

RADICAL OR SEX-RADICAL?

Left Party Views on Prostitution

A Comparative Case Study of Sweden and Germany



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Chapter 1: Introduction

The German government recently reformed its prostitution policy when it passed the Prostitute Protection Act in 2017, introducing new measures meant to improve the safety and health of sex workers.¹ Yet during the Coronavirus pandemic, the government completely abandoned prostitutes, leaving them more vulnerable than ever. It closed all brothels and temporarily prohibited prostitution, causing an estimated 400,000² prostitutes, of which around 150,000³ had already been living in poverty, to fear for their existence. Zhana, who emigrated to Berlin from Bulgaria seven years prior, is one of these prostitutes.⁴ She, like many others, has no choice but to continue working in order to survive. The street is now highly saturated with sex workers and clients are few, meaning that the price for - often unprotected - sexual services is driven down. Due to the closures of brothels this exchange has to take place in public spaces, such as playgrounds or public toilets.

What is the best way for the state to provide protection to its sex workers? Should prostitution even be allowed, or would sex workers be better off if it were criminalized? Is prostitution inherently violent and even harmful to society as a whole? For decades, there have been debates on the best way to regulate prostitution and many governments have developed their own policies. A well-known approach is the “Swedish model”, named after its origin country, which criminalizes only the client, with the eventual goal of abolition. After Sweden, other Nordic countries have also adopted this model. Meanwhile, South of Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands have taken an entirely different approach by instead legalizing prostitution. Here, the idea is that prostitution cannot be eradicated, so the state might as well regulate it.

¹ Büttner Manfred. *Prostituiertenschutzgesetz Kurzkomentar*. Stuttgart: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2017, 5.

² Nier, Hedda, and Mathias Brandt. “Infografik: Knapp 33.000 Gemeldete Prostituierte.” Statista Infografiken. Statista, November 26, 2019. <https://de.statista.com/infografik/20104/in-deutschland-gemeldete-prostituierte/>.

³ STRG_F. „Illegale Prostitution: Trotz Corona auf dem Straßenstrich.“ *YouTube* video, 19:49. 7 April, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDYXjFckzyg&t>.

⁴ Ibid.

These models reflect a broader discussion about prostitution within feminist literature. Feminist scholars are divided among those who regard prostitution as inherently violent against women and want to abolish it (radical feminists), while others view sex work as work like any other occupation and advocate for its decriminalization (sex-radical feminists). Each side has their own views on women in the labor market, as well as aspects of protection and autonomy.

While Sweden's prostitution policy aligns with the abolitionist view, the German prostitution policy is based on the notion that sex work is a form of work. Although these policies were implemented two decades ago, the debate around regulating prostitution is still ongoing in both countries. Especially Germany is experiencing significant advocacy to adopt a Swedish model, led by various feminist groups. Meanwhile, Germany's Die Linke (*the left party*) continues its support for the legalization of prostitution, despite a push from its own members to support a Swedish model instead. Simultaneously, Sweden's Vänsterpartiet (*the left party*) fully supports the abolitionist Swedish model. How is it that two parties with similar views and ideals side with opposing laws on regulating prostitution? By exploring this question, this thesis aims to uncover which influences lead a political party to develop a certain stance on prostitution.

This thesis will analyze official statements regarding prostitution made by Vänsterpartiet and Die Linke in order to answer the question, **What ideas and narratives about work, protection and autonomy do these parties use to explain their support for different legal solutions to prostitution?** This analysis will be done in the form of a political discourse analysis constructed around the two opposing feminist theories on prostitution: the radical feminist against the sex-radical feminist view.

The discourse analysis shows that Vänsterpartiet mostly aligns with the radical feminist view, while Die Linke is closer to the sex-radical feminist scholarship on prostitution. More specifically, this research shows that the German Die Linke approaches prostitution with a Marxist critique on capitalism and frames it as an issue of economic inequality and

workers' rights, whereas Sweden's Vänsterpartiet frames it as an issue of gender inequality and approaches it from a feminist standpoint. Furthermore, the analysis of their approach to prostitution policy yields that each party has a distinct view of the role of the state.

These findings can be explained by the influence of feminist and workers' movements within a party, as well as the broader understandings of the role of the state that underlie these policies. While in Germany, the most important duty of the state, according to the liberal principle, is to set the conditions for people to be able to choose what they define as the morally correct way of life; in Sweden, there is more of a community view, in which the state stands for collective moral principles and decides what lifestyles are desirable. It is the Swedish citizens who form a group with common values; the state merely represents them.⁵ Swedish feminists have established the view that prostitution is a form of violence against women and must be eradicated as it is harmful to society, so the state should establish laws to enable that.

The findings of this thesis have implications for the larger debate on the regulation of prostitution. These results show that prostitution policy is influenced by the strength of the feminist movements within a country, as well as how the role of the state is perceived.

Defining Terms

- In the global feminist scholarship, the sex industry is considered to be gendered, as most of those who sell sex are women, while the vast majority paying for it are men.⁶ Therefore, this thesis will refer to prostitutes as female, and clients as male.
- The terms "prostitute" and "sex worker" will be used interchangeably to describe a woman selling sexual services in exchange for money.
- The terms "client" and "sex buyer" will be used interchangeably to describe a

⁵ Hill, Elisabeth, and Mark Bibbert. *Zur Regulierung Der Prostitution: Eine Diskursanalytische Betrachtung Des Prostituiertenschutzgesetzes*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019, 98.

⁶ Mac, Juno, and Molly Smith. *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights*. London: Verso, 2018, E-book, 20.

man who purchases sexual services from a prostitute.

- “Radical feminists” and “abolitionists” will be used interchangeably to represent the view that prostitution is a form of violence against women, while the terms “Sex-radicals” and “sex-radical feminists” are used to describe the view that sex work is work.

Regulatory Frameworks for Prostitution

- **Full Criminalization** is a legal model in which all aspects of prostitution, including the sex worker, the client and all third parties, are criminalized. This is also referred to as prohibition, and it is currently in place in the United States.⁷
- **Partial Criminalization** is a legal model in which some aspects are criminalized. These are oftentimes the most visible, such as street prostitution. This model is implemented in the United Kingdom.⁸
- **The Swedish/Nordic Model** is a legal regime in which the purchase of sex is criminalized while those who sell sex are decriminalized. Third parties, such as landlords and managers, may also be punished. This is an abolitionist model as its aim is to abolish prostitution, and it is also referred to as the sex buyer law or sex purchase ban.⁹ This is the preferred model of radical feminists.
- **Legalization** is a legal model in which prostitution is legalized, but heavily regulated. Prostitutes who do not comply with regulations are criminalized. Such regulations take the form of bureaucratic requirements such as mandatory health testing, public registration and official employment. This model is also referred to as regulationism, and it is currently in place in Germany.¹⁰
- **(Full) Decriminalization** is a legal model in which all parties of the sex industry are decriminalized, including the sex worker, the client, and all third parties. The regime recognizes sex work as work and regulates the industry through labor law.¹¹ This framework is championed by sex workers’ groups, as well as human

⁷ Ibid, 227.

⁸ Ibid, 175.

⁹ Ibid, 274.

¹⁰ Ibid, 344.

¹¹ Ibid, 369.

rights organizations and international bodies like the WHO, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UNAIDS.¹²

Background and Context

Prostitution in Germany

The implementation of the 1927 Act for Combating Sexually Transmitted Diseases marked the first step towards the legalization of prostitution in Germany. While prostitution was no longer illegal and punishable, it was still regarded as an immoral and socially damaging occupation. Societal perceptions changed with the beginning of the women's movement in the 1970s and the shift towards sexual liberalization.

Simultaneously, the German “whore movement” was born – in 1980, as the first German advocacy and self-help group for prostitutes, Hydra, was founded. Hydra demanded the same rights for prostitutes as are granted for workers.¹³ Yet, up until 2002, prostitutes remained without legal rights.

Summary of Prostitution Law in Germany

Prostitutionsgesetz (ProstG)

In December 2001, the German parliament passed the “Prostitutionsgesetz” (*Prostitution Act*), which effectively legalized prostitution by legally defining it as a service and thus part of economic activity. Simultaneously, the criminal code was updated to legalize procuring, provided there was no exploitation of the prostitute. As a result, brothels could now operate under certain conditions. The government at the time was made up of a coalition of Social Democrats and the Green Party. The liberal and left party also voted in favor of this law.¹⁴

¹² Hardy, Kate. “Taking Apart the ‘Swedish Model’: Diversification in Global Sex Work Policy.” *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 23, no. 4 (2015): 317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1091788>.

¹³ Hill and Bibbert, *Regulierung Der Prostitution*, 9-11.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 13-14.

The law came into force in January 2002, and besides enabling prostitutes to legally pursue clients who refused to pay, it also allowed them to register for health insurance, unemployment benefits, as well as pension insurance. The official aim of the law was to improve prostitutes' legal standing and provide them with social security, reduce criminality associated with the trade, as well as offer prostitutes a pathway to exit. Legalization was justified with the argument that the state was to protect its citizens' human dignity, and thus could not interfere with individual self-determination (such as an individual choice to pursue prostitution as an occupation). The exploitation of prostitutes, pimping, human trafficking, as well as the prostitution of minors remained illegal.¹⁵

It was hoped that the law would lead to prostitutes' empowerment and their destigmatization. Although it was supposed to be a comprehensive improvement of the situation of prostitutes, it turned out to be insufficient, as it only referred to specific aspects and prostitutes were slow to take advantage of their legal improvements.¹⁶ At the time, the government was also implementing the "Agenda 2010", a series of reforms to the German welfare system and labor relations that were meant to promote economic growth and reduce unemployment. These reforms are seen as part of Germany's increased neoliberalization, and many observers see the legalization policy as part of the same process to create new and larger markets, such as that of prostitution.¹⁷ Around this time, the discourse around prostitution in Germany was dominated by the idea of an autonomous prostitute.¹⁸

Prostituiertenschutzgesetz (ProstSchG)¹⁹

In 2016, the German parliament passed a new law, the "Prostituiertenschutzgesetz" (*Prostitute Protection Act*) that constituted a major extensive update on the ProstG. The

¹⁵ Pates, Rebecca, and Daniel Schmidt. *Die Verwaltung Der Prostitution: Eine Vergleichende Studie Am Beispiel Deutscher, Polnischer Und Tschechischer Kommunen*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag., 2009, 48-52.

