

An ethnography of prostitution in Wallonia: from a gender perspective

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Seminar Plan

Three main parts:

1/ Social work and public market of public policy

2/ Ethical, methodological and theoretical framework

3/ Findings and political practice

HOW?

Three interactions time (participants/lecturer)

- Brainstorming vocabulary about the first topic: *Social work and public market of public policy*
- Brainstorming vocabulary about the second topic: *Ethical, methodological and theoretical framework*
- Regarding the third topic: a. getting the participants to reflect on an answer before the lecturer gives it; b. getting the participants to vote.

1/Social work and public market of
public policy

Interaction one

Brainstorming vocabulary about this topic

- What does it mean for you **social work**? What does it mean for you **subsidiary public market**?
- What could be the consequences of the existence of subsidiary public market on the investigative process?

To do so, participants have to form small group tasks of six persons

- Synthesis of what has been said
- Reframing by the lecturer

Social work and subsidiary public market

« The generic term applied to the various organized methods for promoting human welfare through the prevention and relief of suffering” (Scott and Marshall 2005, p.618)

Subsidiary public market: the fact that public entities (i.e. ministry, ...) play a role as a provider for granting investigation. This is not new; what is new is the way that this role is enacted today: as in the private sphere, the public sphere is elaborating request for research proposal directed to a specific sector of researchers.

The research team has to elaborate a proposal which fits with the conditions of the research proposal.

Social work investigative process and public market

To establish a sociogenesis of the role of public market regarding the investigation process is out of purpose. Instead, we point three actual scientific field characteristics:

- the spirit of competition in the scientific field specially in social sciences which have not yet achieved “full recognition”. (Elias 2016)
- A shift in the last two decades:
 - a. the advent and the domination of the neoliberal ideology in our particular time: everything becomes a commodity, knowledge has a price, and a specific function (skill) in the life of the person as a cultural capital for self employability;
 - b. how the academies have to collaborate with the economical sphere to be able to pursue its inquiry mission (Laval et al. 2011)

Social work sector in a global neoliberal order

- the fact that the social work sector (as public health, culture and so on) are facing the implementation of the liberal management logic, that is to say, they have to render accounts of what they do in a specific language (i.e. results obligation Chauvière 2012)

Meanwhile:

to do social work is increasingly more difficult and provokes a lot of tensions among the social workers. At the same time, all social workers do not conceive their job and practice in the same way (Gaspar 2012).

In parallel, the social work finds itself in a transformation process (intermediation Vrancken 2010).

Social work sector in transition

Since the 1980s, in France (and latter in Belgium) the figure of the **social engineer** tends to develop as a new professional horizon, that is to say, as a form of enhancing the social work and the competences needed to respond the new challenges of the social work field. At the same time, doing research in that context has the virtue to highlight the fight to achieve recognition of this new kind of professional figure (Chauvière, De Gaulejac 2005, Autès 1999).

Research granted by public fund: which implications?

- the obligation of inquiring about a peculiar topic means in our case, to resort to a specific methodological and theoretical frame (gender analysis and at the beginning a quantitative approach);
- the obligation to enunciate propositions for public policy.

Note that:

These implications do not differ very much from what happens when the economic field grants investigation in the biological, physical (or so ever) field. The researchers are not free to develop in full autonomy their skills and interests for specific topics. Inasmuch as in the case of social engineering, the subsidiary entities impose their own investigative guidelines regarding the method and the findings expected (Feyerabend, Kuhn, Elias).

The petition: a research on prostitution in the Wallonia Brussels Federation

The Belgium State consists of three regions (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels capital) and three communities: the Flemish, the French (WBF) and the German.

Each region and communities have their own government and parliaments with their specific area of public policy

Regarding to WBF: its government is composed of:

- The minister president
- Two vice ministers president (one in charge of culture and childhood and the other of superior teaching, media and scientific research)
- The minister of education
- The minister of youth help, houses of justice and promotion of Brussels
- The minister of the budget, the public function and administrative simplification
- The minister of social promotion teaching, youth, women rights and equal opportunities

The petition: a research on Prostitution from a gender perspective

It is the ministry of WBF in charge of women rights that orders the inquiry.

