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Social definition and regulation of prostitution. The perspective of institutions that directly engage with prostitutes in Portugal

Definición social y regulación de la prostitución. La perspectiva de las instituciones que se relacionan directamente con las prostitutas en Portugal

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Abstract

The present paper explains the main results taken from an exploratory study in the context of a master's degree in Criminology in Oporto, Portugal. Deriving from that work this paper tackles the current controversial concepts surrounding prostitution and how associations change their discourse and actions based on the social definition that they have of the activity. Primary concerns are knowing how these associations define and see prostitution, what is its social role and its consequences. Furthermore, it is explored how the regulation of the activity may serve or not prostitutes in the persecution of a better life and working conditions, and which policies should be implemented in dealing with this social problem. Findings point that organizations disagree on how prostitution should be defined and are caught between the discourse that argues that prostitution is a form of violence against women and those who persist that prostitution is nothing but a regular job under a liberal capitalist economy. Given this, the advantages of regulation are not recognized by those institutions that state prostitution as a form of violence, but, on the other side, there's not much recognition of the harm that prostitution might inflict on those who engage in such activity.

Keywords

Prostitution; victimization; labor; violence; criminal policy.

Resumen

El presente trabajo expone los principales resultados de una investigación exploratoria realizada en Oporto (Portugal) en el contexto de la realización de un máster en Criminología. En el mismo se abordan las controvertidas nociones actuales en



torno a la prostitución y la manera en la que las asociaciones que trabajan en contacto con mujeres que ejercen la prostitución modifican su discurso y sus acciones en función de la definición social que tienen de la actividad. Las principales finalidades de la investigación se centran en conocer cómo estas asociaciones definen y ven la prostitución, cuál es su papel social y sus consecuencias. Además, se explora de qué forma, desde la perspectiva de esas asociaciones, la regulación de la actividad puede servir o no a las prostitutas a la hora de alcanzar unas mejores condiciones de vida y de trabajo, así como qué políticas deberían aplicarse para tratar este problema social. Los resultados muestran desacuerdos entre las organizaciones en torno a la forma en la que debe definirse la prostitución, encontrándose atrapadas entre el discurso que sostiene que la prostitución es una forma de violencia contra las mujeres y el discurso en que la prostitución no es más que un trabajo regular en el marco de una economía capitalista liberal. Por un lado, las ventajas de la regulación no son reconocidas por las instituciones que defienden que la prostitución es una forma de violencia, pero, por otro lado, el reconocimiento del daño que la prostitución inflige a quienes se dedican a esa actividad resulta limitado

Palabras clave

Prostitución; victimización; trabajo; violencia; políticas criminales.

Introduction

Although prostitution is complex social phenomenon, for the purpose of this article prostitution is the act of selling a sexual service for money or another commodity (Benoit, Smith, Jansson, Healey, & Magnuson, 2018). Given that prostitutes are often segregated from the rest of society it's a hard population to gain access to. Different social discourses arise from prostitution, from moral and religious issues to women's rights, to the violence that is inherent to this activity, many definitions and ideas are shared, that are widely different from one another, with many scholars rejecting the notion of prostitution and preferring to use the term 'sex worker' (Tyler, 2020). This paper confronts the perspective that states prostitution as a form of violence against the idea that prostitution is a form of labor like any other under a capitalist economy. Since it is a subject related to Criminology and Victimology, the theoretical framework discusses the background literature of the victimization present in this activity. Furthermore, it is presented reviewed literature of the main reasons behind the entrance into prostitution and the consequences of exercising the activity, since all this information is the basis to analyze the different approach that each association has. Beyond that point method and procedures in conducting the study will be discussed, assuring that it's a merely exploratory study based on a master thesis, after that, the point of view of the different organizations will be laid out in terms of what is their social definition of the activity and if they see any advantages in regulating prostitution.



1. Theoretical framework

Prostitution is a controversial issue among feminist scholars. Broadly speaking, two antagonistic discourses emerge. This divide is ideological, since the more liberal feminists see that prostitution is nothing but a regular job under a capitalist economy. The term 'sex worker' is, therefore, used to ensure that these women are recognized as workers participating in the economy, although some scholars claim that the term 'sex worker' is only used for ideological gains (Roy, 2018). The more liberal-minded feminists call for the regulation of prostitution, better trade union representation and the liberalization of the sex market (Benoit, Smith, Jansson, Healey, & Magnuson, 2018; Bernstein, 1999; Jenness, 1993).