¹⁶ Hill and Bibbert, *Regulierung Der Prostitution*, 68-69.

¹⁷ BAG LISA. "LISA NRW Papier Zur Prostitutionsdebatte Vom 2.12.2013." DIE LINKE. BAG LISA. DIE LINKE. BAG LISA, December 5, 2013. <https://www.lisa-frauen.de/nc/home/detail/news/lisa-nrw-papier-zur-prostitutionsdebatte-vom-2-12-2013/>.

¹⁸ Hill and Bibbert, *Regulierung Der Prostitution*.

¹⁹ Büttner, *Prostitutionsschutzgesetz Kurzkomentar*.

new law, which entered into force in 2017, is supposed to improve the protection of prostitutes and strengthen their right to self-determination, as well as further reduce criminality, such as trafficking and violence. Another objective is to improve the state's ability to monitor prostitution. The law emphasizes the state's duties to take care of the prostitutes.²⁰

Key elements include permit requirements for prostitution businesses and a mandatory registration and identity card for prostitutes. As part of the registration process, the prostitute will receive a health consultation, as well as information regarding social security in Germany and the contents of the new law. At the end of this process, the prostitute will receive her identification card, which must be renewed every 2 years (through the same process) and must always be carried while working.

Furthermore, every business that is associated with prostitution is required to obtain a permit, which must be requested in agreement with the police. Those who have been convicted of a relevant crime in the past five years will not be approved for permits. In addition, the new law requires the use of condoms, and violation is fined at 50,000 Euros.

Prostitution in Sweden

The Swedish model of regulating prostitution is an abolitionist policy called *sexköpslagen* (*The Sex Purchase Act*), adapted in 1999. The policy is characterized by the criminalization of the demand, whereby the client can be fined or imprisoned for up to one year. Although the selling of sex is legal, prostitution is not considered regular work, meaning that sex workers do not have worker's rights or access to welfare benefits. The aim of this policy is to combat human trafficking and abolish prostitution, which is regarded as violating norms of gender equality and women's rights and freedom, as well as overall damaging to the individual and society. The idea behind this approach is that, by criminalizing the purchase of sex, prostitutes will eventually abandon the trade, and

²⁰ Ibid, 46.

trafficking will be discouraged as the market for sex shrinks.²¹

As reasons for the prevalence of prostitution in Sweden, the government identified a patriarchal society, as well as the commercialization of sexuality. The stated need to fight patriarchy has been a continuing trend in Sweden, where a so-called state feminism has emerged in recent years. Thus, the solution to prostitution was seen in shifting the gender roles in Swedish society. Despite the gender focus, prostitution was still regarded as an issue that affected everyone within Swedish society. It was framed as Sweden globally taking the lead in fighting prostitution, and a response to the liberal tendencies observed elsewhere in Europe.²²

This policy model has garnered a lot of debate and influenced other countries such as Ireland, Canada and the UK to at least partially criminalize the demand of sex. Since Norway, Finland and Iceland have adopted the Swedish model, it has also been referred to as the ‘Nordic model’.²³ This policy has also garnered a lot of support in other countries, as feminists all around the world are advocating for it.

Although hailed as a great success and major policy export by the Swedish government, several scholars who have studied the aims and the effects of the law in practice tend to be more critical of the Swedish model.²⁴ The official investigation into the effectiveness of the law found that street prostitution had decreased, while online prostitution had increased, yet not as much as in other countries. There remains an uncertainty regarding other forms of prostitution, as well as trafficking.²⁵

Critics of the policy say that it is not as effective as it is made out to be, since street

²¹ Danna, Daniela. “Client-Only Criminalization in the City of Stockholm: A Local Research on the Application of the ‘Swedish Model’ of Prostitution Policy.” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 9, no. 1 (November 20, 2011): 81-83. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-011-0072-z>.

²² Svanström, Yvonne. “Criminalising the John - a Swedish Gender Model?” Essay. In *The Politics of Prostitution: Women's Movements, Democratic States and the Globalisation of Sex Commerce*, 225–44. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

²³ Hardy, *Taking Apart the Swedish Model*, 319.

²⁴ See: Danna 2011; Hardy 2015; Holmström and Skilbrei 2017; Mac and Smith 2018.

²⁵ Danna, Daniela. “Client-Only Criminalization in the City of Stockholm: A Local Research on the Application of the ‘Swedish Model’ of Prostitution Policy.” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 9, no. 1 (November 20, 2011): 90. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-011-0072-z>.

prostitution has only diminished, but not disappeared, and most of the prostitution appears to have moved indoors and online, which is not illegal according to the law, as no direct transaction takes place. Meanwhile, trafficking networks are still active in Sweden, yet many have moved to neighboring countries, which may signal a failure in the law's aim to prevent trafficking.²⁶ Furthermore, the policy has been criticized for having been shaped without consulting with sex workers and their organizations, and thus having damaging effects on the prostitutes as a result.²⁷

²⁶ Danna, *Client-Only Criminalization*, 89-91.

²⁷ Hardy, *Taking Apart the Swedish Model*, 320.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theory

The topic of prostitution has divided feminist scholars. On the one hand, there are the radical feminists who view prostitution as violence against women.²⁸ These scholars call for the abolition of prostitution through the criminalization of everyone involved in the trade, except for the prostitute. In this sense, they are proponents of the Swedish Model.

On the other side, there are the sex-radical feminist scholars who recognize sex work as regular work.²⁹ They argue for decriminalization or some form of regulation that normalizes sex work as work, thereby guaranteeing worker's rights and benefits for prostitutes.

While radical feminists tend to make several generalizations about prostitution, maintaining that all prostitutes experience some form of abuse, violence and even trauma; the sex-radical scholars, while acknowledging that these cases do exist, tend to take a more holistic approach by taking in many different perspectives. Sex-radicals believe that sex workers' right to work must be protected and criticize the radical feminists for supporting legislation without realizing their effects on sex workers.³⁰

On Work

Both radical and sex-radical feminists agree that women are generally economically marginalized and enter prostitution to earn a survival income.

Radical feminist Barry argues that it is women's marginalization in the labor market that drives them into prostitution. When due to impoverishment and vulnerability these women need to enter the labor market, they often end up in prostitution as it requires little

²⁸ See: Barry 1979, 1996; Jeffreys 1997, Sass 2017

²⁹ See: Bell 1994; Chapkis 1997; Mac and Smith 2018; Pheterson and St. James 1989; Pheterson 1996.

³⁰ Mac and Smith, *Revolted Prostitutes*, Chapter 5.

skill and offers relatively high pay for less work, compared to other low-skilled work.³¹ This marginalization is also seen to be fueling trafficking.³² Sex-radicals agree with this general sentiment, also referring to sex work as “survival work”.³³ They however appreciate sex work as a safety net which any desperate person can fall onto, and therefore say that it should not be criminalized.³⁴

Barry defines prostitution as a “male consumer market”,³⁵ as sex industries only exist to supply female bodies to satisfy male consumer demand. In this patriarchal prostitution market, Barry argues, women cannot separate from their sexual objectification, as it becomes their full identity. She draws a comparison of prostitution being like a “market fair”³⁶ with no limit to women’s exploitation. Sex-radicals counter that sex work is not purchased consent to do whatever one desires but paying for a specific service.³⁷

Radical feminist Jeffreys gives several arguments as to why prostitution cannot be considered as work like any other job. First of all, prostitution does not require any kind of special skill that would define it as a profession. The skills that prostitutes do present are those necessary for survival, such as setting boundaries, being wary, and dissociation.³⁸ Moreover, she highlights the paradox of prostitute’s work being exactly like the sexual harassment that other female workers are trying to abolish in the workplace.³⁹

Sex-radical feminists’ argument for regarding sex work as work is that prostitutes are “performing” sex, which is a special skill. The image that is often projected is that of trained sex workers who have specialized to cater to a specific demand, sometimes even

³¹ Barry, Kathleen. *The Prostitution of Sexuality: The Global Exploitation of Women*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996, 53.

³² Ibid, 196

³³ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 17.

³⁴ Ibid, 103-104.

³⁵ Barry, *Prostitution of Sexuality*, 39.

³⁶ Ibid, 40.

³⁷ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 95.

³⁸ Jeffreys, Sheila. *The Idea of Prostitution*. North Melbourne, Vic: Spinifex Press, 1997, 179-180.

³⁹ Ibid, 192.

referred to as entrepreneurs. In addition, prostitutes are able to manage and contain their emotion,⁴⁰ something which radical feminists classify as dissonance, and regard as a loss of identity. Furthermore, sex-radical scholars highlight sex work as an act of resistance and a way for the women to gain personal and financial independence.⁴¹ Though they recognize the negative aspects as a reality of prostitution, they choose to highlight the positive aspects of sex work, such as the flexibility of the job, short working weeks and high returns.⁴² Sex work is described as a form of wage labor, and they argue that it should legally be seen as such. Sex-Radical feminists advocate for policies which highlight prostitutes' right to economic and sexual self-determination,⁴³ and thereby enhance their workers' rights through decriminalization and self-organizing.⁴⁴ In a decriminalized regime, sex workers could access labor law, and thus their welfare would be prioritized.⁴⁵ Sex-radicals thus deposit that the left should support decriminalization because the left supports workers' rights.⁴⁶

Smith and Mac argue that radical feminists' ideas of why sex work should not be considered work often draws upon the assumption that work should be personally fulfilling and non-exploitative. However, sex-radicals argue that sex work can be less exploitative than other low-wage labor, such as scrubbing toilets, which is also rarely enjoyable.⁴⁷

On Protection

Radical feminists regard prostitution itself as a violation of women's human rights, and therefore believe that the state should be legally obligated to protect women from prostitution. The end goal is to eliminate prostitution, and they argue this can only be

⁴⁰ Chapkis, Wendy. *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997, 75.

