLIENTS THEY WOULD HAVE REJECTED BEFORE, AND SEX WORKERS ARE NOT ABLE TO CHARGE THE SAME AMOUNT FOR THEIR WORK...

2 Since the internet and mobile phones became very popular at the same time as the introduction of the sex purchase law, it is likely that levels of street sex work dropped both because of improvements in telecommunications, and the introduction of the law.

3 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

Difficulties negotiating with clients

Since clients are criminalised, those who buy sex on the street are now nervous about arrest. What this means for street-based sex workers is that they have less time to negotiate their transactions with clients before getting into a vehicle or leaving the street with the client to avoid police detection. Consequently, sex workers have less time to assess the potential risk of a client, to negotiate which services are to be provided, and to negotiate payment.

...SEX WORKERS HAVE LESS TIME TO ASSESS THE POTENTIAL RISK OF A CLIENT, TO NEGOTIATE WHICH SERVICES ARE TO BE PROVIDED, AND TO NEGOTIATE PAYMENT.

“twenty seconds, one minute, two minutes, you have to decide if you should go into this person’s car... now I guess if I’m standing there, and the guy, he will be really scared to pick me up, and he will wave with his hand ‘Come here, we can go here round the corner, and make up the arrangement’, and that would be much more dangerous”.

(Interview, 2010, Sex Worker [Internet; Escort; Street-Based])⁴

“women says that the law made it more like a client market, because of the law they (have) got to work fast... so if they (the client) open the (car) door and you got to jump in and you never know what really’s going to happen”.

(Interview, 2010, Social Worker, Malmö Prostitution Unit)⁵

In addition to rushed negotiations, fewer clients want to give sex workers identifying information. Such information can act as an insurance for sex workers, since if identifying information has been given, sex workers can report, or threaten to report, clients who are poorly behaved,

abusive, and/or violent. With clients being criminalised, those sex workers who insist on the provision of such identifying information have fewer clients to choose from. Again, those who need income immediately are forced to take greater risks and accept anonymous clients who they would have previously been able to avoid, or face less opportunity to make money:

“I’ve been trying to work more safe, because I don’t want to have any risks, but the clients are so afraid... so they are calling from an anonymous number. And if you take an anonymous number, you can get robbed, so I was very upset the last time I was robbed... So after that I haven’t been taking any clients from anonymous numbers. So now my phone is not ringing so much.”

(Interview, 2009, Sex Worker [Street-Based; Escort; Internet])⁶

With people who buy sex criminalised, concern about being identified and/or being arrested also means that clients who witness abuse of sex workers, as well as clients who witness suspected trafficking, do not report such instances to the authorities. Sex workers and service providers have noted that their clients who buy sex have failed to report such suspicions, despite being concerned. As noted by this client, who had witnessed suspected abuse and trafficking,

“Then (if I reported it to the police) they would ask how I know... I don’t think I can get caught for that, but I will still be in a record somewhere, and then if I pop up again somewhere somehow... Just avoid it. Put a post on it on the forums that says ‘This is trafficking’”.

(Interview, 2011, Sex Worker Client)⁷

4 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

5 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

6 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

7 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

Have levels of sex work in Sweden decreased?

It is now so clear that there have been negative impacts of the sex purchase law that even the 2010 Swedish governmental evaluation of the law, which was mandated to make recommendations on how the law could be applied more effectively and not to criticise the law itself, noted that sex workers now feel more persecuted and stressed in the context of their work.⁸ This governmental evaluation stressed that where sex workers may now find life more difficult, this should be looked at in a *positive* light, since it will serve to encourage people to leave the sex industry. This is certainly a very far cry from assurances that there would not be negative outcomes of the law. The argument now seems to be that the harder the lives of sex workers in Sweden become, the more sex workers will leave sex work. It seems that whatever the outcomes of the sex purchase law, it will be claimed that they demonstrate its accomplishment: when it was introduced it was said the law would not be to the detriment of sex workers, and this was hailed as being one of the law's radical advantages over alternative legislation; now that it is clear that sex workers have experienced difficulties as a result of the law, it is paradoxically claimed that this should be seen as a success of the legislation. This is a constant process of 'shifting the goalposts' in order to promote an ideological and detrimental law.

Despite the lives of many sex workers now being more difficult, however, **there is absolutely no convincing evidence demonstrating that overall levels of sex work have decreased in Sweden.**

As noted above, the introduction of the sex purchase law was accompanied by a substantial drop in levels of street sex work.⁹ This reduction in levels of street sex work has been taken by proponents of the Swedish model to be indicative of the law's apparent success in reducing levels of sex work.

However, levels of street sex work in Sweden make up only a small proportion of sex work – as is the case in many contexts in the global north – and so a decline in levels of street sex work should not be taken to be indicative of an overall decrease in levels of sex work. And due to the fact that the majority of sex work in Sweden occurs in off-street spaces, it is nigh-on impossible to make accurate estimates or assertions as to trends, never mind assertions as to causation of trends. As is stressed by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (the *Socialstyrelsen*), it has been impossible to ascertain whether overall levels of sex work have changed following the 1999 law:

“It is... difficult to discern any clear trend of development: has the extent of prostitution increased or decreased? We cannot give any unambiguous answer to that question”.

(*Socialstyrelsen* 2008: 63)¹⁰

In addition to this, it is not even certain that levels of street sex work decreased permanently: fairly soon after the law's 1999 introduction, street sex work levels then increased again. Some stakeholders note that levels today may be in line with those that were recorded previous to 1999. It should also be noted that since some sex workers who had worked on the street began to sell sex indoors when the law was introduced – due to difficulties in selling sex on the street – this displacement is not indicative of a reduction in levels of sex work.

...THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO CONVINCING EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATING THAT OVERALL LEVELS OF SEX WORK HAVE DECREASED...

8 SOU, 2010:49, *Förbud mot köp av sexuell tjänst. En utvärdering 1999–2008* (Stockholm: Regeringskansliets Förvaltningsavdelning)

9 It should be emphasised that estimates as to specific levels of sex work, as well as increases or decreases, are notoriously unreliable given that sex work takes place in a hidden context due to criminalisation and stigma.

10 *Socialstyrelsen* (Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare), 2008, *Prostitution in Sweden 2007*, available online at: http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/lists/artikelkatalog/attachments/8806/2008-126-65_200812665.pdf (last accessed 30 September 2013)

Summary

The direct negative impacts of the sex purchase law are very much cause-and-effect:

- ▶ The sex purchase law has been used to target public sex work in Sweden.
- ▶ Therefore, fewer clients are willing to buy sex on the street, for fear of arrest.
- ▶ Some sex workers moved off-street to continue working, thereby increasing their distance from service providers and authoritative protection.
- ▶ Sex workers who continue working on the street are often resource-poor and have not been able to establish themselves off-street.
- ▶ These street-based sex workers now have to accept lower incomes and provide more services, as the presence of fewer clients has increased competition and pushed down prices.
- ▶ As clients are fearful of identification and arrest, sex workers on- and off-street have difficulties in negotiating with clients and getting identifying client information.
- ▶ This places sex workers at risk of danger and violence, and concern about arrest also means that clients are disinclined to report suspected abuse and exploitation.
- ▶ The law has therefore given more power to clients and has disempowered sex workers.

The negative impacts of the sex purchase law have perversely been held by some to be indicative of its success, since it is argued that the law therefore promotes stopping sex work in the face of escalating difficulties for sex workers.

Yet despite those seeking to export the law claiming that the law protects sex workers, and despite claims that the law has reduced levels of sex work, there is no evidence that people have stopped buying or selling sex due to the sex purchase law. There is no evidence that levels of sex work have declined as the law intended. Instead, sex work takes place in increasingly clandestine locations, and sex workers who more immediately need the income from their sex work experience greater danger and difficulty in the context of their sex work.

In summary, the Swedish model may be challenged on two key points:

- 1 The Swedish model has failed in its aim to decrease levels of sex work in Sweden.
- 2 The Swedish model has resulted in increased difficulties and danger associated with sex work.

...THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT PEOPLE HAVE STOPPED BUYING OR SELLING SEX DUE TO THE SEX PURCHASE LAW.

Further reading on these topics

The four papers of this toolkit stem from research undertaken by the author, Dr Jay Levy, in Sweden between 2008 and 2012. This research is presented in full in:

- Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Abingdon: Routledge)

In addition to this book, several key texts provide useful further reading.

For a discussion of levels of sex work in Sweden, and some analysis of the direct outcomes of the Swedish model, see:

- Kulick, D., 2003, “Sex in the New Europe – The Criminalization of Clients and Swedish Fear of Penetration.” *Anthropological Theory* 3: 199–218

- Levy, J. and Jakobsson, P., 2014, “Sweden’s Abolitionist Discourse and Law: Effects on the Dynamics of Swedish Sex Work and on the Lives of Sweden’s Sex Workers.” *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. doi: 10.1177/1748895814528926
- Östergren, P. and Dodillet, S., 2011, “The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects.” Presented at *The International Workshop: Decriminalizing Prostitution and Beyond: Practical Experiences and Challenges*. The Hague, 3–4 March
- Östergren, P., 2004, *Sexworkers Critique of Swedish Prostitution Policy*, available online at: http://www.petraostergren.com/pages.aspx?r_id=40716 (last accessed 31 March 2012)

The Real Impact of the Swedish Model on Sex Workers

#3

Impacts of the Swedish Model's Justifying Discourses on Service Provision

Impacts of the Swedish Model's Justifying Discourses on Service Provision

Introduction

In the second (previous) paper of this toolkit, direct impacts of the Swedish model – the criminalisation of the purchase of sex – were discussed: the most notable outcomes of the law have been to the detriment of sex workers, notably street-based sex workers, and in addition to these negative outcomes is the law's failure to achieve its ambition of decreasing levels of sex work in Sweden.

In this paper, I discuss the impacts of the ideas and assertions that justify the criminalisation of the purchase of sex (discussed in the first paper of this toolkit). Specifically, these ideas – advocated by abolitionist radical feminists – include: the construction of sex work as a form of violence; the assertion that the violence that can be associated with sex work is constant and unchangeable; and additionally, the generalisation that sex workers are passive, disempowered victims. Of principal focus here are the impacts that these ideas and generalisations have had on the views of state-sponsored, sex work-targeted service providers, on service provision, and on harm reduction services and views surrounding harm reduction.

What is harm reduction and why is it needed?

As with many other jobs, harms can be associated with sex work. These harms are exacerbated by legal frameworks that criminalise sex workers, which serve to marginalise sex workers, increase social exclusion, and push sex work into underground and hidden spaces (as discussed in the second paper of this toolkit); criminalisation therefore creates disengagement between sex workers and service providers and state-sponsored protection. Violence, stigma, and discrimination are all significant harms that can be associated with some sex work, and other concerns include the transmission of HIV and other STIs and blood-borne infections.