On the other hand, more socialist-minded feminists view prostitution as a representation of patriarchal society and as a form of violence against women. These feminists tend to focus on the historical background that restrains the role of women in society and purely forces her to be the shadow of the male gender. They reject the regulation of prostitution and demand the criminalization of pimps, and, in some cases, of clients (Moran & Farley, 2018), targeting the harm that prostitution brings to women and the constant poverty and pressure that those who exercise this activity are under (Beegan, 2017; Bhattacharya, 2016; Coy, 2012).

Those who argue that prostitution is a form of general violence plea to the idea that this activity is the manifestation of social and gender inequality (García & Álvarez, 2015). Furthermore, it is, although temporary, a way the man has to use women (Avilés, 2015), given that the first has the advantage in this relationship. In exchange for money the client pays to have access to a women's body where he can do anything he wants to the prostitute. In this way, the consent is coerced, the prostitute has the economic disadvantage and so, it can't be an activity where the prostitute is in full power of her liberties. Anything that derives from this, misses the core conception of prostitution in the view of these feminists, where the client in that short amount of time doesn't have to care about the feelings, the health, mental and physical, and the safety of the other person (Davidson, 1998; Dworkin, 1993; Hunter, 1993; Jeffreys, 1997).

From another perspective prostitution is seen as a form of labor in a capitalist economy, there is literature that attests to the condition of the prostitute as being no distinct from any other worker in the capitalist mode of production (Jenness, 1993; Chancer, 1993).

It is a social activity that presents itself as lucrative and is chosen freely by those who engage in it (Varricchio & Block, 2018). Hence, the prostitute is the *bad girl* of the society that neglects her, but, nevertheless, she confronts



society by engaging in this sexual activity that is a form of empowerment in the view of the more liberal feminists (Bernstein, 1999; Vanwesenbeeck, 2013).

The underlying idea is that prostitutes will have better representation through trade unions and better health conditions accessible by public health services, which makes for improved working conditions (Harcourt, et al., 2009; Pitcher & Wijers, 2014). In reality trade unions have little representation, and sex industries trying to avoid taxation, end up in more clandestine environments, making it difficult to regulate such activity in these circumstances (Bishop, 2019).

Adding to the belief that prostitution is a form of violence, a vast range of literature confirms the nature of the activity. Even before the prostitute enters this context, no parental care, early family violence, no emotional aid, lack of jobs, sexual harassment at an early age, by close members of the family or by peers, being addicted to drugs and using prostitution to support addiction, and no financial support¹ are all risk factors that are key to enter prostitution (Bagley & Young, 1987, pp. 22-24; Benjamin & Masters, 1964; García & Álvarez, 2015). Once inside, there is a wide range of risks that are connected with prostitution, anything from kicks, punches, rape, sexual and physical assault, mutilation in result of torture, coercion, threats and homicide (Baldwin, 1993; Hunter, 1993; Matthews, 2015; Miller & Schwartz, 1995). Health issues are also a problem in prostitution, many who take part in this activity find that, physically and mentally, there are consequences. PTSD, anxiety problems, STD's, depression, pelvic and vaginal pain are among the most frequent recorded issues in terms of health problems (Cwikel, Ilan, & Chudakov, 2003; Farley & Barkan, 1998; Jeal & Salisbury, 2004). In summary prostitution is a violent activity that poses a considerably high risk for those involved in it, whether it's an indoor or outdoor context.²

1 This seems to be the most prominent risk factor. Silbert & Pines (1982) in a study made in San Francisco with 200 prostitutes and ex-prostitutes found out that their sample have been raised by both parents or just the mother, and the average age to enter the activity was 16 years old. Problems with peers in school played a minor importance, while a large part of the sample claims to have been victimized, sexually and physically, at an early age, lack of financial options and other job options were the main factors when entering prostitution.

2 Farley & Barkan (1998) in a study with 130 women concluded that 82% of the sample had been physically assaulted, while 68% had been raped, in an outdoor context. Differently Raphael & Shapiro (2004) found that women working in indoor venues suffered more violent episodes than the ones in outdoor context, and that the violence was often more serious and with more consequences to the women involved. In the UK, Church, Henderson, Barnard e Hart (2001) found that prostitutes working on the streets were involved at an early age in prostitution, whilst those who work in clubs or brothels are at risk of being raped.