⁴¹ Pheterson, Gail, and Margo St. James. *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1989, 222.

⁴² Ibid, 223.

⁴³ Ibid, 15.

⁴⁴ Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts*, Chapter 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid, Chapter 7.

⁴⁶ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 107.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 90.

done in an abolitionist regime such as the Swedish Model. Part of this process has to be helping women leave prostitution and offering economic alternatives for them.⁴⁸ Radical feminists repeatedly highlight the vulnerability of prostitutes, describing them as among the poorest, most vulnerable and victimized group of women, as a result of male violence and exploitation.

They draw upon violent images to describe the realities of sex work, in which the violence is gendered, as its actors are always men, primarily pimps and sex buyers, but also police officers. Barry highlights pimps' procuring strategy of 'seasoning' which is meant to break the prostitutes' will and reduce her ego. This includes systematically dehumanizing the prostitute, performing physical abuse and torture, rape and even kidnapping her to exercise their control over the women.⁴⁹ Moreover, Barry argues that an occupational hazard of prostitution is murder, as men see these women as disposable and worthless.⁵⁰

Sass highlights that the majority of prostitutes experience such violence that it causes post-traumatic stress disorder worse than that of soldiers fighting in wars.⁵¹ She further paints the client as a man who aggressively acts out issues with his sexuality through purchasing sex. According to her, sex buyers display more aggressive behavior towards other women as well, while dehumanizing prostitutes and enjoying the feeling of power and control over them.⁵²

In their arguments, radical feminists often highlight the trafficked woman as the ultimate victim in prostitution and argue that abolitionist regimes are also the best to fight trafficking. In this way, they instrumentalize the trafficking victim for their own ends, often regarding all migrant sex workers as victims of trafficking. Furthermore, radical feminists argue that measures to protect prostitutes by abolishing prostitution altogether

⁴⁸ Barry, *Prostitution of Sexuality*, 249.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 207-208.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 44.

⁵¹ Sass, Katharina. *Mythos "Sexarbeit": Argumente Gegen Prostitution Und Sexkauf*. Köln: PapyRossa Verlag, 2017, 78.

⁵² Ibid, 34-59

will also protect other women from being sexually exploited. This is because, they argue, as long as prostitution is not regarded as sexual exploitation, other forms of this will not be recognized or properly addressed.⁵³

Sex-radical feminists believe that the only way the police can protect sex workers is in a decriminalized regime, in which the police uphold labor laws. Otherwise, the police and the state are seen as violent actors who have failed to defend the rights and interests of sex workers, even in legalized regimes, which are criticized for exacerbating prostitutes' existing vulnerabilities.⁵⁴ They argue that the use of policing to eradicate the sex industry only fuels the patriarchal system, in that it produces violence, harassment, eviction, arrest, prosecution and poverty for sex workers.⁵⁵ Since criminalizing any part of the industry makes the sex worker more vulnerable, she is thus at a higher risk for such events.⁵⁶ Sex-radicals specifically criticize the Prostitute Protection Act for ostensibly providing protection to the women, when instead the policy increases state control over them, and thus violates their freedoms and rights as citizens.⁵⁷

Sex-radicals argue that the police are entirely unable to provide protection to sex workers in anti-prostitution regimes, and actually often abuse their powers in these situations.⁵⁸ Moreover, they are highly critical of the Swedish model for painting law enforcement as "saviors" to these women, when in their view, these regimes do not serve them, but the clients instead, as evidenced by the observation that police overwhelmingly target sex workers in these systems.⁵⁹ The Swedish model protects clients in the sense that they can argue to stay anonymous to protect their identity. Meanwhile, the same model still results in prostitutes being fined, evicted, deported, and harassed.⁶⁰ Regulationism is also criticized as protecting the client rather than the prostitute, as it is he who is primarily

⁵³ Barry, *Prostitution of Sexuality*, 65.

⁵⁴ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, Chapter 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 407.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 204.

⁵⁷ Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts*, 155.

⁵⁸ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, Chapter 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Chapter 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 320.

served by her regular health check-ups, while prostitutes fear that mandatory registration jeopardizes their social status and future employment prospects.

Sex-radicals argue that the best method of protecting the sex worker is by decriminalizing the industry and granting her worker's rights through upholding labor laws. In addition, they argue that prostitutes can protect each other through working together.⁶¹ Lastly, sex-radicals agree with radical feminists that there should be proper exit strategies in place for prostitutes, but also add that sex workers would be protected through access to social services. In a decriminalized regime, the state is able to ensure prostitutes' legal, social and economic protection.

Sex-radical scholars are critical of radical feminists who have been debating prostitution without considering the voices of sex workers. This is seen as the cause for the global stigma surrounding prostitution, which Pheterson and St. James refer to as "the whore label".⁶² This has made the lives of prostitutes unnecessarily difficult, such as by dehumanizing them and their work to the extent that the public do not care about their mistreatment.

On Autonomy

Radical feminists mainly argue that women cannot have autonomy as prostitutes. Barry even goes so far as to describe these women as 'slaves', defining 'female sexual slavery' as a situation in which a woman, regardless of how she got into it, cannot escape sexual exploitation and physical violence. This includes women who enter prostitution voluntarily, yet are not free to leave the trade.⁶³ A patriarchal state system is made responsible for this. In a patriarchal society, male violence is accepted and women are made responsible for their own victimization.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid, 311.

⁶² Pheterson and St. James, *Vindication of Rights of Whores*, 4.

⁶³ Barry, Kathleen. *Female Sexual Slavery*. New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 1979.

⁶⁴ Barry, *Prostitution of Sexuality*, 221.

Both Jeffreys and Barry reject the distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution, arguing that women do not freely choose to pursue prostitution, but decide to enter the trade out of economic desperation, given they are not coerced into it by a third party. Jeffreys further criticizes that the ‘prostitution as choice’ narrative perpetuates victim-blaming, as it justifies men’s abuse of women in prostitution.⁶⁵ If a prostitute is treated abusively by her client, it is her fault for choosing this profession.

Radical feminists argue that most of the autonomy is lost through the pimp, who entirely controls the women financially and emotionally. Pimps enact control over prostitutes through rape, intimidation, kidnapping, physical and mental torture, and in addition, take most of the money that she makes and can even control the hours she works.⁶⁶ Barry also sees pimping as a by-product of a patriarchal society in which men strive to establish ownership over women. In this way, the sex-radical argument that prostitution gives women independence is contradicted.

Sex-radical feminists define a prostitute as a woman who is selling sexual services voluntarily, while still recognizing that the main reason women enter the industry is out of a financial need. They do understand that there is a potential to exploitation, but they believe it is better handled as a separate offence. They support the criminalization of sex trafficking and rape or abuse, but they think that decriminalizing prostitution itself would make these other offences more easily prosecutable.

However, they also highlight that sex work gives women independence, in that they are able to earn their own income, through a flexible job that has short working weeks and offers high returns, which allows them to simultaneously care for a child or family member.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, a sex worker is only truly autonomous in a decriminalized regime in which they are legally seen as workers, giving them full rights and protection from the police.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Jeffreys, Sheila. *The Idea of Prostitution*. North Melbourne, Vic: Spinifex Press, 1997, 142.

⁶⁶ Barry, *Prostitution of Sexuality*, 207-217.

⁶⁷ Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts*, 158.

⁶⁸ Mac and Smith, *Revolted Prostitutes*, 382-390.

Prostitution Policy, Feminism and The Left

Sweden

Analyses of the origins of the Swedish policy point to strong radical feminist thinking. Particularly Svanström's analysis yields that the general view among feminists within the political parties was that prostitution is a patriarchal oppression of women, in line with radical feminists. It was seen as being incompatible with Swedish ideas of equality and individual freedom. Svanström concludes that the feminist movement was significant in the adoption of the policy.⁶⁹

She points out that historically, the movement had been less concerned with issues regarding sexuality and much more with women's right to work, which indicates that the movement's involvement may have stemmed from viewing prostitution as inhumane labor for women. Svanström observes that most parties aligned with the feminist movement, although her interpretation is that it was closer to the left parties. However, not all members of the left-leaning parties (especially men), supported the movement. While many scholars view this law as a sign of Swedish feminist state policy, Svanström insists that it is mainly a result of continuous lobbying from the women's movement.⁷⁰

Smith and Mac connect Sweden's prostitution policy to the Swedish political theory of 'folkhemmet' (*the people's home*), which is still referenced in Swedish government today, even by members of the Left Party.⁷¹ This theory posits that, much like in a small family household, the Swedish state benignly looks after its citizens in exchange for their contributions. In this way, the state acts like a 'good parent', and guides its children towards good behavior. In this system, the prostitute takes on an antagonistic role.

⁶⁹ Svanström, *Criminalizing the John*, 225-243.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 238-244.

⁷¹ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 343.

The Netherlands & Germany

Joyce Outshoorn argues that the feminist movement was influential in leading to legalization in the Netherlands, as all of its original demands were met in the policy. She argues that feminist groups influenced the country's shift from the traditional moralistic view to the now-prevalent sex work as work narrative.⁷² She also highlights that it was the left parties who most aligned with the feminist movement.⁷³ In her observations, the Dutch Left mainly draws on the sex-radical framework, employing the violence against women discourse only when discussing forced prostitution. In parliament, the Left echoed feminists' connection of prostitution to (sexual) self-determination.⁷⁴

Outshoorn shows that in the Netherlands, the sex work discourse is in line with individual rights discourse and liberal contract theory, as proponents of legalization used the argument of women's right to sexual self-determination, which they view as the state's responsibility to guarantee. Legally recognizing prostitution as a profession would empower the prostitutes and enable the state to ensure their legal, social and economic protection. As the Left is a proponent of this discourse, it might suggest the presence of inherently liberal views within the Dutch Left.⁷⁵

Germany also legalized prostitution in the early 2000s. Hill and Bibbert however have since observed a recent shift from a prostitution discourse centered around autonomy, in line with sex-radical feminist thought, to a now dominant discourse centered around ideas of protection, reflecting radical feminist thought. The protection discourse is classified as liberal, and as utilizing a strategy of moralizing.⁷⁶

Die Linke is in support of legalization, although it opposes the recent revision of the law. Sass finds this support hypocritical, as she asserts that left parties should not support what

⁷² Outshoorn, Joyce. "Debating Prostitution in Parliament." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 8, no. 4 (November 1, 2001): 472–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050680100800405>.