These harms are variable, and, like with all potential harms and difficulties that can be associated with work and working environments, they can therefore be tackled, mitigated, and reduced. Though Sweden's outspoken ambition is to abolish sex work, O'Connell Davidson (2003)¹ pertinently notes that even where an aim is to reduce levels of sex work, reducing the harms surrounding sex work should be a priority 'in the meantime' (it should be stressed, however, that abolitionism and criminalisation do, in and of themselves, exacerbate and create harm, as discussed in the second paper of this toolkit).

...HARMS ARE EXACERBATED BY LEGAL FRAMEWORKS THAT CRIMINALISE SEX WORKERS, WHICH SERVE TO MARGINALISE SEX WORKERS, INCREASE SOCIAL EXCLUSION, AND PUSH SEX WORK INTO UNDERGROUND AND HIDDEN SPACES...

1 O'Connell Davidson, J., 2003, "Sleeping with the Enemy? Some Problems with Feminist Abolitionist Calls to Penalise those who Buy Commercial Sex." *Social Policy & Society* 2,1: 55–63

TO REDUCE THE HARMS THAT CAN BE ASSOCIATED WITH SEX WORK, HARM REDUCTION IS IMPERATIVE, WHETHER OR NOT THE POLITICAL AMBITION IS TO DECREASE LEVELS OF SEX WORK...

Harm reduction initiatives position themselves politically neutrally: they do not aspire towards reducing levels of the activity in question, but instead to reduce the harms that may be associated. First advocated and introduced for people who use drugs in the context of the HIV pandemic (for example, needle exchange/provision and opiate substitution therapy), harm reduction initiatives have been advocated for sex workers; they include condom provision, the provision of information on selling sex more safely, the provision of lubricants, the provision of medical and GUM (genitourinary medicine) services, and arguably decriminalisation, since criminalisation is itself demonstrated to be harmful. To reduce the harms that can be associated with sex work, harm reduction is imperative, whether or not the political ambition is to decrease levels of sex work, as is the case in Sweden.

If harm reduction is imperative, is there opposition to harm reduction?

Yes: abolitionist feminist discourse sees sex work as a form of violence, and sees the variable harms that can be associated with sex work as constant. This means that harm reduction is simply dismissed since:

- 1 harm reduction discourse does not strive to reduce levels of sex work, and is therefore seen as conflicting with abolitionist aims, and
- 2 it is asserted that the harms surrounding sex work cannot be reduced, and so efforts to reduce harms are seen to be pointless and unrealistic. As per the below quotation, sex work is seen to always and inevitably be “really, really dangerous”:

“prostitution in itself attracts strange people, and I think prostitution has always been, and always will be really, really dangerous... in what way can you help someone then, what kind of information would you give to help people?”

(Interview, 2009, Social Worker, Stockholm Prostitution Unit)²

As with other elements of radical feminist discourse, then, this opposition to harm reduction has come to inform the stance of Swedish stakeholders and service providers. Harm reduction for sex workers is opposed, since it is not just seen to be pointless in the context of what are asserted to be unavoidable harms, but is actually seen to *encourage* and *facilitate* sex work. Harm reduction is seen to keep people in sex work where otherwise they may have ceased, and these approaches are therefore seen to undermine Sweden's expressed aim to abolish sex work:

“harm reduction is many times a way of, I mean it, it tends to keep people in the problem, instead of helping them to leave”.

(Interview, 2009, Social Worker, Stockholm Prostitution Unit)³

2 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

3 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

Swedish views of condom provision for sex workers and their clients

This wider opposition to harm reduction has led to opposition amongst targeted service providers, the Swedish Prostitution Units. These organisations are tasked by the government to reduce levels of sex work through social service provision.⁴ Though sex workers and their clients are both foci for HIV and STI prevention for the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, the Stockholm Unit in particular opposes condom provision to sex workers during its outreach work. Condoms are not seen as measures to promote health and to reduce harm, but instead as means with which to attract sex workers to the Stockholm Unit's offices (where condoms are available).

Despite Sweden being often regarded as one of the world's ultimate welfare states, the Swedish model has resulted in street-based sex workers not being provided with condoms. The need for condom distribution during outreach to street-based sex workers is made clear by reports of sex workers having to provide one another with condoms, and further reports of sex workers having to shoplift condoms:

"every time I'm on the street, the girls are coming to me asking for condoms... When I was working before, regularly (on the street)... girls were shoplifting condoms. And now I don't know what they do. But it was a store, then they didn't want to let us in".

(Interview, 2009, Sex Worker [Street; Escort; Internet])⁵

Not only is there opposition to the provision of condoms to sex workers; opposition to the provision of condoms to sex workers' clients has been considerable in Sweden. The Malmö Prostitution Unit, in the south of Sweden, has previously attempted to provide harm reduction services, providing sex workers with condoms during outreach, and providing condoms to people who buy sex. However, its giving condoms to clients resulted in a national outcry.

II: "We tried with condoms, and it became a national issue. Not a local, but a national issue. It is very funny if you think about it, 'cause we, you gotta remember, we gave out how many condoms?"

I: "Eight condoms."

II: "Eight condoms! Eight condoms. And it became a national issue."

(Interview, 2010, Two Social Workers, Malmö Prostitution Unit)⁶

This opposition was due to the fact that in Sweden (and abolitionist feminist discourse), the purchase of sex is constructed as a form of violence; it is this understanding that justifies the Swedish model. With sex work constructed as a form of violence, giving condoms to sex workers' clients – seen to be the perpetrators of this violence – is therefore seen as providing the tools with which to commit a violent offence, not as a means with which to promote health and harm reduction.