The conditions of the research proposal:

- The obligation of using a theoretical gender perspective
- The obligation of elaborating a state of arts regarding the places and the different kinds of prostitution existing in WBF what implies to realize a quantitative approach of the phenomena
- The obligation to enunciate propositions for public policy
- The budget: less than 45.000 euros
- The schedule: one year

The proposal and the negotiation

Research team which constructs the proposal:

composed by two researchers (one from the Social Action College and one from APES – Ulg – a research unit from the Health public School of the university of Liège) with the scientific supervision of a senior researcher, specialized in gender studies (Social Sciences Faculty of the University of Liège)

After the presentation of our proposal to the ministry cabinet, we received the acceptance one month after. Thus the negotiation started on the ground of:

- **The methodology (1):**

we argued that it was impossible to conduct a quantitative approach of the phenomena due to the specificity of the phenomena itself (its invisibility)

The proposal and the negotiation (con't)

Facing the constraints (budget/working remunerated time), then we advocated that a qualitative approach would better investigate the different forms that prostitution is actually taking in WBF

The ministry cabinet agreed with our proposal. Nevertheless, they insisted that we focus on specific forms of prostitution (street prostitution, window prostitution, salon prostitution)

- **The methodology (2):**

We argued for the constitution of a steering committee composed by politics, public administration functionaries, scientists and activists involved in the field of prostitution. Our request was dismissed

2/Ethical, Methodological and Theoretical
framework

Ethical Framework

Methodological framework(1): Standpoint theory

Methodological framework(2): How?

Theoretical framework

Gender (Scott)

Subjectivity (Foucault)

Five faces of oppression (Iris Marion Young)

Ethical framework

What is the “nature” of the relations between researchers, public administration functionaries, the political office of the minister and the persons directly involved in the investigative process?

I.E. Researcher Ethics:

Interaction with the persons experiencing prostitution:

To be emphatic, to behave as professional – respectful, powerless interaction//standpoint theory – anonymous and confidential

To take the person seriously: to remunerate the interview (50 euros).
→ Incentive// prejudice: one hour without working has a cost

To be self reflexive (methodologically, epistemologically, morally, politically, ...)

Methodological framework(1)

Standpoint theory

- Voices from above?

People experiencing oppressive relationships

Researchers do not experience these kinds of relationship, because:

- They are men,
white, middle class, heterosexual
- They have not experienced paid sex

Methodological framework(1)

Standpoint theory (con't)

But:

- They are familiar with gender' studies from feminists writings engaged with academics (Mead, Strathern, Schepper Hughes, Stolcke, Harding, Stengers, Perrot, De Beauvoir, Delphy, Mathieu, Fraser, Young,) and others fields (Groult, Tristan, De Pizan, Wollstonecraft,)
- They are questioning the gender agreement (how does the gender agreement is operating?)
- They are always conscientious of their particular inhabited position (mind and body) all along the investigative process
- They share with all the participants involved in the research the socio/political reality of this late pharmacological and pornographically capitalist time (Preciado 2010)

Methodological framework(1)

Standpoint theory (con't)

How is it then possible to account for these voices?

How does a researcher reflect on a social phenomena (that he has only an inhabited knowledge) from the point of view of above, that is to say, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence?

Methodological framework(2)

How?

How to collect and inform about the accountability of people experiencing prostitution?

Four kinds of techniques:

- State of arts
- Focus group
- Interviews
- Participant observation

Methodological framework(2)

How?

State of arts

What kinds of information are there available about prostitution in WBF?

What does the scientific literature say on prostitution in WBF?

What are the main theoretical postures on the topic?

Bernstein (2007), Broqua & Deschamps (2014), Dorlin (2003), Mathieu (2015, 2016), Pheterson (1993), Phipps (2014), Tabet (2004), Weitzer (2009)

Methodological framework(2)

How?

Focus group:

Once finished the fieldwork and the data analysis, two focus groups (one with scientific experts and one with activists) have to be organized to discuss and comment on the research findings.

Methodological framework (2)

How?