⁷³ Outshoorn, Joyce. "Voluntary and Forced Prostitution: The 'Realistic Approach' of the Netherlands." Essay. In *The Politics of Prostitution: Women's Movements, Democratic States and the Globalisation of Sex Commerce*, 197-202. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

⁷⁴ Outshoorn, *Debating Prostitution*.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Hill and Bibbert, *Regulierung Der Prostitution*.

she interprets as liberal and market-oriented policies. She believes the party should support a Swedish model, since it actively combats the social and economic causes of prostitution, so a partial criminalization would be the next step.⁷⁷

The literature on prostitution has so far mostly focused on the two extreme cases: the Dutch legalization and the Swedish abolitionist model, but discussions about these policies have recently become the focus of many other countries in Europe and beyond. Germany is an extremely interesting case to study further, as only little has been written about it, despite it being the biggest European prostitution market, with the industry worth an estimated €15 billion per year.⁷⁸ There is a clear need for more research on the German case, particularly within international academic debates. As many other countries choose to adopt a Swedish model or a version of it, Germany is standing by its legalization policy but making it more protectionist.

Since Germany's approach closely resembles that of the Netherlands, it could perhaps be explained by a degree of neoliberalization. However, this liberal approach is also championed by the Left Party, which generally opposes neoliberal policies.

This literature review shows that there is quite a lot of disagreement on approaches to sex work that cut across ideological lines. Nevertheless, it is important to understand why parties of similar ideology would take such different positions on the same issue. The Swedish case is relevant to Germany as the Swedish model is frequently invoked in parliamentary debates and beyond, yet it has not resulted in a policy shift so far. In both countries, the policy approaches are championed by the left parties, despite them being extremely different. This thesis will try to understand how both parties justify their stance and why they are so different. In order to answer this, statements made by both parties in parliament will be examined. These documents are chosen as they provide the most

⁷⁷ Sass, *Mythos "Sexarbeit"*, 11-12.

⁷⁸ O'Sullivan, Feargus. "Across Europe, a Growing Sense That Legalized Prostitution Isn't Working." Bloomberg.com. Bloomberg, December 5, 2013. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-12-05/across-europe-a-growing-sense-that-legalized-prostitution-isn-t-working>.

comprehensive statements made by each party on the policies in recent history. These are joint statements made by multiple party members and reflect the parties' current stances.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In light of the ongoing feminist debate on whether prostitution constitutes a form of violence against women, or whether it is a form of work, two European countries have adopted prostitution policies based on these notions. While the German legalization of 2002 echoes the sex-radical view that sex work is work, the Swedish sexköpslagen of 1999 reflects radical feminist ideas on prostitution. While previous analyses have looked into why these countries adopted opposite approaches on this issue, there remains an open question as to why these policies are supported by the countries' respective left parties, who seemingly have similar histories and ideologies.

To those scholars who interpret the German model as having a very market-oriented and liberal rationale, it is puzzling why Die Linke, a party that opposes neoliberal policies, would be supportive of it. Similarly, those scholars who interpret the Swedish model as violating worker's and women's rights, it remains puzzling as to why Vänsterpartiet, which advocates for such rights, would support this policy. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the question, **What ideas and narratives about work, protection and autonomy do these parties use to explain their support for different legal solutions to prostitution?** It is expected that Vänsterpartiet will use a radical feminist rationale to justify its stance, while Die Linke makes use of the sex-radical feminist one.

This thesis will take an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from the fields of International Relations, Gender Studies and Sociology. The research question will be answered through a Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) of statements made by Vänsterpartiet against those of Die Linke, revealing what influenced the parties to come to their stances. The framework of this discourse analysis will be the two opposing feminist theories on prostitution: the radical feminist (abolitionist) and the sex-radical feminist (sex work as work). While it is expected that Vänsterpartiet will be in line with the former and the Die Linke with the latter, the analysis will uncover to what extent this is the case.

The objective is to uncover the underlying influences in the construction of policy through the study of political discourse. In this context it is imperative that rhetoric is a powerful tool in solidifying ideas which come to fruition in a policy. A Political Discourse Analysis thus offers the best framework for understanding the motivations behind a political stance and can answer questions that cannot be simply explained by political science theories.⁷⁹

This analysis is to be understood in the broader framework of International Relations, in that prostitution policy and its debate is informed by global trends, such as industrialization, neoliberalization, globalization and migration. In this case, specifically European integration through the European Union has led to a wave of economic migration, which includes women who migrate from Eastern Europe and the Balkans to work in the German sex industry. Furthermore, the context of different state models should be understood. While Germany's is a liberal state model, Sweden operates as a welfare state.

The discourse analysis is divided up into sections, each answering one of the following sub-questions:

1. How do the parties connect prostitution to the question of work, the labor market, the right of the women in the workplace?
2. How do they connect prostitution to ideas of protection?
3. How do they connect prostitution to ideas of autonomy?

Data Selection

The comparison between Sweden and Germany is justified by the fact that these countries adapted opposing legislation of prostitution. The left parties of both countries represent the far-left views of each respective population and share very similar ideals.

⁷⁹ Fairclough, Isabela, and Norman Fairclough. *Political Discourse Analysis: A Method For Advanced Students*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.

The focus on two specific political parties as opposed to all left-leaning parties, which would include the Social Democrats for example, also allows for more in-depth analysis within a thesis of limited scope.

For Vänsterpartiet, several motions and proposals made by the party in the Swedish parliament have been selected, the main one being from 30 September 2008. Others referenced are from 4 October 2007 and from 20 September 2019.

The source documents for the Die Linke are two speeches by party member Cornelia Möhring in the German Parliament on 2 June and 7 July 2016 and an official statement made by party members on their stance regarding prostitution, in response to a call for abolition, from 26 November 2015. These statements were made in the months leading up to the introduction of the new prostitution law, ProstSchG.

These documents are selected as they are the most comprehensive statements made by each party on the policies in recent history. Since the laws have been introduced in both countries almost two decades ago, there have been revisions or attempts thereof, as both laws have been and are still subject to debate. The chosen statements are part of these debates and reflect the parties' current stances.

Statements by Vänsterpartiet in Swedish Parliament:

1. 'Action plan against prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes' by Josefin Brink et al (30 September 2008)⁸⁰
2. 'On Prostitution and trafficking' by Josefin Brink et al (4 October 2007)⁸¹
3. 'Criminal proceedings against the exploitation of children through the purchase of sexual acts' by Linda Westerlund Snecker et al (20 September 2019)⁸²

⁸⁰ Sveriges Riksdag. *med anledning av skr. 2007/08:167 Handlingsplan mot prostitution och människohandel för sexuella ändamål*. by Josefin Brink et al. 2008/09: Ju3. Stockholm: 30 September 2008, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-skr-200708167-handlingsplan_GW02Ju3 (accessed 5 June 2020).

⁸¹ Sveriges Riksdag. *Prostitution och trafficking*. by Josefin Brink et al. 2007/08:Ju340. Stockholm: 4 October 2007, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/prostitution-och-trafficking_GV02Ju340 (accessed 5 June 2020).

⁸² Sveriges Riksdag. *med anledning av prop. 2018/19:157 Straffrättsliga åtgärder mot utnyttjande av barn genom köp av sexuell handling*. by Linda Westerlund Snecker et al. 2019/20:109. Stockholm: 26 September

Die LINKE:

1. Statement by Cornelia Möhring (2 June 2016)⁸³
2. Statement by Cornelia Möhring (7 July 2016)⁸⁴
3. ‘Against Capitalism and the Patriarchy – for Sexual Self-determination!’ By Matthias Birkwald et al (26 November 2015)⁸⁵

Limitations

As the primary source documents were not in English, they had to be translated. The translation of the German documents was entirely performed by the author, who is a German native speaker, while Swedish documents were translated using Google Translate, and with occasional help from a native Swedish speaker. The author’s knowledge of the Swedish language is limited. Since the translations were up to the author’s interpretation, the results may contain unintentional biases. The use of Google Translate for the Swedish documents will likely contain some inaccuracies. In order to limit this, secondary sources as well as statements from the official party website were used for reference regarding the Swedish documents.

Not all members of Die LINKE agree with the party’s stance on prostitution policy. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, only a few statements made by each party could be examined. A wider examination of statements and parliamentary debates would yield a more accurate picture.

2019, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/med-anledning-av-prop-201819157_H702109 (accessed 5 June 2020).

⁸³ Deutscher Bundestag. *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung: Bericht der Bundesregierung zu den Auswirkungen des Gesetzes zur Regelung der Rechtsverhältnisse der Prostituierten (ProstG)*. By Cornelia Möhring (Die Linke). Plenarprotokoll 18/173. Berlin: 2 June 2016, 11-13, <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/18/18173.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2020)

⁸⁴ Deutscher Bundestag. *Zweite und dritte Beratung des von der Bundesregierung eingebrachten Entwurfs eines Gesetzes zur Regulierung des Prostitutionsgewerbes sowie zum Schutz von in der Prostitution tätigen Personen*. By Cornelia Möhring (Die Linke). Plenarprotokoll 18/183. Berlin: 7 July 2016, 82-83, <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btp/18/18183.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2020)

⁸⁵ Birkwald, Matthias W. et al. “Gegen Kapitalismus Und Patriarchat - Für Sexuelle Selbstbestimmung! - Birkwald.” Matthias W. Birkwald. Die LINKE im Bundestag, November 25, 2015. <https://www.matthias-w-birkwald.de/de/article/1184.gegen-kapitalismus-und-patriarchat-fuer-sexuelle-selbstbestimmung.html>.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This chapter will begin with an introduction to the respective parties, which includes their history, links to the workers' and feminist movements, as well as their policy stances on these issues. This will be followed by a discourse analysis of their narratives on work, protection and autonomy in relation to prostitution.