WITH SEX WORK CONSTRUCTED AS A FORM OF VIOLENCE, GIVING CONDOMS TO SEX WORKERS' CLIENTS... IS THEREFORE SEEN AS PROVIDING THE TOOLS WITH WHICH TO COMMIT A VIOLENT OFFENCE, NOT AS A MEANS WITH WHICH TO PROMOTE HEALTH AND HARM REDUCTION.

⁴ It is very important to remember that Sweden's desire to decrease levels of sex work was to be achieved through both legal interventions (criminalisation of demand) and through social interventions. In spite of this, when the law was introduced in 1999 no money whatsoever was given to social services (and several million Swedish kronor were given to the police).

⁵ Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

⁶ Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

Swedish view of guides to safer sex work and harm reduction information

As well as giving condoms to sex workers and their clients, the Malmö Unit has also provided a harm reduction pack, which includes a safer sex work guide, informed by sex workers themselves. Again, these guides are felt by some key stakeholders in Sweden to actually encourage sex work, and were even considered by the National Coordinator Against Trafficking and Prostitution to encourage people to *begin* sex work:

“maybe some young girls who is not in the prostitution for the moment, they find this on the internet, and say ‘Ah, maybe it could be really safe, because I have this handbook, and I have these things, so nothing could happen’”.

(Interview, 2009, Interview, 2009, Stockholm Länsstyrelsen)⁷

As discussed above, with sex work generalised as inevitably and unchangeably surrounded by violence, providing information on safer sex work is also seen to be pointless: there is not seen to be any such thing as safer sex work.

Moreover, as a Swedish politician who proposed the Swedish model notes below, since the purchase of sex has been criminalised, providing harm reduction and information regarding safer sex work is seen as providing information regarding how to commit a crime, a crime that has been constructed in dominant Swedish discourse as a form of violence.

“since it’s illegal, you can’t, it becomes very strange if you are informing of something that not legal in Sweden”.

(Interview, 2010, Proposer of *Sexköpslagen*; Politician – Social Democrats)⁸

With so little provided by way of harm reduction and information on safer sex work, sex workers in Sweden learn how to avoid harm from doing their own research, from having to educate one another, or from having experienced harm personally.

Selective and conditional service provision for sex workers in Sweden

Further to Swedish oppositions to harm reduction, generalisations of sex work as problematic and violent have informed the views and attitudes of Swedish service providers. With all sex workers assumed to be victims in need of assistance and exit from sex work, service providers are unconcerned about providing services to sex workers who do not identify their sex work to be problematic and/or who do not identify as victims. These sex workers do not fit into mainstream and political assumptions regarding sex work, and so they are simply excluded from state-sponsored assistance. Indeed, sex workers ‘who feel good’ are not seen to be worthy of the ‘energy’ of service providers:

“as far as they feel well, and like to be in this situation, fine with me, I mean, the day when they don’t like it anymore, they can come to me. So I don’t spend my energy on this group of people”.

(Interview, 2009, Stockholm Länsstyrelsen)⁹

Though respondents from the Stockholm Prostitution Unit emphasised that they did not judge their clients, and that they did not insist that their clients ceased selling sex, it seems that their alignment with Swedish understandings of sex work have resulted in their assuming their clients to be victims, as well as applying abolitionist conditions on their provision of services.

...WITH SEX WORK GENERALISED AS INEVITABLY AND UNCHANGEABLY SURROUNDED BY VIOLENCE, PROVIDING INFORMATION ON SAFER SEX WORK IS ALSO SEEN TO BE POINTLESS: THERE IS NOT SEEN TO BE ANY SUCH THING AS SAFER SEX WORK.

7 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

8 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

9 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

As per the below quotations, one sex worker noted that social workers had refused to provide her with assistance in getting a doctor's note unless she ceased her sex work for a period of time; another reported that she was expected to adopt a victim status during her engagement with social workers at the Unit. These claims certainly contrast with the Stockholm Unit's asserted neutrality, suggesting instead that they align firmly with the discourses that justify the Swedish model.

"I had so many questions. Is this wrong? What will happen if I get sick? What happens if I get robbed? What happens if I get killed with a customer?... And they were not talking about the good things, they were only doing (making) things worse. So when I go home from them, I was crying, and I was feeling like, 'Oh my god, what a bad dirty people I am'... I like to do this. I'm not a bad girl... they should really be able to understand how we're thinking, and why we are thinking, and why we exist. Not to push us out back on the street, and (say) 'you're a bad person'".