Risky contact is not only between the prostitute and the client, the relationship between the prostitute and the pimp can also have complicated issues attached. Farley (2018) concludes that, aside from getting minors into prostitution, pimps also try to push prostitutes to the maximum in order to increase profits. Pamela et al. (2014) saw that pimps recruit young girls from the age of 12 to 14 years old for they are easy to manipulate through a series of strategies like coercion, threats and pregnancy to keep them dependent. Gerassi (2015) notices that, apart from the verbal and physical abuses, drugs are fomented in young girls to be used as an incentive for prostitution. Giobbe (1993) points to a series of crimes committed by pimps, anything from coercion, threats, kidnappings and deportation of women to locations pimps think will be profitable. Moran & Farley (2019), aside from the mentioned aggression and assaults, also point to the fact that pimps force girls into having sexual relations that they don't want, without condoms, with multiple partners in order to make more money. From the relationship with the client, to the relationship with the pimp, prostitution shows itself to be a very violent activity.

2. Study objectives

Research was made in the context of a master thesis in Criminology, its two objectives were laid out to be studied with the social organizations that engaged with prostitutes. All the institutions get in contact with prostitutes by going on the streets and meeting with them, or by exposing their services on newspapers and advertising that can spread the word to get to other prostitutes. In Portugal, *Ninho*, *Porto-G* and the *Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights* are organizations that are recognized, even at a political level for assisting prostitutes, even though this assistance is variable, depending on the definition of prostitution that each association has (Oliveira, 2017). In terms of street prostitution in Portugal the situation is complex, with high level of victimization present among those who are on the streets, with many wanting to leave prostitution and facing anxiety or other psychological problems (Oliveira, 2004; Teixeira, 2011).

The objectives present in this paper emerged from the study made in my master thesis in Criminology, merely exploratory. They were suited to ensure that the associations that participated in the current study had the capability of answering them since it's directly linked to their line of work every day. Two main objectives were to find the social definition that each association has of prostitution and if regulation would bring any benefits for those working in this activity.



Sample

Table 1. Characterization of the sample.

Ninho (I1)	Porto-G (I2)	Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights (I3)
Based in Lisbon, its goal is to provide social and labor support to women in prostitution with the aim of getting them out of the activity if they want. It has a more abolitionist view.	Based in Oporto, focuses its activity more on the idea of providing legal information and STD testing to women, giving continuation to the activity. Offers a regulation viewpoint.	Also based in Lisbon, the association acts in a lobbying logic with different political parties to influence decision making processes. Acts more in an abolitionist view.

Source: Self-elaboration.

All three institutions were found via research *web* and contacted by *e-mail*. Informed consent was given to all these institutions that participated in this study. Participation was voluntarily and all the data collected was to serve the study and deleted afterwards. Even though the number of associations interviewed is limited, as mentioned above, all these three institutions are highly recognized for their work with street prostitutes, and furthermore, there aren't many associations left in Portugal that could participate in the study and have the relevance that these organizations have.

3. Method

A qualitative approach was utilized in this study. Qualitative methods support a more deep and profound understanding of a series of events and dynamics that the researcher is trying to investigate, offering a more empathetic analysis of problems, concepts, and experiences (Tewksbury, 2009). This method is more convenient in the sense that allows the researcher to have a more direct contact with people that are experiencing directly or indirectly the phenomenon that one is trying to study (Patton, 2002). Given this, it is of a deep importance that the researcher is always capable of analyzing his or her own performance and can leave his own personal beliefs out of the analysis of any given subject (Berg, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, which allows a certain freedom to the subject of the study, giving it more free space in the discourse. Berg (2001) argues that this kind of interviews offers the researcher enough liberty to be open enough to endorse new and unexpected information. In semi-structured interviews the reliability comes from the meaning that the words have in the context of the interview (Barriball & While, 1994). For that



matter, it is the most suitable instrument regarding the investigation of a subject such as prostitution, so we may better understand the information that is given by the participants and better suited for the accommodation of new information that is gathered through ample and open questions (Adams, 2015).

4. Discussion

The data was analyzed using Thematic Analysis, it is a flexible and accessible method to use because there is no need to adhere to a specific language code, rather just analyze the different topics that come out from the various interviews (Vaismorad, Turunen, & Terese Bondas, 2013). In this study, different thematic groups were coded into larger themes and then inside those themes smaller ones were identified. The presentation of the data becomes clearer and more systematic, organized in themes to tell a larger story that is a representation of the recorded data (Clarke & Braun, 2012).

