



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

Crime, punishment, and counselling – a study of the local judicial and social work application of prostitution policy in Sweden

ISBN: 978-91-88267-17-7

By

Narola Olsson

Doctoral Thesis/Akademisk avhandling
som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Göteborgs universitet för
avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen framläggs till offentlig granskning

fredagen den 12 mars 2021, kl. 09:15 Europasalen,
Wallenberg Conference Center, Medicinaregatan 20 A, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent är Docent Marlene Spanger,
Department of Politics and Society, Aalborg University

This thesis is based on the following papers:

- I. Olsson, N. (2020). The implementation of Sweden's prostitution law at the local level. *Journal of Social Work*. First Published 12 March 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017320911352>
- II. Olsson, N. (forthcoming). *An ideal witness – Implementing Swedish prostitution law with no plaintiff*. Submitted and under review.
- III. Olsson, N. (2021). Brott och Skam – stigmas betydelse vid rättsfall om köp av sexuell tjänst. In A. de Cabo Y Moreda, C. Holmström & J. Kuosmanen (Eds.), *Sex mot ersättning – säljare, köpare, makt och moral*. (p. 93–120) Studentlitteratur: Lund.
- IV. Olsson, N. (forthcoming). *Men buying sex – a (new) field for social work in Sweden*. Manuscript submitted.

Reprints were made with the permission of publisher.

Abstract

Title: "Crime, punishment, and counselling – a study of the local judicial and social work application of prostitution policy in Sweden"

Author: Narola Olsson

Key words: prostitution policy, the Swedish Sex Purchase Act, buying sex, implementation, law in action, social work, counselling, Sweden, stigma, policy analysis, WPR analysis, social construction

ISBN: 978-91-88267-17-7

ISSN: 1401-5781

<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/67363>

This thesis explores the social construction of a purchase of a sexual service within the implementation of prostitution policy in Sweden and seeks to contribute to the current knowledge about how a purchase of a sexual service is regulated based on how the law and social work are locally implemented.

The thesis consists of four papers based on two empirical studies, including legal documents concerning the enforcement of the Swedish Sex Purchase Act (Chapter 6 Section 11 of the Criminal Code), and interviews with professionals within social services providing counselling to individuals with the experience of purchasing sexual services. The first paper provides a descriptive analysis of how the Sex Purchase Act is implemented. The second paper examines how a purchase of sexual services is established as a criminal offence and the construction of the buyer and the seller during the legal process. The third paper examines the legal process of a case concerning the purchase of a sexual service and how stigma and social normative notions of the offence potentially influence the legal process. The fourth paper examines the construction of a purchase of a sexual service as a social problem and how this is addressed through the work of social services in Sweden.

The results show that a purchase of a sexual service is socially constructed as a criminal offence and as a social problem through the implementation of Sweden's prostitution policy. This construction represents a purchase of a sexual service as a problem concerning gender equality, as a problem with a symbolic victim and as a problem of morality. All three representations construct the purchase of a sexual service as a problem that can be addressed through punishment and counselling with Sweden's prostitution policy. Hence, experiences of buying and selling sexual services that fall within the current problem definition are addressed in the current criminal justice and social work practices. However, experiences outside the current problem definition are often left unproblematic. A potential consequence of this is that individuals with the experience of buying sexual services are positioned further away from the punishment and counselling used to implement Sweden's prostitution policy.