(Interview, 2010, Sex Worker [Internet Escort])¹¹

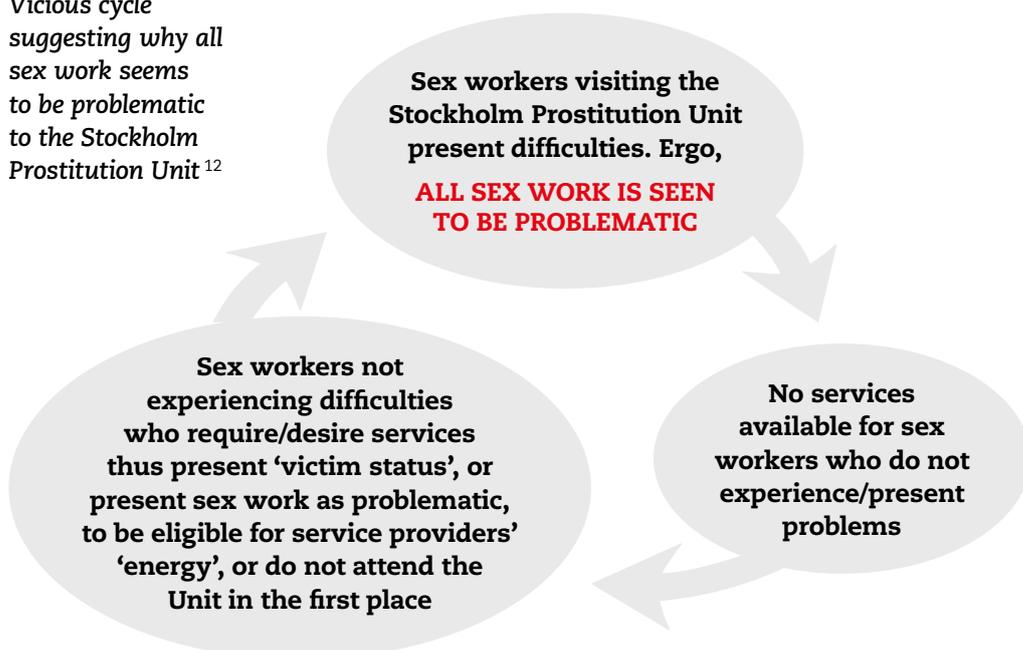
With only some sex workers eligible for state-sponsored assistance, we can see why stakeholders in Sweden assert that all sex work is problematic: only those sex workers who problematise their sex work are entitled to service provision. Those who do not may therefore position themselves as being a victim and/or their sex work as being problematic, or they will not seek out service provision at all:

...ONLY THOSE SEX WORKERS WHO PROBLEMATISE THEIR SEX WORK ARE ENTITLED TO SERVICE PROVISION. THOSE WHO DO NOT MAY THEREFORE POSITION THEMSELVES AS BEING A VICTIM AND/OR THEIR SEX WORK AS BEING PROBLEMATIC, OR THEY WILL NOT SEEK OUT SERVICE PROVISION AT ALL...

"I was going to talk to them for some months, and she (Stockholm Prostitution Unit Social Worker) also told me that if she was going to help me, to write a paper, that I needed to *sjukskrivning* (sick note)... she was going to write a paper to help me to get the doctor to write that paper, because I have been waiting for three years... so she said 'if you are stopping prostitution for three months, and you don't do anything for three months, then I will write that paper'".

(Interview, 2009, Sex Worker [Street; Escort; Internet])¹⁰

*Vicious cycle suggesting why all sex work seems to be problematic to the Stockholm Prostitution Unit*¹²



¹⁰ Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

¹¹ Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

¹² Levy, J., 2012, *Second-Class Citizens of Sweden: Sex Work and Drug Use in the People's Home* (University of Cambridge: PhD Thesis)



Summary

SUCH OPPOSITION... IS MARKEDLY SIMILAR TO OPPOSITION TO DRUG-RELATED HARM REDUCTION, WITH NEEDLE EXCHANGE AND PROVISION FALSELY ASSERTED TO ENCOURAGE DRUG USE, AND NOT SEEN IN A CONTEXT OF REDUCING HARM.

In opposing the Swedish model, arguments tend to focus on the *direct* outcomes of the law. This paper has made clear that it is not only the law itself that needs to be opposed, but, in addition, the ideas that frame it, which are informed by ideological generalisations.

These ideas include generalisations of sex work as inevitably violent and of sex workers as disempowered victims, and these beliefs have directly informed the views of service providers. Harm reduction initiatives are opposed, seen to be both pointless and actually counterproductive in their apparently encouraging and facilitating sex work. Such opposition, driven as it is by Swedish

radical feminist abolitionism, is markedly similar to opposition to drug-related harm reduction, with needle exchange and provision falsely asserted to encourage drug use, and not seen in a context of reducing harm.

Although the Swedish model is advocated as a progressive piece of legislation and set of ideas, as a part of Sweden's liberal and progressive welfare state and Sweden's aspirations towards 'gender equality', the refusal of service providers to provide even the most basic services and harm reduction initiatives to sex workers – due to the ideas that frame the Swedish model – undermines such claims.

Further reading on these topics

The four papers of this toolkit stem from research undertaken by the author, Dr Jay Levy, in Sweden between 2008 and 2012. This research is presented in full in:

- Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Abingdon: Routledge)

In addition to this book, several key texts provide useful further reading.

For discussions of harm reduction – particularly sex work-related harm reduction – and the importance of focussing on harm reduction and service provision, see:

- Cusick, L., 2005, “Widening the Harm Reduction Agenda: From Drug Use to Sex Work.” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 17: 3–11
- Rekart, M. L., 2005, “Sex-Work Harm Reduction.” *The Lancet* 366: 2123–2134

For further discussion of the impacts of the Swedish model on service provision, see:

- Levy, J. and Jakobsson, P., 2014, “Sweden’s Abolitionist Discourse and Law: Effects on the Dynamics of Swedish Sex Work and on the Lives of Sweden’s Sex Workers.” *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. doi: 10.1177/1748895814528926

The Real Impact of the Swedish Model on Sex Workers

#4

Impacts of Other Legislation
and Policy – The Danger of
Seeing the Swedish Model
in a Vacuum



nswp

Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

Impacts of Other Legislation and Policy – The Danger of Seeing the Swedish Model in a Vacuum

Introduction

In the second paper of this toolkit, the direct impacts of the Swedish model on street-based sex work and on the wider dynamics of sex work were discussed. It was established that the law has failed in its stated mission of reducing levels of sex work in Sweden, and has additionally served to worsen conditions for sex workers, contrary to assertions that the criminalisation of the purchase of sex would not have negative side-effects. The third paper of the toolkit illustrated that the impacts of the Swedish model have not only been direct: the ideas that justify the law have informed the views of service and healthcare providers, and have had negative impacts on targeted service provision for sex workers in Sweden.