Introducing the Parties

Die Linke:

Die Linke (*German: the left*) is a leftist, democratic socialist party in the German parliament. It was formed in 2007 through the fusion of the PDS, which was the successor to the Communist State Party of East Germany (SED), and the WASG, which was a secession of the Social Democrats formed in protest of its party's neoliberal positions. Die Linke views itself as the legal successor of the SED and thus is a mainstream party in the former East German states, whereas it remains a smaller opposition party in the West.⁸⁶

Scholars classify the party as left-wing populist or socialist populist, with its roots in the former Communist Party and the German worker's movement, and as having close relationships with unions.⁸⁷ Die Linke traces its origins back to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, empathizing both with former communists as well as socialists. It thus follows that the party is critical of neoliberalization and calls for reforms to overcome capitalism.

Die Linke actively advocates for policies to reduce and eradicate poverty. It calls for a fundamental change in the labor market, as well as social and economic policies towards

⁸⁶ Oppelland, Torsten, and Träger Hendrik. *Die Linke: Willensbildung in Einer Ideologisch Zerstrittenen Partei*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014.

⁸⁷ See: Mayer 2008; Mudde 2008.

a socialist cause. The party wants to improve the social security system in place, improve working conditions, and strengthen workers' rights.⁸⁸

The party identifies itself as having socialist feminist standards. It wants to abolish the structural discrimination against women and establish gender justice, especially in the labor market.⁸⁹ However, the party and its predecessors have been criticized for not integrating enough feminism into its policies.⁹⁰ The party has a feminist women's working group called LISA, which ensures that feminist positions are consistently represented. Its mission is to demand and enforce the woman's self-determination about her way of life, her body and her sexuality. Nevertheless, LISA advocates against prostitution with a radical feminist rationale and cites Marx to highlight that there is no place for prostitution in a truly socialist society.⁹¹

The party's predecessor PDS voted in favor of the legalization policy in 2001.

Vänsterpartiet

Vänsterpartiet (*Swedish: the left party*) is a Swedish socialist party founded in 1917. It has origins in the socialist labor movement, and its previous names include Swedish Communist Party and Socialist Democratic Left Party. In the twentieth century, the party joined the Comintern and was closely linked to the Soviet Union, much like the East German predecessor to Die Linke.⁹² Both parties are also similar in size and representation within their respective parliaments. The party is anti-capitalist and promotes democratic socialism. Although Vänsterpartiet bases many policies on Marxist

⁸⁸ Die LINKE, ed. "Sicherer Job, Planbares Leben!" DIE LINKE. Partei Die Linke, April 2020. <https://www.die-linke.de/themen/arbeit/>.

⁸⁹ Die LINKE, ed. "Feministische Politik." DIE LINKE. Partei Die Linke, April 2020. <https://www.die-linke.de/themen/feministische-politik/>.

⁹⁰ Brie, Michael. *Die Linkspartei: Ursprünge, Ziele, Erwartungen*. Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2005, 60.

⁹¹ BAG LISA. "Papier Zur Prostitutionsdebatte."

⁹² Pfahl-Traughber, Armin. "Von „Schwedens Kommunistischer Partei“ Zu „Die Linkspartei“ Schwedens. Bedingungsfaktoren Der Demokratisierungsentwicklung in Historischer Perspektive." Essay. In *Jahrbuch für Extremismus- Und Terrorismusforschung 2015/2016 (II)*, 129–57. Brühl, Rhein: Hochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung. Zentralber., 2016.

analysis, it does not refer to itself as communist, but instead as socialist, feminist and environmentalist.⁹³

The party self-identifies as being part of the international workers' movement. It believes that the capitalist market economy is unable to meet people's needs, so it advocates for socialist policies. Some of these demands include: full employment, good and safe working conditions, a sustainable working life, and shorter working hours.^{94 95 96}

In 1997, the party officially introduced the concept of feminism into its program, having also previously been working towards strengthening women's rights. In 2012, it established its own women's network, similar Die Linke's LISA, with the aim of strengthening feminism within the party and putting feminist issues on the agenda.⁹⁷ It self-identifies as being a part of the women's movement. One of its goals is to abolish the patriarchy "in favor of an equal socialist society," and it claims to "run feminist demands in every political area."⁹⁸ Its main feminist demands are focused on working life, such as demands for equal pay, as well as women's human rights, such as the right over their own bodies.⁹⁹ It should be noted that Gudrun Shyman, former leader of Vänsterpartiet from 1993 until 2003, left the party to form the Feminist Initiative in 2005, an explicitly feminist political party in Sweden.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Ibid, 150.

⁹⁴ Vänsterpartiet. "Arbetsmarknad Och Arbetsliv." Vänsterpartiet, August 17, 2018.

<https://www.vansterpartiet.se/politik/arbetsmarknad-och-arbetsliv/>.

⁹⁵ Vänsterpartiet. "Arbetsmiljö." Vänsterpartiet, August 17, 2018.

<https://www.vansterpartiet.se/politik/arbetsmiljo/>.

⁹⁶ Vänsterpartiet. "Mer Tid För Att Leva, Vi Är För Arbetstidsförkortning." Vänsterpartiet, August 17, 2018. <https://www.vansterpartiet.se/politik/arbetstidsforkortning/>.

⁹⁷ Pfahl-Traugher, „Die Linkspartei· Schwedens“, 156.

⁹⁸ Vänsterpartiet. "Feminism." Vänsterpartiet, August 31, 2018.

<https://www.vansterpartiet.se/politik/feminism/>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Orange, Richard. "Sweden's Strictly Star Adds Charisma to Feminist Push for Parliament." The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, August 23, 2014.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/23/strictly-star-sweden-feminist-push-gudrun-schyman>.

On Work, the Labor Market and Women's Right to Work

Die Linke

Die Linke describes prostitution using economic terms for a marketplace. Prostitutes are referred to as 'sex workers' and 'suppliers of sex', while prostitution is referred to as 'work', 'an occupation', 'a job', or a 'sexual service'.¹⁰¹ Defining prostitution as such already sets the framework that a marketplace and an industry are being discussed. Furthermore, this service is seen as essential and necessary as it satisfies a human need. In this way, the existence of sex work is justified and not only the prostitute but also the client is normalized and humanized. When prostitution is regarded as being the same as consensual sex between adults, it is made to appear harmless. This very much echoes sex-radical feminist thought that sex work should be regarded as work.

Following the sex-radical feminist argument, Die Linke highlights the different kinds of sex workers, such as those who only work part-time to earn extra money. Moreover, the party debunks the argument that a prostitute should feel pleasure in her work, by comparing it to working as a geriatric nurse or an assembly line worker. These are relatable and common everyday jobs, and this comparison once again normalizes prostitution as work. Moreover, these jobs are also essential to society, and Die Linke paints prostitution in a similar light, as fulfilling a need.

Sex work is highlighted as being consensual and voluntary, which connects to images of the self-determined prostitute, as echoed in sex-radical feminist literature. The prostitute is a woman who decided on her own that she wishes to pursue sex work, and her rights must be protected. Die Linke makes frequent references to rights in relation to prostitution, which are the same as workers' rights. Prostitutes should be free to choose their profession, and free to decide how they carry it out, and the state should ensure minimum standards for this work. This follows the rationale set by sex-radical feminists,

¹⁰¹ Deutscher Bundestag, *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung*, 11-13.

that the left should support prostitutes' rights because the left supports workers' rights,¹⁰² and Die Linke is doing just that. By stating that sex workers should also be allowed to self-organize, they are specifically referencing a worker's right that is most important to the party, and even evoking images of a worker's movement. This becomes even more apparent when Cornelia Möhring references International Whores' Day in the beginning of her speech,¹⁰³ which is celebrated on the same day. This is a celebration of sex workers fighting for their rights, and by mentioning this, Möhring is specifically placing the idea of a revolutionary workers' movement at the forefront of her speech. Using this powerful image, she relates her stance on prostitution back to her party's roots and ideology. Die Linke sees its origins in Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht who spearheaded a revolutionary movement in favor of workers' rights. International Whores' Day came about after prostitutes occupied the church of Saint-Nizier in Lyon in 1975, in order to draw attention to their horrible working conditions.¹⁰⁴ Mentioning this event solidifies her party's positioning on prostitution, which should place prostitutes and their rights at the forefront, since they are simply workers asking for better working conditions, much like other worker's movements that the party sympathizes with.

Möhring specifies which worker's rights should be protected, when she criticizes big brothels and highlights the importance of small apartment brothels in which women can work together independently. In this way, she echoes leftist ideology that states that big businesses are much more exploitative, as the worker relinquishes power to the employer. Working in a smaller business and independently is portrayed as more favorable, which reflects the desire to empower marginalized workers.

Interestingly, Die Linke does note that prostitutes' work is inherently more intimate than other kinds of work as it involves selling one's body, and that some sex workers themselves view it as degrading. This is mentioned to argue for strengthening their protection and rights. Initially, it appears that the party suddenly steers away from the

¹⁰² Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 107.

