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Prostitution, Moral Spatiality, and Urban Territory The example of Zurich Charlotte Malterre-Barthes and Gabrielle Schaad with Valentina Genini

If money cannot buy love, love-making or sex is being traded for centuries. In this context prostitution is generally and traditionally defined as an exchange of sexual services for money or material remuneration¹. However, according to Marxist theory, it is more than that, because of the notion of power over one person's body by another.

«Sex work» exerts individually a right of command over and visible prostitution is, the more it sexualizes the another person's body for a time: domination.2 Control space it occupies and the deepens the conflict it generover bodies might be the main goal of all societies and ates, a relation is to be established between mobility is, over women's bodies, fundamental.³ Undoubtedly it and visibility of prostitution. is no overstatement to extend this projection to the urban space and the desire of control exerted by authorities over prostitution. Domination, particularly in terms of territory, generates conflict. When streetpracticed or de facto visible in reserved districts, prosti- Prostitution signals the presence of sex in the urban tution is often attached to a general degradation of space. The city is sexualized and organizes human sexlife quality and a stigmatization of areas as dirty, ual relations in a Manichean way to perpetuate distincdangerous and depraved. The conflict between prostitions between goods and bads sexual identities9. tution and urban space relates to the sexualisation of Namely, socio-spatial practices encourage people to the city and the production of moral geographies, as adopt heterosexual identities without them being well as to subsequent spatial migrations.⁴

has not only become subject to increasing regulation. from the clean realms of heterosexual citizenships. Its visibility also changes with the growing importance ments are counted in the Canton of Zurich, while one prostitution, occasionally red-lighted at night. Prostiexists in nine cantons; the most frequented areas are in escort or out-call prostitution, the customer calls an Olten, Basel and Zurich. Still, the lack of restrictions, agency and the act takes place at the customer's place number of prostitutes per capita in Zurich to one of thus reducing direct visibility. Hypothetically, because people, similar to the rate of Amsterdam, known for its visibility of prostitution. A recognized, legalized busi-

Prostitution in urban territories: Sexualizing the city

conscious of it. Only confronted with deviating and To opt for Zurich as a case study allows the <abnormal> manifestations of sexuality (prostitution, recognition of such migrations in the city as a concrete homosexuality, hardcore pornography, etc...) do they paradigm. However, interferences between common come to question their own sexual evidence. Hence use of public space and prostitution in public space prostitutes constitute a key sexual identity about the have dramatically changed the manner in which prostilimits of heterosexuality¹⁰. Prostitutes are symbolic of tution is perceived within the last decade. Prostitution «sexifying» heterosexuality, and are therefore banned

Prostitution occurs in a variety of settings. In of the Internet and new digital applications.⁵ The street prostitution the prostitute solicits customers number of clients is estimated at 125000 country- while waiting at street corners or walking alongside a wide—approximately 5% of the country's male popula- street, visible but possibly only at a certain time during tion aged between 20 and 65.6 According to a recent the day. Prostitution also takes place in some massage study on behalf of the federal government there are parlours, identified as such. Whilst prostitution is more 16000 female prostitutes working in about 900 «indoor out in the open, solicitation occurs at bars. Brothels or establishments»⁷ throughout Switzerland. 1452 employ- sex-clubs are establishments specifically dedicated to post is often shared between several women. The numtution can also take place at the prostitute's apartment ber of women working as street prostitutes is estimated or in a rented room when solicitation of costumers is at 250 over the entire country. Street prostitution done from behind windows or through advertising. In combined with the country's wealth, has pushed the of residence or more commonly at his hotel room, the highest of industrialized countries. Based on police visible prostitution sexualizes its pertained space; a figures, Zurich has about 11 prostitutes per 1000 connection can be recognized between mobility and sex trade. With the assumption that the more explicit ness such as a brothel implies certain spatial inertia, due to reputation and tolerance. But visibility is delim- order a key element to migrations and locations of ited here by a building facade. On the other hand, with prostitution in urban space while underlining the pera much more explicit exposition, with visible prostinicious conflict between (visible) sex-trade and the city. tutes and clients the much more (sexualized) streetprostitution is constantly stigmatized and extremely mobile. Thus, the question of visibility is central to the spatial aspect as it, by sexualizing the city, directly Zurich, as urban centre, has a history of prostitution¹⁵. influences morality and therefore movements of prostitution migrations—a paradigm that could be labelled tution was mainly concentrated in the Niederdorf, as as a conflict.