- **Semi structured interviews**

Twenty-nine persons (26 women, two men and a transsexual)

Duration: 50 – 1h30

Full transcription (French, Spanish French, English French)

Coding: five faces of oppression/social division (generation, sex, culture, social belonging)

- **Informal conversation (32 women)**

Duration: 15 – 30 minutes

List of people interviewed

Where Sex Age Kind of prostitution Year experience Origin

Ingrid, Liège F 38 window 10 Belgium

Carine Liège F 32 window 2 South America

Yolande Charleroi F 58 street 28 Belgium

Kadija Charleroi F 48 Street – studio 26 North Africa

Nancy Liège F 52 window 30 Belgium

Adélia Liège F 46 window 5 South America

Maude Liège F 49 domicile ? Belgium

Christiane Liège F 43 window 23 Belgium

Chantale Liège F 57 window 37 Belgium

Céline Liège F 30 window 12 Belgium

Irina Liège F 37 window 5 Central Europe

Joëlle Liège F 54 window 31 Belgium

Ilhane Liège F 34 window ? Central Africa

Morgane Liège F 32 Salon massage ? Belgium

Esmeralda Liège F 37 window ? Belgium

List of people interviewed

Where Sex Age Kind of prostitution Year experience Origin

Maryse Liège F 54 window + escort 8 Belgium

Macha Liège F 27 Salon 7 Belgium

Samantha Liège F 27 Salon 2 mois Belgium

Nora Liège F 47 Salon 20 Belgium

Ana Bruxelles F 21 window 2 mois Central Europe

Dame de Compagnie Bruxelles F 21 window 1 Belgium

Cathy Charleroi F 46 Street, studio 19 Belgium

Patricia Charleroi F +-50 Street, studio 28 Belgium

Sabrina Charleroi F ? Street, studio 16 ans Belgium

Zeze Charleroi F 45 Street, studio 22 Central Africa

Patrick Bruxelles M 31 ? Escort ? Central Africa

Gaëtan Bruxelles M 27 Escort 1 Belgium

Lauranne Bruxelles T (MtF) 32 Escort 16 Central Africa

Survivor Bruxelles F 49 Street 30 Belgium

List of informal conversations

Where Sex Age Kind of prostitution Origin

Pierrette Liège F +-20 Window Central Africa

Sophia Liège F +-30 Window Belgium

Lucie Liège F +- 20 Window Central Africa

Tatiana Liège F +-30 Window East Europe

Soraya Liège F +-30 Window Belgium

Josiane Liège F +-30 Window Central Africa

Linda Liège F +-50 Window Belgium

Joslette Liège F +-50 Bar Belgium

Ellen Liège F +-40 Street Belgium

Ghislaine Liège F +-30 Salon Belgium

Marielle Liège F +-20 Salon Belgium

Karine Liège F +-30 Salon Belgium

Margueritte Liège F +-40 Salon Belgium

List of informal conversations

Where Sex Age Kind of prostitution Year experience Origin

Isabelle Liège F +-20 Salon Belgium

Jeanne Liège F +-20 Salon Belgium

Rose Liège F +-20 Window East Europe

Alexandra Liège F +-30 Window East Europe

Sabrina Liège F +-20 Window Belgium

Irma Liège F +-60 Window Belgium

Tania Bruxelles F +-30 Window Albania

Dame Compagnie Bruxelles F +-60 Window Albania

Dame de compagnie Bruxelles F+- 30 Window Albania

Svetlana Bruxelles F +-20 Window East Europe

Dame de compagnie Bruxelles F+-40 Window Albania

Catherine Bruxelles F +-30 Window Belgium

Renée Bruxelles F +-60 Window Belgium

Dame de compagnie Bruxelles F +-70 window Belgium

List of informal conversations

Where Sex Age Kind of prostitution Year experience Origin

Anastasia Bruxelles F+-30 Window East Europe

Pauline Bruxelles F +-40 Window Africa

Conchi Liège F +-30 Window Guinea

Natacha Liège F +-40 Window Rumania

Brigitte Liège F45 Street Belgium

Methodological framework(2)

How?

- **Participant observation**

Interacting with a person about her practice. To do so, we took notes of the material conditions of the practice of prostitution:
decoration of the place, smelling, comfort -WC, shower - , health prevention (preservative)
the neighbourhood

More than two hundred writing pages of notes, feelings and reflexions

Field work's diary

Red Lights district of Brussels (excerpt)

Walking in the street, along windows facing a brick wall. Time to time, young women call for attention performing pornographic bodies' movement to two white men in their forty and fifty years old passing nearby









Interaction Two

Brainstorming vocabulary about this topic

- What does it mean for you **prostitution**?
- What does it mean for you **gender**?