¹⁰³ Deutscher Bundestag, *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Mathieu, Lilian. "An Unlikely Mobilization: The Occupation of Saint-Nizier Church by the Prostitutes of Lyon." *Revue Française de Sociologie* 42 (2001): 107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3323055>.

sex-radical view that sex work is comparable to other kinds of work. However, the party again performs a characteristic Marxist analysis by stating that under a capitalist system, powerless workers are sometimes forced to sell their bodies as work, which not only includes prostitutes, but any worker who performs hard manual labor. In addition, this system limits people's choice for type of employment, depending on their social status. Furthermore, Die Linke portrays an image of a patriarchal capitalist system in which women's bodies are inherently traded as commodities. This is another example of how Die Linke turns a critique of prostitution into a critique of capitalism. Thus, the party implies that current issues within sex work are the result of it operating within a capitalist system.

In order to legitimize their arguments, Die Linke references experts, prostitute's organizations, professional associations, and studies of the effects of prostitution policies, as the audience will likely regard either one of these as a reputable authority on prostitution issues.

All in all, Die Linke's understanding of prostitutes in the labor market is very much in line with the sex-radical feminist view that sex work is work, and prostitutes' rights are workers' rights and should thus be protected, following leftist ideology. The sex industry is understood as another market place in a capitalist economy, and the prostitute, as the worker, is automatically marginalized, so her rights must be strengthened in order to give the worker more agency. The existence of the market is justified, but it should be regulated by the state in order to guarantee the best possible conditions for the prostitute. Since Die Linke aligns mostly with sex-radical feminist scholars on this topic, it would seem logical following their statements that they would support a decriminalized model of prostitution in which sex work is recognized as work and can be regulated according to labor law. However, it appears here that the party instead prefers a legalization model, as was introduced in Germany in 2001, because it does call for some state regulation.

Vänsterpartiet

Vänsterpartiet produces a violent and exploitative image of prostitution, which is in line with the radical feminist view that all prostitution is violence against women. While prostitution is still described in economic terms by referring to it as a market and acknowledging the existence of a ‘demand’, the woman is never described as a supplier. Instead, she is described as the commodity in this market. This commodity is then consumed by men to satisfy their sexuality, and then it is disposed of. This creates a powerful image of women and their bodies as disposable goods, which makes prostitution appear as a ruthless practice that facilitates violence against women.

Moreover, the prostitute is only referred to as either that or even a slave, but never a sex worker. Using aggressive images to describe prostitution, such as calling it ‘rape’ reinforces the belief that prostitution is too violent to be considered work. Vänsterpartiet delegitimizes women who claim to enjoy their job, not only by calling them delusional, but sarcastically referring to them as “happy whores”,¹⁰⁵ which ridicules them and reinforces the argument. This also clearly echoes views of radical feminists.

In fact, the party’s entire description of prostitution in the work context reflects the radical feminist interpretation. Echoing radical feminist Barry’s views, Vänsterpartiet defines prostitution as a male consumer market, an industry which only exists to supply female bodies to satisfy this male demand. The male demand is seen as the ‘engine’¹⁰⁶ of prostitution, for the entire industry depends solely on it. Also making the male demand responsible for sex trafficking further vilifies it. Thus, part of the solution to prostitution must be abolishing this male demand, which is seen as a societal problem.

The man who purchases sex is normalized as an everyday man, by describing him as a father and partner, and not a ‘perverted deviant’¹⁰⁷. In this way, the party posits that the sex buyer is not a bad person, just someone who is engaging in the bad behavior that is

¹⁰⁵ Sveriges Riksdag. *Handlingsplan mot prostitution*.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

purchasing sex. By describing it as such, the party is utilizing a moralizing strategy here to address what it sees as the problem of prostitution. To solve it, men must be taught that this is bad behavior in order to refrain from engaging in it. This hints towards the political theory of folkhemmet in which the state is the parent of its citizens and guiding them towards what it regards as good behavior. It is an indication that Vänsterpartiet also believes in this approach when it comes to addressing prostitution.

The party's interpretation of the prostitution exchange further posits that it reflects gender inequality in that it expresses male superiority over women as they are able to purchase their bodies for their own satisfaction. Framing prostitution as a feminist issue that reinforces male superiority indicates that the party's response to it will be based on their feminist stance. Since the party fights against male superiority, it makes sense for Vänsterpartiet to advocate for the criminalization of the purchase of sex, since this is the expression of male power over women. By prohibiting this practice, men will be stripped of their power, thereby contributing to gender equality.

Vänsterpartiet uses the same rhetoric to describe both prostitution and sex trafficking. Both are described as market places in which women's bodies are traded to satisfy male sexuality. Thus, both are fueled by male demand, are expressions of male dominance over women, and constitute violence against women. Therefore, Vänsterpartiet sees no difference between prostitution and sex trafficking, and disregards the idea of women wanting to sell sex voluntarily. Sex trafficking is highly criminalized and regarded as extremely violent by all feminists. By describing prostitution and sex trafficking as one and the same, Vänsterpartiet is evoking images of prostitutes as victims of a 'modern slave trade'.¹⁰⁸ This is again another powerful image used by the party to frame prostitution as a feminist issue, and not one of workers' rights. Prostitutes cannot be sex workers, according to the party, as workers act out of free will, and prostitutes are slaves which have been forced into this industry.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

Vänsterpartiet actually frames prostitution as something which limits women's ability to participate in the labor market by highlighting how women who have worked as prostitutes struggle to find a job. Phrasing this as women 're-entering' the labor market reinforces the idea that prostitution is something that takes place outside of it. While they do point to this difficulty resulting from the stigma around prostitution, it still creates the notion that it would be better for women if they could be steered away from entering prostitution in the first place.

Vänsterpartiet legitimizes their statements and arguments by referencing experts and studies, done both by the government as well as international institutions, such as one by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women which links prostitution and sex trafficking. This is effective as the listeners/audience will likely regard either the government or such an institution as reputable sources.

All in all, this analysis of Vänsterpartiet's view on prostitution in relation to work and the labor market shows that their thinking is in line with the radical feminist view on prostitution, who see it as violence against women. Moreover, it shows that the party approaches it as a feminist issue, and not one of worker's rights. Thus, their response is based on their feminist ideology.

On Protection

Die Linke

Die Linke's narrative of protection in relation to prostitution mostly consists of a strong critique of the Prostitute Protection Act, which to the party completely misses its apparent goal of protecting the sex worker. The law and its proponents are viciously attacked by members of Die Linke, who strongly posit that the law actually worsens the situation of the prostitutes.

The regulations that would be imposed as part of the new law, such as consultation, health check-ups and a registration requirement are ridiculed and described as irresponsible, and nothing more than a bureaucratic checklist. This has the effect of diminishing the legitimacy of the lawmakers who proposed it. Die Linke takes this further by describing them as idiotic, ignorant and unnecessarily provocative, which has a powerful effect of making the new regulations appear even more senseless. The irony of a law that is called Prostitute Protection Act, but doing exactly the opposite, is highlighted multiple times. Among the aspects criticized are the increased stigmatization that is expected to result from this, which will further alienate the sex worker from the rest of society, therefore making her less safe as a result. This relates back to sex-radicals discussion of how harmful the "whore label" is to the lives of prostitutes, as the resulting alienation makes people care less about their mistreatment.¹⁰⁹

Die Linke paints a picture of the law once it is implemented as leading to prostitution moving out of sight in order to avoid surveillance, which will be dangerous to the sex workers, whose safety and rights can no longer be guaranteed in such a situation.

While at times, the law is criticized for being a 'law of control',¹¹⁰ which echoes sex-radical sentiments, it is also criticized for not improving the surveillance of prostitutes. In this context, it becomes evident that Die Linke regards surveillance as a necessary step in the protection of the prostitute, steering away from sex-radical feminist ideas. Sex-radicals are highly critical of surveillance by the state and the police and prefer the

¹⁰⁹ Pheterson and St. James, *Vindication of Rights of Whores*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Deutscher Bundestag, *Zweite und dritte Beratung*, 83.

prostitutes to be left alone. In fact, they welcome a decriminalized regime precisely because it would limit harassment from the police. Die Linke does not echo this sentiment at all. In fact, it does exactly the opposite, by describing the police as an actor that will guarantee the protection of the sex worker. The police is someone that the sex worker can turn to in time of need, if she is being blackmailed or she experiences violence, according to the party. The possibility of the police being a bad actor is never mentioned. It would only be as a result of the new law and regulations that the prostitutes would lose trust in the police, who would then have more reason to charge the sex worker with breaking the law.

Instead, Die Linke argues that the best way to protect the prostitutes is by improving their existing situation within the previous legalization model. This is done by working towards reducing the stigma, strengthening their self-determination rights, the right to self-organize, improving working conditions, as well as increasing social security and generally fighting poverty. Here the party again frames prostitution as an issue of economic inequality, thus relating it back to its main party ideology. Protecting the prostitute means reducing poverty. In relation to this, Die Linke paints a picture of other vulnerable groups who live in precarious situations and are in need of protection, such as refugees or single mothers. Their protection would also be ensured by poverty reduction, as it would get them out of precariousness. This is again powerful imagery and to make it in connection to prostitutes does make them appear as especially vulnerable and in need of protection from the state. This is actually more in line with radical feminist thought. However, the party does highlight that while this is the case for a significant proportion, there are also those who do not live precariously. Nevertheless, the focus is on those who do need protection, and while sex-radical feminists believe that most sex workers do not experience violence daily, Die Linke is arguing that they do. For the first time, there is a conflict, as Die Linke's rhetoric is shifting away from a general alignment with sex-radical feminist thought and steering more towards radical feminist ideas, although not entirely.

To sum up, when it comes to discussing the protection of prostitutes, Die Linke seems to fall somewhere in between the radical feminists and the sex-radical feminist ideas. While they are highly critical of the Prostitution Protection Act, as many sex-radicals are, they do not paint the police as a malign actor, but actually as someone who can ensure the sex workers protection. In fact, sex-radicals specifically criticize the image of the police as a ‘savior’ to the prostitutes. Therefore, the observation is that Die Linke’s position on prostitution is more convoluted than previously assumed in this research.