Though the law has had negative side-effects on sex workers,¹ the Swedish model itself directly criminalises only people who buy sex. It is claimed that sex workers are therefore legally protected from direct interference from the state and that this is what makes the Swedish model such a progressive and important law. If we are to believe what supporters of the Swedish model say, sex workers are immune from attention of, and persecution from, the police and the state.

Indeed, this was noted by one such supporter of the law – a senior member of the Swedish police – who asserted that the police have no recourse to target sex workers directly:

“the police definitely don’t interfere, I mean because selling is not criminalised. That is not a police issue, if you want to sell it’s okay. We don’t target the women, or the person in prostitution.”

(Interview, 2010, Police [Prostitution and Trafficking])²

This sort of assurance is frequently used as a means with which to promote the Swedish model. It is regularly asserted that this legislation will protect sex workers from the sort of state-sponsored harassment to which they have often been subjected in other states and contexts.

Does the Swedish model protect sex workers from state-sponsored harassment?

No. It needs to be stressed that the Swedish model – the law criminalising the purchase of sex – should not be analysed only in a vacuum. The above assertions that sex workers are not directly harassed and ‘interfered’ with are entirely untrue. This paper demonstrates that the Swedish model has not resulted in an end to sex workers being targeted directly by the state. Sex workers suffer not only displacements from public space – as discussed in this toolkit’s second paper – but also deportations internationally, evictions from private property and their own property, and issues related to child custody.

**THIS PAPER
DEMONSTRATES THAT
THE SWEDISH MODEL
HAS NOT RESULTED
IN AN END TO SEX
WORKERS BEING
TARGETED DIRECTLY
BY THE STATE.**

1 This would have been fairly easy to predict, given that criminalising legislation frequently has the effect of displacing the activity in question and exacerbating harm and marginalisation. Indeed, concerns that the law would have these impacts were expressed during the legal debate prior to the Swedish model’s introduction in 1999.

2 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

Laws and policies other than the sex purchase law

Harassment during client arrests

As noted above, the Swedish police have asserted that they do not directly target sex workers themselves, only their criminalised clients. This is misleading, since police need to target sex workers themselves in order to target sex workers' clients. For a successful prosecution, the police would require either testimony from the sex worker in question, from witnesses, or to catch a sex worker and their client 'in the act'. This involves highly invasive raids, during which sex workers have reported that police have refused to allow them to dress, have verbally assaulted them, have recorded their identity, and have documented the events on film. This is a far cry from assertions that sex workers are shielded from authoritative harassment and 'interference'.

Evictions and domestic harassment

Aside from reports of problematic and abusive encounters, sex workers have been targeted when not even seeing clients. It is illegal in Sweden to provide premises for sex work to take place, and it is also the case that "tenancy right is forfeited" if "sexual relations for payment"³ take place. However, as long as one's landlord is unaware of any sex work taking place, no action will be taken. The police have thus been noted to report sex workers to their landlords, which therefore forces the evictions (or the landlords will be prosecuted by the police).

Similarly, police have reported sex workers to hotels and venues, with sex workers then being kicked out and/or barred from returning, which again serves to displace sex workers. Such reporting seems punitive and spiteful, deliberately making sex workers' lives difficult. There was additionally a case of women being denied entry to a venue simply because they were assumed to be sex workers due to their being perceived to be Asian, with the court upholding this decision. Such is the stigma and racialisation of sex work in Sweden that the movements of both sex workers, and other groups of marginalised women, have come to be controlled and delimited:

"In a decision issued earlier this week, the court ruled Harry's [the venue in question] owners had a 'legitimate reason' to stop to women in their efforts to curb suspected prostitution."⁴

Some sex workers may choose to work collectively for reasons that can include safety, protection, and to avoid feeling isolated in their work. Yet these sex workers can also be targeted by the police, charged with pimping one another under pimping legislation, a law that predates the Swedish model. Furthermore, sex workers' partners or adult children can be prosecuted for receiving the income of sex work. It is clear that these laws do not solely serve to protect sex workers from exploitation, and the introduction of the Swedish model was not accompanied by the removal of legislation that is used to directly disrupt the lives of sex workers themselves.

IT IS CLEAR THAT THESE LAWS DO NOT SOLELY SERVE TO PROTECT SEX WORKERS FROM EXPLOITATION, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SWEDISH MODEL WAS NOT ACCOMPANIED BY THE REMOVAL OF LEGISLATION THAT IS USED TO DIRECTLY DISRUPT THE LIVES OF SEX WORKERS THEMSELVES.

³ Jordabalken law, available online at: <https://lagen.nu/1970:994> (last accessed 14 July 2014); author's translation

⁴ See The Local, 2013, Pub Cleared for Rejecting 'Asian Looking' Women, 12 September, available online at: <http://www.thelocal.se/20130912/50200> (last accessed 14 July 2014) for an account of this case.

Further to such legislation, the police have been known to visit sex workers' homes and overtly threaten them with police interference. This is in stark contrast to police assurances that “the police definitely don't interfere” with sex workers:

“they come to my door and, you know, ask for my ID and so forth so it's like harassment ... The third time it's like, ‘We know what you're doing, I mean, what you're about. We're going to go after your clients' ... I make a living out of this, so I was really paranoid for a very long time after.”