Two main thematics (Table 2) were identified to answer the main objectives about the social definition that these different associations think that prostitution should have and if regulation would have any benefits for those who engage in such activity.

Within the social definition thematic different topics were highlighted, the institutions paid attention to prostitution as a form of violence, and within that topic talked about the reasons why women engage in prostitution and what are the consequences of the activity. On the contrary, other institutions, in terms of the social definition, stated that prostitution is a form of labor and should be recognized as such.

As for regulation, two main topics were identified within this thematic, what benefits and working rights regulation would ensure prostitutes and the continued violence and human trafficking that regulation can facilitate. Table 2 summarizes this information.



Table 2. Identified Thematics (in bold)

Identified thematics	
Social Definition	Regulation
Looking to prostitution as a form of violence: – Reasons for the entrance into prostitution – Consequences in engaging in prostitution	Benefits and working rights
Looking to prostitution as a form of labor	Sustained violence and human trafficking

Source: Self - elaboration.

5. Social definition

In this first thematic we will explore what kind of action each association takes to help prostitutes and what is the social definition that they have of this activity. Given this, we can see that this social definition directly influences the kind of action they have with women in prostitution. As for *Ninho*, given its abolitionist tendencies, they support women mainly by trying to give them assistance in finding another job that can open doors to society.

It's true that the monetary help here are the 400 euros, that she has from coming here from nine o'clock until half past five. Women either go here to the office or go the protocol with the regional administration where she earns the minimum wage (I1).

As for *Porto-G* they have a different approach to deal with women in prostitution, instead of giving them alternatives in dealing with their activity, *Porto-G* focuses on giving them legal information and testing for STD's.

Porto-G in a practical sense is a team of risk reduction and a proximity team that deals with people where the sexual work is carried out (...) rapid tests for STD's, HIV 1, 2, Hepatitis, B and C and Syphilis. We also give vaccines for Tetanus (I2).

As for the entrance into prostitution, it is a complex dynamic. *Ninho* and the *Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights* conceptualize prostitution as a form of violence against women, and as such, entrance is motivated by a wide range of violent motives, from which financial motives were highlighted.

There are many... But misery. But to tell you that it's only misery? I can't say that. But economic factors are key (I1).



Poverty is the main factor. I think that, generally, lack of Money is the biggest issue (I3).

The idea that lack of financial support is the main reason why women enter prostitution is corroborated by the literature that concentrates on these issues (García & Álvarez, 2015; Silbert & Pines, 1982), although lack of family support, early victimization and addiction problems also need to be recognized (Bagley & Young, 1987; Benjamin & Masters, 1964).

When engaging in prostitution, *Ninho* and the *Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights*, focus on the brutality it holds for women.

But after a while the glamour is gone and what remains is the violence, having a sexual relationship inside a coffin because, maybe, on that day she received 500 euros from a funeral agency owner that wanted her inside that coffin (I1).

Another form of violence presented by the two institutions mentioned above is the inequality of power, which is a key factor in the feminist side that argues that prostitution is a form of violence against women, where man can have the upper hand in the relationship in that short period (Davidson, 1998).

I would say inequality of power and sexual violence, something like that (I3).

Gender violence is a critical component when looking to the dynamic of the connection between the prostitute and the client, seen that the abolitionist side has a very critical view of the social role that women have, questioning the historic background that, conventionally, places women in a substandard situation when compared to men (Avilés, 2015; García & Álvarez, 2015).³

Porto-G has a different mindset when looking to the nature of prostitution. Rejecting the aforementioned violence, *Porto-G* clearly regards prostitution as a form of labor.

Sexual work is an activity that involves two or more people, in legal age, where one of them voluntarily and in exchange for money performs a sexual behavior to another (I2).