To do so, participants have to form small group tasks of six persons

- Synthesis of what has been said
- Reframing by the lecturer

Theoretical framework: On gender

What is gender?

Scott (1986):

- *Subjectivity*

Relational

Lived experiences: “modes d’existence” Foucault // arts of doing, way of thinking in way of acting De Certeau ;

- *Material*

Social practices

Historic (contextual)

Politics: power relationships (institutional conditions)

Oppression relationships (Young)

Foucault: subjectivity as a third dimension

How does the human being become a social agent?

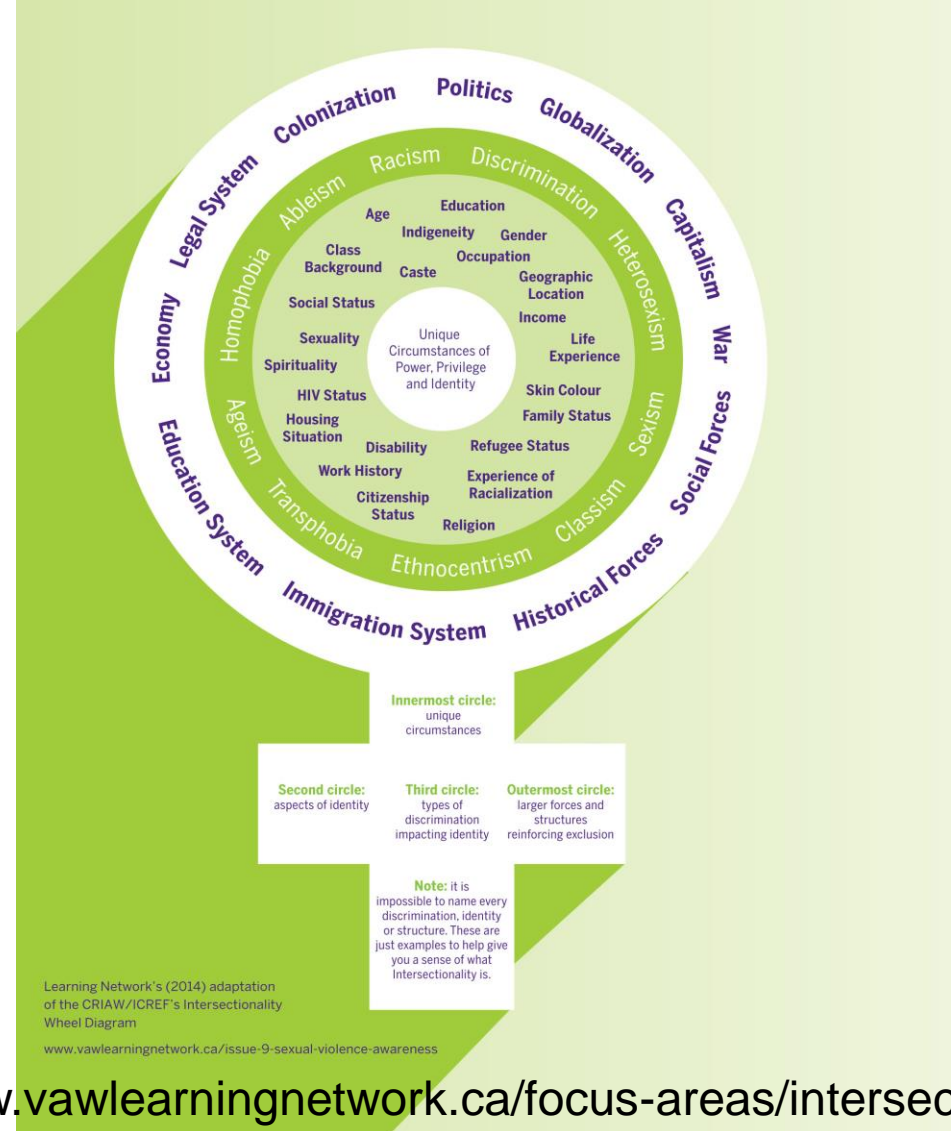
- Knowledge: the scientific discourse constructs what is to be a human being (men and women)
- Power: power relation everywhere, how to deal with fools, beggars, ...?
- Subjectivity: power relation to oneself

It is a process and a relation to oneself, an art of living

“[knowledge, power and subjectivity] constitute ways of living, ...” (Deleuze 2013, p.128)

On gender (con't)

Gender **Intersection** with:
Class,
Race,
Generation,
Culture (meanings and arts
of translation language,
imaginaries, medias, ...)