Vänsterpartiet

Vänsterpartiet portrays prostitution as men’s sexual violence against women, describing the sex as a form of rape. As the women are victims in this situation, the party regards prostitution as a violation of their human rights, and therefore believes that the prostitute must be protected from this practice. This narrative is perfectly in line with radical feminist views on prostitution.

The party evokes several powerful images of the violence that women are subjected to in order to paint the prostitute as a victim in need of protection. Such images include that of the prostitute being raped, abused, robbed, threatened with a knife, as well as shot and strangled. In order to legitimize these images, Vänsterpartiet delivers them as statistics, citing the frequency of these events, so as to show how common these occurrences are within prostitution. Studies commissioned by the Swedish government showing the close link between prostitution and violence are cited in order to validate such statements. For example, the statistic which states that the death rate for prostitutes is 40 times higher than for the rest of the population¹¹¹ is effective in portraying the danger which the women find themselves in.

The party also highlights that violence is generally underreported, because the women are so used to it, which further reiterates their helplessness and victimhood. This notion is exacerbated by describing prostitutes as sex slaves. In this sense, the overarching

¹¹¹ Sveriges Riksdag. *Handlingsplan mot prostitution*.

narrative is that a prostitute cannot be anything other than a victim. Prostitutes' victimhood is further amplified by labelling the women as drug addicts and suffering from trauma, and highlighting how this, in combination with being a woman and a prostitute, places them at the bottom of the societal hierarchy. This points towards the idea that these women will automatically be disadvantaged in Swedish society, and that nobody will look out for them. Therefore, they need special care and attention from the state in the form of protective policies. Vänsterpartiet also points out that within the group of prostitutes, immigrants and young women are included, which are already predisposed to being vulnerable, and are made even more so through participating in prostitution. Therefore, they will need special attention. Connecting prostitutes' issues to that of young women and immigrants, which constitute a larger percentage of the population, also strategically broadens the issue and makes it appear more significant to the general public.

According to Vänsterpartiet, this victim encompasses all women who sell sex, not just prostitutes in Sweden. It therefore makes its fight one against all of global male violence, which sends a strong international feminist message. It argues that all women who sell sex are equally in need of protection. This also goes hand in hand with the party's narrative that prostitution is the same as sex trafficking, and therefore a fight against prostitution would be a fight against the other as well. Efforts to protect women in prostitution would automatically provide protection to victims of sex trafficking.

Vänsterpartiet regards the Swedish Sex Purchase Act as being very effective in providing the necessary protection from male violence to these victims. Sexköpslagen is continually commended and defended, and the party's contribution to its implementation is regarded with pride. Specifically, the law is commended for not going after the prostitutes, who are in need of special protection, as well as for protecting victims of sex trafficking. It is highlighted that sexköpslagen is in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which grants the law global legitimacy. The party's support of the law also reflects its belief that the

key to protecting prostitutes and women in general is through reducing men's demand of sexual services.

Nevertheless, the law is criticized for not going far enough in providing protection to prostitutes. Notably, the party calls for the law to send a stronger message to society that the purchase of sex is a serious crime that violates not only the individual's but also the public interest. Specifically, the punishment is to be increased to a minimum of six months in jail as opposed to a mostly harmless fine. This shows that Vänsterpartiet is trying to dictate moral behavior within society through sexköpslagen, which again alludes to a belief in the theory of folkhemmet.

Another criticism of the law as it currently stands is that it does not provide adequate support and assistance to women who want to leave prostitution. This is a criticism that is often voiced by sex-radical feminists, who oppose sexköpslagen mainly due to the belief that the law does not prioritize prostitutes. While earlier the party criticized the lack of protection provided by society, it is now calling out the state for failing to do so as well. In order to guarantee more support to women who wish to leave prostitution, Vänsterpartiet proposes a 'National Resource Center Against Prostitution and Trafficking'.¹¹² The name alone has a powerful effect in that it dictates a negative attitude towards prostitution. It is put into the same category as trafficking, and one should inherently be against it.

As mentioned above, the party sees reducing male demand as a key factor in protecting women. In addition to criminalizing this demand, the party proposes that this should be addressed sooner and at the source, by working towards changing men's attitudes towards purchasing sex while they are still young. The party mandates that sexuality and the risks of sexual exploitation be discussed in school. This framing again hints at the state dictating moral behavior to its citizens, but it also suggests an innocence of sex buyers, especially through the image of young school boys, who are simply ignorant to the negative effects of their behavior. Moreover, the party suggests that this work of

¹¹² Ibid.

reducing demand also be prioritized by NGOs as well as ‘selected authorities’, so as to continue spreading awareness into adulthood. In relation to this, the party also highlights that in this education, the aspect of feminist theory must be included, with the implication that improving both men and women’s perception of women will reduce the occurrence of prostitution. This is another instance of the party framing prostitution as a feminist issue.

In addition, the party believes that actors who engage with prostitutes, such as the police and the judiciary, need to receive special training on how to deal with issues of sexual violence. This again points to the perceived victimhood of women in prostitution. Overall, Vänsterpartiet proposes more protection to the prostitutes in the form of education, support, health and addiction care, as well as therapy. The key actors in providing protection are named as: the police, social workers, women’s shelters, health care workers, schools, and non-profit organizations. The most notable of these actors is the police. The party believes them to be very important in providing protection to these women, especially once they have received adequate training.

All in all, Vänsterpartiet’s view of protection in relation to prostitution is very much in line with radical feminist thought, who regard prostitution as violence and a violation of human rights, believing that the state should be legally obligated to protect women from prostitution.

On Autonomy

Die Linke

The image of the prostitute as presented by Die Linke is that of an autonomous, self-determined woman, who voluntarily chose to pursue sex work as a means to earn an income. For whatever reason, she has decided that this is the type of work that suits her needs the best, and her ability to make this decision must be protected. The idea that one might not support such work is ridiculed.

The party continuously references the importance of self-determination, and that in connection to prostitution, the right to sexual self-determination and the freedom to choose one's profession must be upheld. As it is mentioned the most, it follows that it must be the most important right to the party. In connection to this is also the right to not be discriminated against, the freedom to sexual orientation and self-determination specifically over one's body. In this way, the party is linking prostitution to freedom by arguing that the right to be a prostitute is the right to be free. Limiting a prostitute's self-determination would be going against the party's ideology, which holds this freedom at a very high regard. As seen previously when discussing work, this is again linked to capitalism, which is seemingly the root of every issue in connection to prostitution. According to Die Linke, in a patriarchal capitalist system, women are inherently discriminated against and robbed of their autonomy. Thus, by fighting for women's autonomy in prostitution, Die Linke is in line with its anti-capitalist ideology.

Specific images of sex workers' autonomy include that of self-organizing through International Whores' Day, as well as being independent and self-employed. Prostitutes are considered most autonomous when they can run their own brothel in an apartment, instead of being dependent on someone else or working in a large brothel, as is common in Germany. These images specifically echo sex-radical feminist literature. However, it appears that Die Linke does not necessarily regard sex work as empowering as some sex-radical scholars do. Although it may grant financial independence, it could still be degrading work for some prostitutes.

When discussing autonomy, the Swedish Model is singled out by Die Linke as being especially harmful to sex workers' agency. It is described as repressive, discriminatory, and restrictive. Moreover, supporting such an 'age-old' model is ridiculed as being 'conservative'¹¹³, both of which should be interpreted as offensive terms coming from a left party. The Swedish Model is painted as robbing prostitutes of their rights, freedom and autonomy by discriminating against them and worsening their stigmatization. It is also pointed out that such a model impedes on the autonomy of the sex buyer, whose freedom to choose must also be upheld according to Die Linke. The party is therefore implying that a Swedish Model constitutes a universal violation of human rights, as both the female sex seller and the male sex buyer are being disenfranchised. It is therefore not a specifically feminist issue, but a universal human rights issue that could potentially be damaging to society overall.

The overall narrative by Die Linke is that ensuring prostitutes' autonomy leads to the best possible result. The prostitute is most autonomous when her right to self-determination is upheld. Here the party uses the term 'emancipation', which does suggest some form of empowerment. According to the party, the best possible conditions for the prostitute are created when she is able to enjoy safe working conditions, is able to decide freely over her employment, and perhaps most importantly to Die Linke, when she can participate in the social security system. The importance of combating poverty is mentioned here, which suggests that poverty is something that impedes the prostitute's autonomy. Here we see the party again frame the issue within a capitalist critique by pointing out economic inequality that is created and sustained in such a system. The rights of girls and women are strategically connected to the rights of the poor in the context of prostitution policy.

All in all, Die Linke's statements regarding prostitution in relation to autonomy very much reflect the sex-radical narrative. In addition, we once again observe Die Linke framing prostitution within a capitalist critique, connecting it to the party's main issue

¹¹³ Birkwald et al, *Gegen Kapitalismus und Patriarchat*.

and overarching ideology. Although there are a few hints towards feminism, autonomy in prostitution is mostly framed as a general societal issue.

Vänsterpartiet

Vänsterpartiet portrays prostitutes as helpless victims who cannot act autonomously. The idea of voluntary or autonomous prostitution is disregarded, as to the party, prostitution and sex trafficking are one and the same. The two issues are continually discussed in connection to one another, with the highlighted similarity being the shared realities of both as experienced by the woman, which are described as extremely violent and degrading. This again highlights that the prostitute is a victim, and that she was somehow forced into prostitution. To the party, it is impossible that a woman would voluntarily choose to sell sex. Vänsterpartiet believes that women could not wish to pursue sex work as a means to improve their income due to the extensive Swedish welfare system. Since the system enables women to have enough money to survive, it is unimaginable that they would voluntarily subject themselves to such violence just to earn more money. In this way, a comprehensive welfare system is what grants women autonomy.