This definition pairs the idea that prostitution is a form of labor like any other (Chancer, 1993; Jenness, 1993). It is a simple exchange that occurs between client and prostitute, Varricchio & Block (2018) go as far as arguing that, although recognizing that prostitution has some risks, it can't be considered a dangerous occupation. In this sense it should be regarded as a free occupation-

3 Gender issues are heavily focused by feminists since women make up most people engaging in prostitution, and from the fact that clients are made up, essentially by men, that look for prostitutes for widely different reasons (Gómez-Suárez & Verdugo-Matés, 2013).



al choice. I can't do anything but wonder, knowing the risks associated with the entrance into prostitution, (Bagley & Young, 1987; Benjamin & Masters, 1964; García & Álvarez, 2015), and the risks associated in exercising this activity (Baldwin, 1993; Church, Henderson, Barnard, & Hart, 2001; Davidson, 1998; Dworkin, 1993; Hunter, 1993; Matthews, 2015; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004; Silbert & Pines, 1982) what definition of *dangerous* do Varricchio & Block (2018) use. Defending capitalism blindly as a simple commodity exchange, ignoring specific circumstances that people find themselves in, does not get you very far.

Given this, we can see that *Ninho* and the *Portuguese Platform of Women's Right's* concentrates more on offering alternatives to women that engage in prostitution, and views this activity as a form of violence against women. As for *Porto-G* they offer legal information and health services, all of which have in mind the continuation of the activity, since for this institution prostitution is a form of labor like any other present in the capitalist society. We can also note that these associations act with prostitutes accordingly with the definition that they hold of prostitution, giving them alternatives in terms of work if they think it's oppressive to women, or giving them health check-ups and legal information if they think it's a form of labor.

6. Regulation

In terms of regulating prostitution, the organizations have different standpoints regarding rights and human trafficking issues. *Porto-G* pays its attention to the fact that people who participate in this activity don't have the same conditions that other workers have when promoting the economy, proposing the regulation of prostitution to solve this problem and grant prostitutes:

Rights like any other worker, the right to have safety in work, to good conditions, a clean work environment, paid vacations, the right to get paid for extra work, safety of unemployment, parental rights, pensions, retirement plans, rights that any other worker has (12).

These rights constitute the main argument that those who think prostitution should be regulated use. Even if recognizing that prostitution is a dangerous occupation, the focus is that these rights would give better working and health conditions to sex workers (Harcourt, et al., 2009) and better trade union representation (Pitcher & Wijers, 2014). For this, *Porto-G* actively supports regulation.

As for *Ninho*, it doesn't dismiss these rights but maintains that the fundamental rights that every person is entitled to are also available to those in



prostitution, whether it's healthcare, social benefits or a State social program, every platform that is available for any other citizen is also available to those in prostitution under the Portuguese Constitution.

These women have the same rights that every Portuguese citizen has. Social welfare programs, family care programs, pre-birth child protection, healthcare... (I1).

Ninho doesn't consider rights related to working conditions given that for this association prostitution is not a form of labor. In fact, the Portuguese Constitution, in its article 64, guarantees free universal healthcare regardless of the economic or social position that one may have. Since this association doesn't see prostitution as a form of labor, in a last resort, *Ninho* asserts, anecdotally, that the prostitute may as well act like an independent worker and give a receipt to the client for the sexual service that was performed. Given this, and opposite to *Porto-G*, *Ninho* is against the regulation of prostitution. It is also safe to conclude that the role of trade unions and the working rights that result from regulation don't always play in favor of the prostitute, as business rackets try to avoid taxes and try to minimize every right that the worker has, something that already occurs in other types of work under a capitalist economy, with the downside being that prostitution is a very clandestine activity (Bishop, 2019).

A counterpoint to work benefits and labor rights for prostitutes is the continued violence that those who enter this activity are subjected to. Apart from the violence in countries that have regulated prostitution not decreasing (Moran & Farley, 2018; Raymond, 2003), another important point made by the more abolitionist side is the increase in human trafficking.

If I was in the human trafficking business I wouldn't come to Portugal, I would go to the Netherlands or Germany where I am a sex capitalist, where I can open my own house and have women working for me (I1).

Ninho goes as far as saying that we can all be against slavery, but it doesn't mean much if you're not against the slave trade. On the opposite side, *Porto-G*, points out that if prostitution is regulated it can be easier to spot this type of criminal activity.

From the moment that this question is regulated, the authorities will have better conditions to spot this type of criminal behavior (I2).

In fact, on one hand, in Portugal, human trafficking is a top priority since the resolution from the council of ministers no. 80/2018 foresees the IV plan to better face this type of criminal activity between 2018 and 2021. On the other hand, it's worth noticing that countries that adopted the regulation approach have seen a growth in the flux of human trafficking (Cho, 2013; Cho, Dreher, & Neumayer, 2012; Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2010; Waltman, 2011).