On gender (con't)

To study prostitution from a gender perspective is:

Subjectivity: to account for situated practices on paid sex,

→ exploring them from the point of view of the person who sells parts of herself (sexual, affects,...) as practices aimed to configure a certain human being quality of live (mother, father, wife, spouse, daughter, son, ...)

Five faces of oppression (Young)

Distribution as a way to eradicate oppression is not enough, there is a need to explore the institutional conditions in play with the realm of oppression:

Identity

- “Groups are real not as substances, but as forms of social relations (...) The self is a product of social processes, not their origin”

(Young p.44)

- Constituents of individual identity: group categorization and norms
- Group oppression: it is subject to one or more of the five conditions of oppression

Exploitation/1

“Social rules about what work is, who does what form whom, how work is compensated, and the social process by which the results of work are appropriated operate to enact relations of power and inequality” (Young p.50)

Standpoint theory:

“As a group, however, women undergo specific forms of gender exploitation in which their energies and power are expended, often unnoticed and unacknowledged, usually to benefit men by realising them for more important and creative work, enhancing their status or the environment around them, or providing them with sexual or emotional service” (Young p.51)

Marginalization/2

- Material deprivation

“Thus, while marginalization definitely entails serious issues of distributive justice, it also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction” (Young p.55)

Feature of all liberal societies:

“a sufficient warrant to suspend basic rights to privacy, respect and individual choice” (Young p.54)

Standpoint theory:

To be autonomous and independent = citizenship

This representation of the citizenship is totally gendered (androcentric), it reflects “a specifically male experience of social relations, which values competition and solitary achievement” (Young p.55)

Powerlessness/3

- To be powerless: to lack: status, sense and authority

Inhibition in the development of one's capacities

Lack of decisionmaking power in one's working life

Exposure to disrespectful treatment due to the statuses one occupies

“The powerless have little or no work autonomy, exercise little creativity or judgment in their work, have no technical expertise or authority, express themselves awkwardly, especially in public or bureaucratic settings, and do not command respect” (Young pp. 56-57)

Respectability:

“To treat people with respect is to be prepared to listen to what they have to say or to do what they request because they have some authority, expertise, or influence” (p.57)

Exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness

“...all refer to relations of power and oppression that occur by virtue of the social division of labor – who works for whom, who does not work, and how the content of work defines one institutional position relative to others (...) these kinds of oppression are a matter of concrete power in relation to others – of who benefits from whom, and who is dispensable” (Young p. 58)

Cultural imperialism/4

Cultural imperialism

“ ...involves the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible at the same time that one is marked out as different” (Young p,60)

Standpoint theory:

“Double consciousness arises when the oppressed subject refuses to coincide with these devalued, objectified, stereotyped visions of herself or himself” (Young p.60)

Violence/5

- “What makes violence a phenomenon of social injustice, and not merely an individual moral wrong, is its systemic character, its existence as a social practice” (Young p,62)

Standpoint theory:

- “...the violation of rape, beating, killing, and harassment of women, people of color, gays, and other marked groups is motivated by fear or hatred of these groups” (Young p,62)
- “As a group women are subject to gender-based exploitation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence” (Young p.64)