(Interview, 2010, Sex Worker [Internet Escort])⁵

Deportations

In addition to invasions of sex workers' privacy and police deliberately forcing evictions of sex workers from hotels, venues, and from their homes, immigration authorities work to displace sex workers internationally through deportations. These deportations are somewhat at odds with Swedish social constructions of sex work. As was discussed in the first paper of this toolkit, Swedish understanding of sex work draws on abolitionist feminist discourse in constructing sex workers as passive victims who lack agency, arguing that it is impossible to truly consent to sex work or to choose to sell sex. Migrant sex workers and victims of human trafficking are therefore seen as indistinguishable in Sweden. Given this conflation of migrant sex workers and victims of human trafficking, it might be assumed that attitudes towards migrant sex workers (who are assumed, by default, to be exploited and in need of protection and state-sponsored intervention and assistance) may be sympathetic, albeit also disempowering and patronising.

In fact, migrant sex workers and victims of trafficking alike are deported when they come to the attention of the authorities in Sweden. They may remain in the country as long as they testify at a trial (if one is to take place), but once the state has no remaining use for the individual, they are deported. In some circumstances they can apply to remain, though it is rare that these applications are successful. Sweden's posturing as a country that prioritises the welfare of sex workers and victims of trafficking alike is certainly not an accurate indicator of the country continuing to use laws and policies to internationally displace sex workers. One individual, known to Swedish sex worker rights organisation Rose Alliance, was deported with “she has not supported herself in an honest manner” (author's translation) stamped on her deportation order as the reason for her deportation.⁶ This branding of sex workers as immoral and ‘dishonest’ resonates with historically established stigma, rather than the abolitionist feminist construction of sex workers as victims.

Sweden continues, therefore, to use an array of laws, policies, and perceptions to directly target sex workers themselves: pieces of legislation are used to evict, displace, and deport sex workers, with justifications including victim labelling and historical stigma, which are used interchangeably depending on which happens to best suit the circumstances. The Swedish model claims to target sex workers' clients only, but in actual fact sex workers themselves remain very much the focus of law enforcement and the state, and essentially remain criminalised, marginalised, and subject to gross social exclusion and persecution.

...SEX WORKERS THEMSELVES REMAIN VERY MUCH THE FOCUS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE STATE, AND ESSENTIALLY REMAIN CRIMINALISED, MARGINALISED, AND SUBJECT TO GROSS SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND PERSECUTION.

5 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge)

6 Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Routledge); also see Levy, J. and Jakobsson, P., 2013, *Abolitionist Feminism as Patriarchal Control – Swedish Understandings of Prostitution and Trafficking*, *Dialectical Anthropology* 37, 2: 333–340

Child Custody

Additional to these direct harassments and prosecutions of sex workers by the Swedish authorities is the fact that sex workers in Sweden have difficulties with social services in terms of child custody. Sex workers report losing custody of their children, with their sex work being cited as the reason for such interventions.

To understand how the state justifies this, we should bear in mind how sex work and how sex workers have come to be understood in Sweden: sex workers are seen as traumatised, abused, vulnerable, disempowered victims, unable to exercise choice and agency in decisions to sell sex. Sex work is asserted to be undertaken as a result of trauma, and is seen to result in further traumatisation.

Since sex workers are therefore viewed as unstable victims, they are not seen by some stakeholders in Sweden as being capable parents. Not only this, but with ‘false consciousness’ used as a means to silence the voices of some sex workers, this same narrative is seemingly used to undermine the testimony of sex workers who do not problematise their sex work, legitimising a removal of child custody. In short, if a sex worker is seen to be unable to engage with their reality ‘objectively’ (i.e. in terms of how sex work has been constructed in Sweden and in abolitionist feminist discourse), they are seen to be unable to take care of their children.

The case of Petite Jasmine illustrates how the understandings of sex work that justify the Swedish model, as outlined above, are used to justify the removal of sex workers’ children, and can result in enormous harm and danger to sex workers (beyond that of losing child custody). Jasmine was a member of Swedish sex worker rights organisation Rose Alliance, and was

an outspoken critic of the Swedish model. When the state removed her children from her custody, one key motivator was that she was ‘romanticising prostitution’, in that she refused to condemn sex work, to define it as damaging, and to identify as a victim in line with dominant Swedish understanding:

“Social Services made an emergency recovery of the kids, dragging them from her arms... and then started an investigation. They placed them with the father straight away. During the investigation regarding her parental skills, they told her she was lacking insight into the damage her sex work caused.”

(Pye Jakobsson interviewed by Caty Simon for *Tits and Sass*, 2013)⁷

Jasmine’s children were taken from her and placed with her ex-partner; this man had a history of recorded abuse, and it seems that the authorities were aware that his abusive behaviour and that his stalking had continued after the state removed the children from Jasmine. It therefore appears that Swedish social services feel that abusive men are better equipped as parents than people who sell sex. This is due to how sex workers have come to be perceived in Sweden, understood as incapable and lacking in self-awareness.⁸

Following the removal of Jasmine’s children from her and award of their custody to her violent ex-partner, this same partner was arrested by the Swedish police in the summer of 2013, and charged with stabbing Jasmine to death at their meeting with social services. The title of a *Tits and Sass* interview with Rose Alliance founder and friend of Jasmine’s, Pye Jakobsson, after Jasmine’s death sums up Sweden’s complicity in Jasmine’s murder: “*The Bloody State Gave Him the Power*”.