Given the opportunity to act like a business, prostitution markets tend to expand which leads to an increase in human trafficking (Santos, Gomes, & Duarte, 2009). This is supported by the fact that since 2006, the United Nations has informed that most of the victims of human trafficking are for sexual use (United Nations Organization, 2020). Regulated prostitution tends to be a complex situation regarding human trafficking issues. We can see that *Ninho* and the *Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights* view regulation as a damaging aspect when dealing with prostitution, they are against it, and say that regulating this activity openly increases human trafficking and doesn't abolish the violence that women are subjected to. On the contrary, *Porto-G*, asserts that regulating prostitution would award women more rights and give the upper hand to authorities when dealing with cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

7. Conclusion

It is clear that two different perspectives, the one that states prostitution as a form of labor and the other that upholds that prostitution if a form of violence against women, confront one another. We can conclude that the social definition that each association has of the phenomenon of prostitution is going to reflect everything else. For *Ninho* and *The Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights* the social definition that prostitution must have is one that points to the violence present in the context of this activity. In fact, all the extended literature attests to that violence, right from the moment of the entrance in prostitution, until the moment the prostitute decides to leave the activity, if one is ever able to without help. Given this social definition, all the rights that every citizen has, are also available to those who engage in prostitution, working rights tend to be neglected given that, for these associations, prostitution is nothing but a manifestation of gender inequality and violence against women.

For *Porto-G* prostitution is a form of labor inserted in the capitalist society, and as such, even if recognizing gender and violence issues, it's a phenomenon that should be regulated. With the regulation of prostitution comes the recognition by the State of pimping and all the complex issues in the relationship between the prostitute and the pimp highlighted in this paper. Human trafficking is also a problem, since the Netherlands and Germany witnessed an increase in the flux of human trafficking and the construction of real street markets for women to be displayed on shopping windows for everyone to see. As for regulating the activity *Ninho* and the *Portuguese Platform of Women's Rights* uphold that regulating this activity will not decrease the violence that women suffer in prostitution and that it would just make the activity legal in the eyes of the State, enabling human trafficking in the country. On the contrary, *Porto-G*



declares that this regulation is crucial for women's rights, especially working rights while exercising prostitution and that benefits of labor unions and health care issues would be massively beneficial for women.

Ultimately prostitution is a divisive issue among those who contact with the prostitute themselves. The social definition that one has of this activity will open the possibility of criminalizing or not certain activities. Even though it is a complex issue, it is undeniable that prostitution has violent consequences for those who engage in it, and is a threat to human rights, especially women's rights.

To conclude this paper a few limitations need to be pointed out. In a study to understand the dynamics of prostitution and to correctly assess if we're talking about a regular job or a form of violence it is of great importance to have direct information from those who engage in prostitution, not having a sample with prostitutes constitutes the most important limitation of this study. Time was restricted, and although not many associations deal directly with prostitutes in Portugal, the sample was able to reach a diverse range of opinions which made the debate clearer. Furthermore, if we want to explore the idea of the regulation of prostitution one has to access those who influence policy-making in a certain country. A hybrid view that includes the presence of prostitutes and political parties in a sample would be of great value, and yes, every political party has its own agenda, whether it's more liberal, conservative or socialist/communist minded, but exploring what each of these ideologies have to say about prostitution might give us a hint of which has more connection to reality and to scientific literature.

The vast information corroborates how dangerous and unsafe it is to be in the context of prostitution, given that regulation doesn't seem to reduce the violence or even the stigma associated with this activity, the focus should be on the root that throws women into this phenomenon. From working conditions or wages, or better recognizing risk factors associated with early family victimization and early traumatic sexual episodes, much more attention is needed to these factors in order to prevent women from resorting to prostitution. Once in the context of the activity the social role of institutions and the State should be stronger to facilitate the transition to other lines of work, if the person in question wishes it, or have welfare programs that can help better deal with this issue. To give a concrete example *Ninho* has a direct partnership with the local government of Lisbon which establishes a protocol that can direct women from the institution into a public service of maintenance in the context of the city. The idea is not to simply focus on welfare to fix the problem, but offer concrete solutions with economic and work safety that can guarantee an alternative to prostitution. These options, together with a much sharper attention on prevent-



ing those risk factors associated with the entrance into prostitution, enables a much better and fair society in terms of opportunities, while respecting those, a very small minority, who still want to exercise prostitution.

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