3/ Findings and political practice

- Key findings

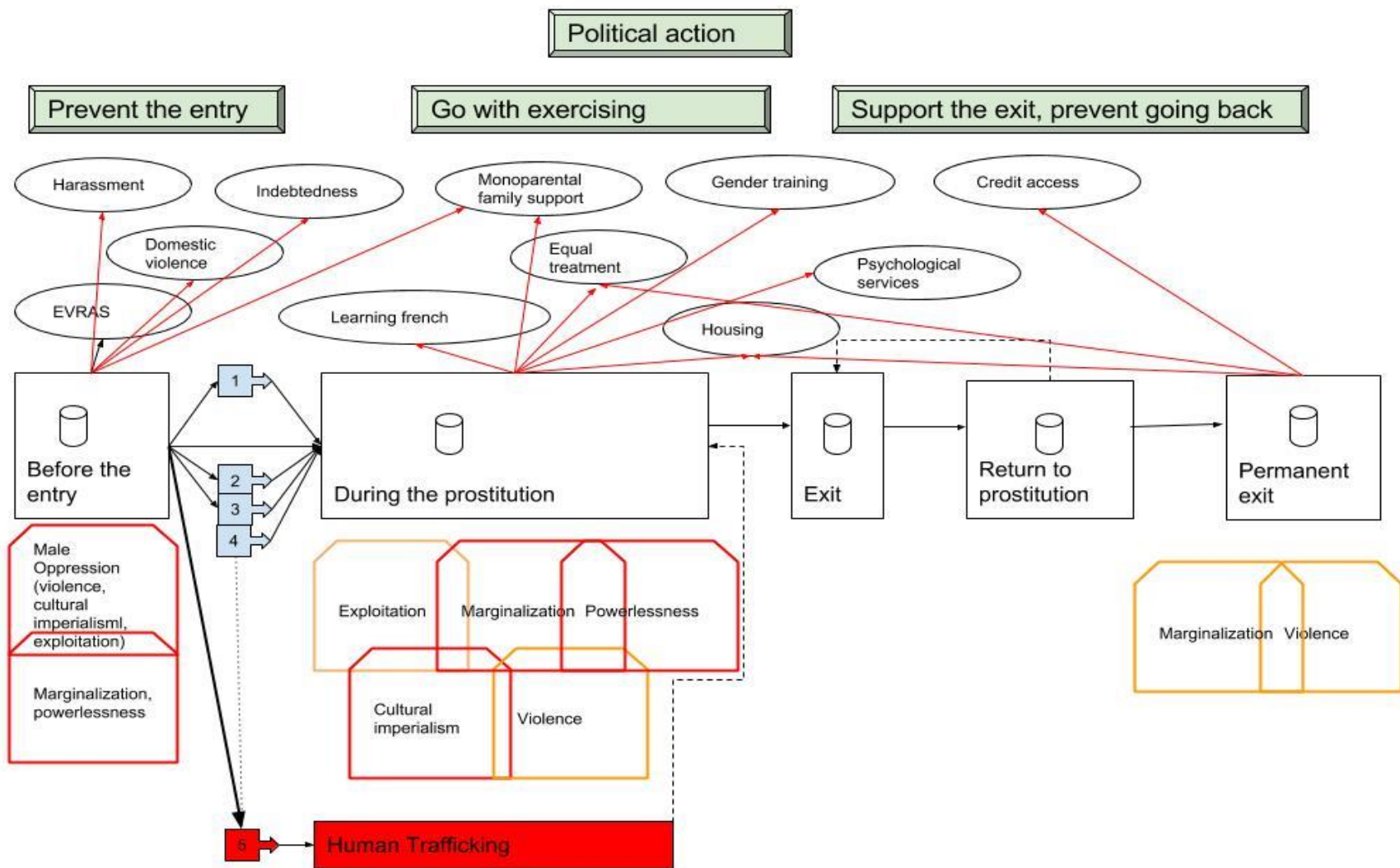
- Political practice

Recommendations

“Bringing about justice where there is exploitation requires reorganization of institutions and practices of decisionmaking, alteration of division of labour, and similar measures of institutional, structural, and cultural change” (Young p.53)

→ from above, people exercising prostitution and the legal frame which goes with it

