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Delocalized prostitution: Occultation of the new modalities of violence.

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Abstract

In the last five years an important transformation is taking place on the demand and offer forms of paid sexual services. The key factor is the introduction of the communication technologies, especially 3G mobiles and diverse Internet services (web, video-chat, email). There's a part of the prostitution consumption related with technologies that have enabled for the face-to-face relationship between who demands and who offers to be substituted at least partially. The implications are many: loss of control by all the involved, easiness to wide persons involved (negotiators-procurers, women and men offering services, clients), change in the forms of sexual relations (through images, no personal contacts, etc.); etc. According to the characteristics of those technologies the concept of "delocalized" prostitution arises, as the prostitution based in a contact in which the spatial dimension of the relation is not clearly determinable. Our research (GIFES-UIB) has allowed to better understand the reality of this transformation. A summary of the main results is presented, as well as the debates and conclusion from the study

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1. Introduction

The great technological innovation and the legal void that characterise the cyberspace have created, partly, the ideal conditions for the rise of new forms of prostitution; furthermore those two facts – paired with the characteristics of the business of prostitution in itself – have opened the possibility of new channels for the recruitment on clients and the observation of the offer (Ballester, March, Orte, 2006).

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In this paper we aim to through some light into a field that is scarcely observed and described; especially in a context such as Spain where there is no rigorous work on the topic. Not even the best studies have paid attention to it. This can be explained by the novelty of the phenomenon, the difficulty to research this field and a certain taboo that always seem to surround prostitution. It is not until 2003, with a report from the Council of Europe (Hughes, 2003), that a more rigorous research is initiated in the field.

On the one side we try to dimension the patent relation between the sex industry in general – within which the prostitution has a relevant specific weight – and the development and evolution of the World Wide Web in the last years. Secondly we try to clarify the main characteristics, conditions and circumstances in which prostitution is developed in the cyberspace.

Internet is changing the modes of interpersonal communication and the social conventions of the current society (Castell, 2004). According to the Danish sociologist Mansson, one of the human realities that have been more dramatically affected by the Internet is the sexuality (Mansson, 2001).

The business of prostitution have adopted, adapted and in some cases even created – or at least improved-, the technologies and resources characteristics of the known as “knowledge and information society” with a double finality: a) ease the access of the clients to the services and increase in this way its business potential; and b) offer new services through the use of new technologies. The prostitution industry has used and uses the majority of possibilities of the new technologies, but its worth pointing out that the most used resource is the World Wide Web.

The characteristics of the Internet: world wide reach; technical impossibility to control all the pages; great communication possibilities (bi-directionality and interactivity, images, sounds, etc.); very diverse social networks; multimedia advertising with real time distribution and easy interaction; geographical delocalization; freedom of schedules (worldwide presence 24h a day 365 days a year), easy access to great amounts of related information (infinity of diverse alternatives for each type of information); low costs of offer; etc. very clearly increase the potential to do business. In addition we can speak from the client’s perspective, the Net has several added advantages, especially valued in the field: CONFIDENTIALITY. Keeps their anonymity and the client can contact women offering sexual services from the most absolute privacy. CONTROL. Easiness of access to the offers, producing sensation of complete control of a wide “catalogue of services”. LOW PRICE. Possibility of finding low-cost offers, adapted to all types of clients. In occasions the same add generates a strong attraction, even if the services it offers are not consumed.

The first two characteristics (confidentiality and control) are imaginary. As it is obvious, there is no such confidentiality. Everything that enters the web or another electronic channel (for example, mobile technology) stays there forever and with all detail. As to the control, this is also an illusion, as the client is controlled after with selected publicity, depending on the preferences that the client has shown. The third characteristic, low price, is disastrous for the women, as it forces them to compete offering lower prices or practices with a higher risk for their health.

The Internet is even transforming into a new media where the first contact with this activity happen. Which is to say a radical a deep renovation of the sex industry takes place. In general terms we can identify as the main advantages that the Internet introduces in the prostitution business or industry: it facilitates new channels of access to the market. It enlarges the international visibility of the business. It multiplies the offer of services creating new uses. It globalizes and delocalises its offers and its business base (¿where is this supposed business based?). Supposedly it protect the privacy of the client. It facilitates and “improves” the contact between women working in prostitution and the client (more information, less “annoyances” for the women, more warranties to find clients, etc.) etc. Anyhow, the public policy developed by the Spanish state have still not reacted to those changes and new realities related to the delocalized prostitution (Brufau, 2011).

2. Development

2.1. Mobile technology and web pages as a media for contact in context of prostitution

The prominence of the mobile technology has materialized in the last years in the field of prostitution; as well as visualized the change in the classified contact adds in the newspapers. Its use to create contacts (consults without compromise), as well as the apparent liberalization for the women that use it to offer services (they don’t have to be hours waiting for a client), seem two immediate advantages. However the inconveniences and the negative

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