The party portrays an elaborate image of the prostitute as a victim of past sexual abuse and current abuse, as a woman who suffered a trauma in her past, and who is engaging in prostitution as a way of inflicting harm on herself. This idea of trauma echoes radical feminist thinking, specifically Sass' discussion of prostitutes' post-traumatic stress disorder.¹¹⁴ The party's logic is that prostitution is so horrible that the only reasonable explanation for women to pursue it is that she must be mentally ill and not in her right mind. Prostitution is seen as destructive behavior. Prostitutes must not think themselves worthy enough and believe to deserve the violence that is inflicted upon them in this regard. Moreover, they are depicted as drug addicts, which again clouds their behavior and impedes on their decision-making abilities. The implication is that they do not know what is best for them and are in denial. In this way, the people who argue for voluntary prostitution are shut down. In addition, this conveys the idea that only the state could

¹¹⁴ Sass, *Mythos "Sexarbeit"*, 78.

know what is best for these women. It again hints towards folkhemmet, as the state is dictating morally correct behavior. In this system however, nobody could have true autonomy, if the state is telling its citizens how to act and which professions to choose.

The ‘myth’ of the autonomous prostitute is further debunked by citing testimonies from former prostitutes, who would be the best source on what the reality of prostitution is like. The voices of former prostitutes who have come forward to tell stories of their abuse and the violence they experienced are highlighted. The significance of such testimonies is further given legitimacy by citing the increasing number of women who have sought help to leave prostitution. This gives validity to the assumption that those women who claim to be selling sex voluntarily must be in denial due to dissonance experienced as a result of trauma, again echoing the radical feminist view on prostitution. Similarly, much like radical feminists, Vänsterpartiet points towards the autonomy that is inherently lost due to the practice of pimps and smugglers, as they first gain the woman’s trust only to then make her dependent on him and take complete control of her, which is compared to an abusive relationship. This not only debunks ideas of autonomy, but again evokes highly violent images, and draws comparisons to a form of slavery. Although not explicitly stated as such, this implication is reminiscent of Barry’s idea of female sexual slavery, which also encompasses women who entered the trade voluntarily, but are not free to leave.¹¹⁵ Once a pimp or a smuggler makes a woman dependent on him and controls her every move, it would seem impossible for her to come out of this situation.

Lack or loss of autonomy is also expressed by framing the prostitution exchange as reinforcing the power disparity between the genders. Buying another person’s body is described as the buyer expressing power over the other person. It reflects the idea that men are superior over women, evidenced by the fact that prostitution is mostly men buying sex from women, not the other way around. In prostitution, men are powerful as they are given the right to exploit women’s bodies, while the women serve as a commodity for men’s sexuality, which they can dispose of after consumption. Such images reinforce the idea that prostitutes have no autonomy, as they are subjected to this

¹¹⁵ Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*.

powerful male superiority. Moreover, Vänsterpartiet highlights that prostitution is entirely driven by male demand, which the women are dependent on. This suggests that the women also have no autonomy in deciding when and how much they work, as this is all decided by the male buyer. In this sense, Vänsterpartiet actually points to the men as the autonomous actors in prostitution, these being not just the sex buyers but also the pimps and the smugglers. This once again shows how Vänsterpartiet views prostitution as an issue of gender inequality.

Lastly, the party points to another loss of autonomy that is created through prostitution, and that is the difficulty which women experience in trying to find employment once they leave prostitution. This difficulty is the result of having to process the violent experiences and dealing with the trauma, as well as having to find a new social circle. In this way, Vänsterpartiet is not only saying that women in prostitution cannot have autonomy, but they are also suggesting that participating in prostitution will limit their autonomy in the future. If women's autonomy is to be ensured, then prostitution must be abolished.

All in all, through this analysis of Vänsterpartiet's discourse on autonomy in relation to prostitution, we see the idea reinforced that women cannot have autonomy as prostitutes, which entirely echoes the radical feminist view on prostitution. There is even evidence to suggest that Vänsterpartiet agrees with the radical feminist portrayal of the prostitute as a slave.

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

The preceding analysis explores Die Linke's and Vänsterpartiet's ideas and narratives on work, protection and autonomy in relation to prostitution. Die Linke's narrative on work aligns with the sex-radical feminist view that sex work is work and prostitutes' rights are workers' rights. Prostitution, as work, is understood through a Marxist lens and any issues with it are framed as a critique of capitalism. Meanwhile, Vänsterpartiet's view on prostitution, as work, aligns with the radical feminist view that all prostitution is an expression of violence against women and a violation of rights. It cannot, therefore, be considered a manifestation of work. Transactional sex reflects gender inequality, therefore making prostitution a feminist issue, not one of workers' rights.

When it comes to protection, however, Die Linke unexpectedly deviates from the sex-radical view. Although critical of the ProstSchG, the party views the police as a good actor to ensure the protection of the prostitute, which is the opposite of how sex-radicals view the police. Vänsterpartiet portrays prostitutes as victims who need protection, thereby staying in line with the radical feminist view.

Die Linke's narrative on autonomy reflects the sex-radical view, as the party portrays the prostitute as someone who voluntarily chose to pursue sex work, and very much highlights the importance of protecting the right to self-determination. Vänsterpartiet rejects this narrative while equating prostitution to sex trafficking, and thereby portraying the prostitute as a slave, consistent with radical feminism.

Throughout the analysis, two similarities between the parties stand out. Neither Die Linke nor Vänsterpartiet particularly vilify the client, although they acknowledge that he can be violent. Vänsterpartiet even paints him in an innocent light, while Die Linke advocates for the rights of the clients. This marks a deviation from the radical feminist view for Vänsterpartiet. Moreover, both parties also highlight the potential of the police as a good actor towards the prostitute, which particularly contrasts the sex-radical feminist view. This can perhaps be explained by their distinct perspective as political actors. As parties

represented within parliament, they believe in the police as an entity which protects its citizens.

Overall, the starkest difference observed throughout the analysis is the terms through which they frame prostitution. Die Linke frames it as an issue of economic exploitation. Frequently connecting prostitution to poverty and economic inequality, the party specifically places capitalism at the root of every problem with prostitution. Prostitutes' rights were seen as workers' rights. Framing it in such a way connects it to the party's Marxist roots and socialist ideology, thereby justifying its stance on prostitution policy. Nevertheless, the party supports a legalization model, as opposed to decriminalization, which is what sex-radical scholars advocate for. This is somewhat of a contradiction, as equating prostitutes' rights with workers' rights is only legally defined as such in a decriminalized model, in which prostitution is regarded as work and regulated through labor law. However, it should be noted that there is also no explicit opposition to a decriminalization coming from the party.

Vänsterpartiet, on the other hand, frames prostitution as a feminist issue, highlighting how it reinforces gender inequality through a display of male superiority. Therefore, their stance on prostitution is justified through their feminist ideology.

Based on these findings, the difference in the parties' approaches to prostitution policy could be explained by their emphasis on a certain ideology. While Die Linke claims to have strong feminist standards and advocates for increased gender equality, it does not self-identify as feminist, like Vänsterpartiet does. Moreover, Die Linke has been criticized for not integrating feminism enough into its policies. This would explain why Die Linke does not approach prostitution as a feminist issue, but instead one of workers' rights. Another explanation of this could be the parties' ties to the feminist and workers' movements. While both have ties to each movement, it could be that Vänsterpartiet's ties to the feminist movement is stronger, while Die Linke is more influenced by the international workers' movement, especially considering that the German feminist movement advocates for a Swedish model. This could also imply that the feminist

movement is not as politically influential in Germany as it is in Sweden, where a state feminism has emerged in recent years. This aspect could be further explored by comparing parliamentary discourse to the views of the German feminist movement over time.

Another interesting difference that stood out throughout the analysis was the parties' understanding of the role of the state and their attitudes towards it. Through Die Linke's heavy focus on self-determination, it becomes apparent that the party believes the state's role is to guarantee citizens' rights to self-determination. This idea is also referred to as the liberal principle, which states that the most important role of the state is to facilitate conditions for people to choose what they see as a morally correct way of life.

Meanwhile, Vänsterpartiet frequently uses a moralizing strategy which dictates what is correct behavior and what is not. This relates to the idea of *folkhemmet*, which was integral to the Swedish welfare state.¹¹⁶ It views society as a community and posits that the state is a parent to its citizens, deciding how they should live a morally correct life.

Based on these findings, a possible explanation for the differing approaches to prostitution policy could be traced back to the different state models. While Germany follows the principle of the liberal state, Sweden is primarily a welfare state. As a liberal state, Germany ideologically will not interfere in its citizens' lives, and therefore not prohibit or criminalize prostitution in any way. Sweden, on the other hand, follows the principle that its society is a community with common values which are dictated by the state. If the state regards prostitution as having a negative effect on society, it will criminalize it. Even these two left parties, who are known to criticize government, appear to share the general understanding of their respective state's role. This also points to the importance of political socialization and would make it interesting to see how the way these parties frame their arguments relates to those of more mainstream parties.

¹¹⁶ Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 343.

While this thesis offers possible explanations for how the Swedish and the Germany Left Party come to diverging views on prostitution policy, it would benefit from taking other important factors into consideration, such as internal party disagreements, political competition, social formation and historical trajectory. Researching the ideological role of the women's movement within the parties more extensively could also provide a more comprehensive picture. A particularly compelling aspect to examine would also be Die Linke's historical background as leader of an oppressive socialist regime, and how prostitution was approached in East Germany.

Even though it is not possible to conclusively show where the different ideas on prostitution come from, this research has shown that even in fairly similar countries such as Germany and Sweden, reasonably similar parties can hold very different opinions on prostitution. These ideas seem to be formed by country-specific processes and understandings of the role of the state. This has significant implications for the global debate on prostitution policy. It shows that even though sex work itself, and discourses on it, are becoming quite transnational, legal solutions are still informed by nationally rooted understandings. This could provide an answer as to why the Swedish Model has been successfully exported to so many other countries, yet has not stuck in places like Germany or the Netherlands. In the future, it would be fascinating to see if and how prostitution policy changes in these countries, as attitudes towards prostitution continue to progress. Will Germany give in to the growing pressures to adopt a Swedish Model, or will it remain true to its liberal ideals and come to favor a decriminalization of prostitution instead?

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