Key findings



1. Relationship
2. Bartender
3. Companion/husband
4. Pimp

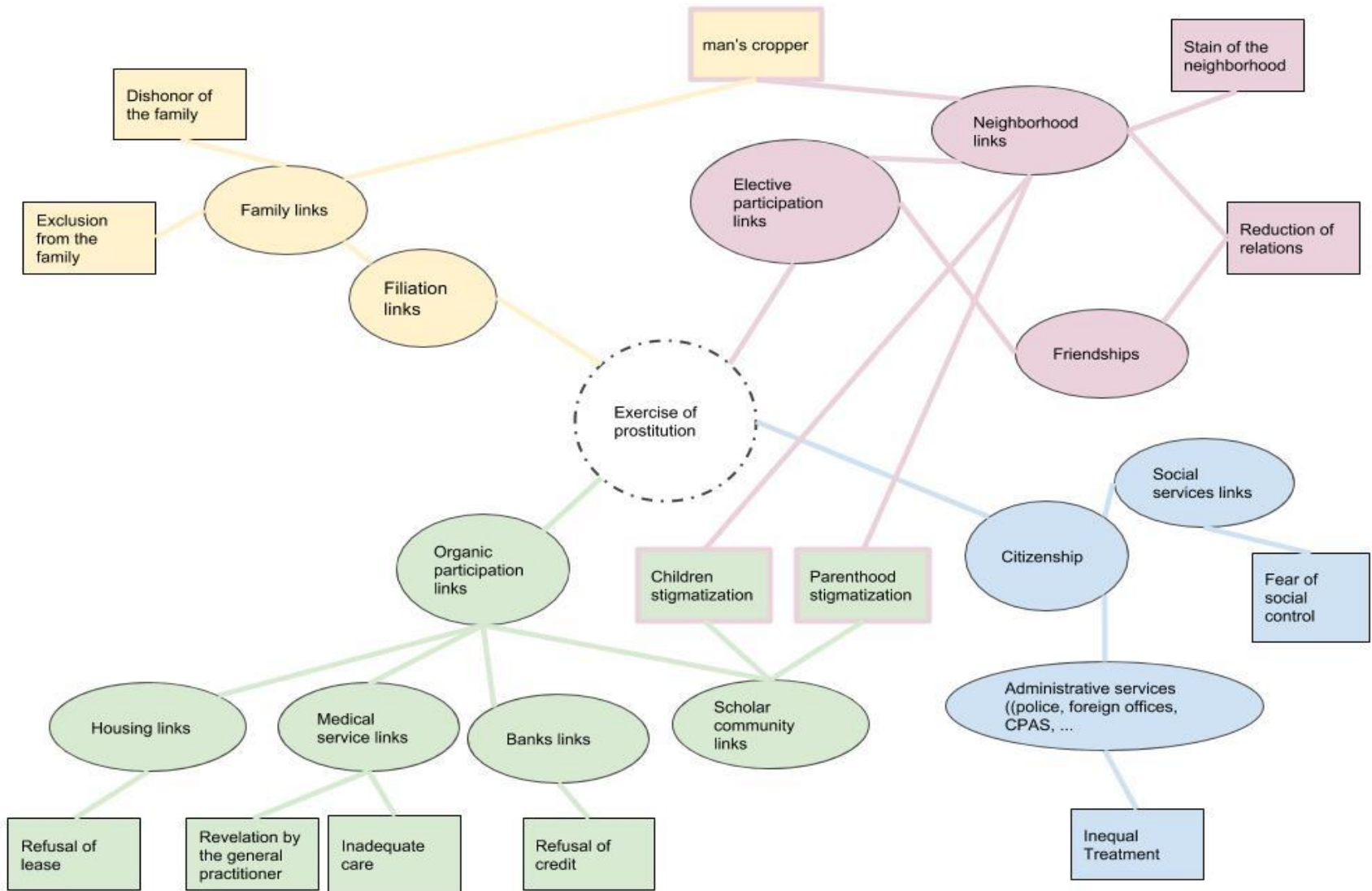
How to interpret these findings?

Social disqualification theory (Serge Paugam)

Exercising prostitution implies relationship management with different actors in different social circles. This modality to “be into the world” proceeds and reinforces social ruptures dynamic as those analyzed by Paugam (1991) referring to poverty.

Following Paugam, social ruptures affect links of filiation, links of elective participation (the socialization), links of organic participation (professional) and citizenship.

The loose of these links jeopardizes the integration of the person in the social world



Social disqualification and the exercise of prostitution (con't)

- Links of filiation

The persons who are exercising prostitution can be in conflict with their families. They can also be in breach with their social origin and the moral inherited from it. This rupture could explain the search for a dominant figure of bond as can be a paid companion (Brussels salon), the boss of massage centre, a pimp, an influent client,...

- Elective participation

What is at stake are the links of socialization which the persons exercising prostitution have or have not access. To some extent, for a few interviewed persons, the world of the prostitution is sufficient in itself and becomes the principal locus of socialization. This reduction of the locus of socialization can result from a choice because the person feels better like that (she eludes the occurrence of social verdicts). But it can also be a strategy of manipulation when it is to socially enclose a person exploited by a network

Social disqualification and the exercise of prostitution (con't)

- Organic participation

The integration of the person exercising prostitution is jeopardized by the fact that prostitution is an activity from which it is very difficult to get out. It contributes thus to the reinforcement of marginalization

- Citizenship

Citizenship is undermined because a) the contributions of the persons exercising prostitution are not recognized; b) their participation to the debates about prostitution is always cautioned or mediated by representatives.