IT THEREFORE APPEARS THAT SWEDISH SOCIAL SERVICES FEEL THAT ABUSIVE MEN ARE BETTER EQUIPPED AS PARENTS THAN PEOPLE WHO SELL SEX.

7 Simon, C., 2013, “The Bloody State Gave Him The Power: A Swedish Sex Worker’s Murder”, *Tits and Sass*, 16 July, available online at: <http://titsandsass.com/the-bloody-state-gave-him-the-power-a-swedish-sex-workers-murder/> (last accessed 23 June 2014)

8 Such issues with child custody are not peculiar to Sweden or, indeed, the global North. As one sex worker rights activist noted, “The case of the late Petite Jasmine of Rose Alliance follows a beaten path in Africa where sex workers are regarded as bad parents. Sex workers in Africa hardly receive any support towards raising of their children even when the fathers of their children [are] able but in the event that the man decides that he wants his children the mother, especially if she is identified as a sex worker, will have no say in the matter.”

Summary

In support of the Swedish model, it is argued that only sex workers' clients are criminalised and are subject to the attention of the authorities and the police. As this paper of the toolkit has highlighted, this is clearly untrue in the context of sex workers' lives and realities in Sweden. Social constructions of sex workers have come to justify deportations and sex workers losing custody of their children. As with the second paper in this toolkit, these processes are very much cause and effect, and derive from the narratives that justify the sex purchase law:

- ▶ The Swedish model is justified by a construction of sex work as a form of violence. Sex workers are seen to be passive victims who are unable to exercise 'true' choice and consent due to the asserted traumatisation of sex work, and the traumatisation that is argued to act as a precursor to sex work.
- ▶ Since sex workers are seen to be incapable of making decisions about even their own lives, they are seen to be incapable of looking after their children appropriately.
- ▶ Those sex workers who refuse to identify with these mainstream perceptions of sex work risk losing custody of their children. Their refusal to identify as such is not seen to be indicative of their 'objective' situation: it is seen to derive from their 'false consciousness', as discussed in this toolkit's first paper.

In addition to difficulties with child custody, several pieces of legislation – older legislation than the sex purchase law itself – have remained in place, and are used to directly target sex workers themselves, to evict sex workers from homes, and to remove sex workers from hotels and venues. Such is the array of legislation that is used to directly target sex workers in Sweden that the only ways a sex worker can work and only be affected by the Swedish model itself are 1: by selling sex in the street, or 2: going to clients' homes. Sweden's laws and policies therefore exacerbate danger, serving to push sex workers to work in ways that can be less safe.

In opposing the Swedish model, it is important to not only focus on the direct and indirect outcomes of the law itself (see, respectively, papers 2 and 3 of this toolkit), but to remember that the law is something of a smokescreen that masks the wider impacts of laws and policies upon the lives of sex workers in Sweden. It conceals the fact that, for all intents and purposes, sex workers themselves remain persecuted and criminalised in Sweden. The assertion that sex workers are legally protected and decriminalised by the Swedish model is a false one.

SWEDEN'S LAWS AND POLICIES THEREFORE EXACERBATE DANGER, SERVING TO PUSH SEX WORKERS TO WORK IN WAYS THAT CAN BE LESS SAFE.

Further reading on these topics

The four papers of this toolkit stem from research undertaken by the author, Dr Jay Levy, in Sweden between 2008 and 2012. This research is presented in full in:

- Levy, J., 2014, *Criminalising the Purchase of Sex – Lessons from Sweden* (Abingdon: Routledge)

In addition to this book, several key texts provide useful further reading.

For some discussion of how legislation other than the sex purchase law is used to destabilise the lives of sex workers directly, see:

- Levy, J. and Jakobsson, P., 2014, “Sweden’s Abolitionist Discourse and Law: Effects on the Dynamics of Swedish Sex Work and on the Lives of Sweden’s Sex Workers”, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, doi: 10.1177/1748895814528926
- Östergren, P. and Dodillet, S., 2011, “The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects.” Presented at *The International Workshop: Decriminalizing Prostitution and Beyond: Practical Experiences and Challenges*. The Hague, 3–4 March

For an overview of how trafficking is constructed (and conflated with sex work) in abolitionist fundamentalist feminism, how Sweden constructs issues surrounding human trafficking, and for discussion of the deportation of sex workers and victims of human trafficking, see:

- Agustín, L., 2005, “Migrants in the Mistress’s House: Other Voices in the ‘Trafficking’ Debate”, *Social Politics* 12, 1: 96–117
- Doezema, J., 2010, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters – The Construction of Trafficking* (London: Zed Books)
- Levy, J. and Jakobsson, P., 2013, “Abolitionist Feminism as Patriarchal Control – Swedish Understandings of Prostitution and Trafficking”, *Dialectical Anthropology* 37, 2: 333–340
- Regeringskansliet, 2008, *Action Plan against Prostitution and Human Trafficking for Sexual Purposes* (Stockholm: Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality Sweden), available online at: http://www.ungift.org/doc/knowledgehub/resource-centre/Governments/Sweden_Infosheet_National_Action_Plan_Against_Human_Trafficking_en.pdf (last accessed 9 November 2013)
- Weitzer, R., 2007, “The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade”, *Politics and Society* 35, 3: 447–475



nswp

Global Network of Sex Work Projects

Promoting Health and Human Rights

The Matrix, 62 Newhaven Road
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, EH6 5QB
+44 131 553 2555
secretariat@nswp.org
www.nswp.org

NSWP is a private not-for-profit limited company.
Company No. SC349355

BRIDGING THE GAPS
Health and rights  for key populations