Social disqualification and the exercise of prostitution (con't)

People who are experiencing social disqualification are facing a deficit of protection (“to count on”) and a denial of recognition (“to count for”)

That is why the proposals for policy actions would have to aim to transform the social conditions of the exercising of prostitution insofar to defeat the processes of protection deficit and recognition denial. It is at the same time to work on these conditions recognizing the possibility of autonomy for the persons exercising the prostitution.

Interaction three

From the findings of the research:

In group, formulate five recommendations for the use of public policy ministry of the women' rights. Agree between you the order in which they have to be implemented.

Intergroup discussion:

Agree between the groups two main recommendations to implement first.

Recommendations

Proposals for policy actions

1. Exploitation and equal working rights
2. Marginalization and the right to dispose of his body
3. Powerlessness and the right to be represented
4. Cultural imperialism and the right to be not stigmatized
5. Violence and the right to the physic and psychic integrity
6. Coordinated and transversal Public policy

Exploitation and equal working rights

Before the entry in prostitution

- To develop the public policy against harassment on working place (specially in jobs related with catering – restaurant, coffee, bar – and cleaning services).
- To support social protection for the persons, specially women and mothers, working in precarious job, not well remunerated and laborious.
- To reinforce the training during work life and initial training about gender relations (administration, police, social services).

Exploitation and equal working rights

During the exercise of prostitution

- To look for a more strict application of the legislation as for instance the article 380 of penal code paragraph 3 « *whoever will have sold, rented or provided, for the purposes of prostitution, rooms or any other local with the aims to realize abnormal profit* ».

Exploitation and equal working rights

To get out of the prostitution

- To fight prejudices and social inequalities which would impeach or would render very difficult the project of a person to get out of prostitution. It is at the same time:
 - To assess with the persons concerned by the future public policy,
 - To pay attention to the respect of equal treatment in the services,
 - To facilitate the access to trainings for the persons who don not master French or for the persons who do not have their high school degree, ...
- Fiscal amnesty

Marginalization and the right to dispose of his body

During the exercise of prostitution

- Possibility to choice the way of selling sexual services, relational aspects included in.

The choice concerns: the practices, the schedule, the display modes, the clothing, the gestures, the clients (quality and number).

This choice includes a reinforcement of preventive medicine and psychological help services just as its access.

Powerlessness and the right to be represented

During the exercise of prostitution

- To reinforce the recognition of the persons who exercise prostitution:
 - When doing research on prostitution, systematically involve the persons exercising prostitution in the research process;
 - When assessing public policy about prostitution, systematically consult the persons exercising prostitution.

Cultural imperialism and the right to not be stigmatized

Before, during and after prostitution

- To integrate in scholar programs of high school and college a consciousness-raising to the gender relations
- The gender relations have to be present in trainings and EVRAS* actions to the scholar public
- To develop EVRAS actions and education to the media oriented gender relations from Youth houses, ...

*EVRAS:

Health Behavior in School-aged Children

Violence and the right to the physic and psychic integrity

Before, during and after prostitution

- In case of recognition of the prostitution, it would be important to recognize the right to working medicine and the right to affiliate to social security.
- More specific actions as suicide prevention and an easier access to mental health services would have to be considered

Coordinated and transversal Public policy

- **A public policy supporting non stigmatization campaign would have to be displayed with professionals in contact with persons exercising prostitution** and who are in position, exercising a social verdict, to harm the capacity of persons exercising prostitution to develop her life project or to get out of prostitution.
- **To systemize political action.**
- **To work for the development of services as SOS Rape, SOS Incest.** If the prostitution is the object of social stigmatization, rape and incest too.
- **To pursue specific trainings** (centered on gender relations) in public services which are dealing with incest and rape problematics.
- **To reinforce field associations mandates** with platform to which the persons exercising prostitution are directly represented.
- **To coordinate public policy regarding the illegal persons exercising prostitution.** These persons are facing a double stigma, as stranger without resident ID and as prostitute.

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