The creation of spatialized moral order by state and law

«protection» to those engaged with it. Clearly, on the or such, like the (Hotel Krone). legal side, cities and governments (and to a certain generate a spatialized moral order.

work). Namely, law regulates activities that offend cation nodes such as the railway station. public order and decency and expose the citizen to what is allegedly offensive and injurious. 14 One must of prostitution was over. Brothel owners tended to give concede that jurisdiction concentrates on the (good) away the business quickly, pressured by authorities. citizen and does not necessarily consider populations. Competition increased, and brothels started using involved in prostitution-a classical double-standard advertising methods, girls standing scantily clad at position. Another regulation of (sex work) consists of windows and doors of the houses and typical red lights banning prostitution from city centres and can be were installed. Since most of the establishments were related to authority's desire to (clean) the urban core. in the vicinity of residential houses, they were causing Typically, the phenomenon of outcasting and periphe- considerable grievance among the population, a critiralization addresses questions of mapping out specific cism that was to be uttered repeatedly towards the end sites of the body and the city. This means the disposal of the 19th century. Complaints concerned the behavof a certain form of prostitution composed of lower iour of the girls, loud music, dancing and the general classes (fragile/visible/troublesome) and keeping the activity buzz. Brothels became objects of popular high-range prostitution (needed) as sex outlets for resentment. Unexpected crackdowns and police invesbusiness centres. Current vice laws are difficult to sum-tigations were increasing, which upset clients. Harsh marise, as they embrace contradictory notions of controls and consequent busts and prison sentences sexual rights of individuals, gendered space, morality, deteriorated the commerce. Civil society grievance got economy, ... However, moral control and spatial order- considerable, as well as the pressure from morality ing, as well as mobility and human factors make spatial groups. Finally, in 1897, many bordellos of the city were

Spatial migrations of prostitution in Zurich

Spatially, in the 19th century, the business of prostinine of the registered tolerated bordellos were located there. The Niederdorf was an area of leisure, packed with drinking houses, bars, informal business and cabarets, enjoying a regional and extra-regional reputation. Women who were to sell themselves moved to the As the ordering of urban space plays a crucial role in Niederdorf, where the chances were better to find producing and reproducing sexual identities that clients. Located a bit offside from the new commercial accord to notions of being a good citizen in Western area Bahnhofstrasse, away from high traffic streets, but societies, law is a key element to spatial morality. Law close to the city centre and the railway station, accessiis one of the most powerful means used by society to bility level was high, leading to a general considerable control behaviour. If Jurisdiction seeks to regulate and increase of frequentation. In the Köngengasse and the control prostitution expressing a moral condemnation Weingasse, the density of bordellos was relatively high, of it as well as supposedly offering some degree of two of the five houses of the Köngengasse were brothels

The Hottingen district was ostensibly more extent, civil society) have an impact on where and how quiet with the first-class establishments of Eidmattprostitution should be practiced, if legal or not, if tole-strasse and Kreuzbühlstrasse. They profited directly rated or not, and how this relates to its migrations.¹² from the neighbourhood of the Variété theatres (Corso) Therefore contemporary vice laws are crucial to geogra- and (Pfauen), just as the theatres could benefit from the phies of prostitution. Moral control and spatial ordering bordellos as an extension of their entertainment areas. The Culmannstrasse brothel was situated a bit further Regulation of of sex work often relies on the away from the city centre. Close to the ETH and Unistrategic containment of prostitution to sites where it versity, it was visited by students and professors. The can be subjected to regimes of surveillance by state and Aussersihl brothel was characterised otherwise. It was law as by society in general. Legal codes, norms and located in the Zollstrasse, a nearby street of the railway understanding vary from locale to locale.¹³ It seems station, with a poorer population and low-rent area. that some forms of prostitution are more tolerated Most of the clients of this third-class brothel were than others, prostitutes working the streets are seen as workers, soldiers and young recruits at duty in the less acceptable than off-street prostitutes who conduct close-by Kaserne. In a word, prostitution businesses at their affairs in the private realm-presumably on the time were located around multifunctional leisure basis that the presence of prostitutes in the urban areas such as Niederdorf, close to obvious business space might indicate the state's tacit approval of (sex poles like the Kaserne or theatres and near communi-

At the end of the 19th century, the golden age

activity of prostitution in the late 19th and 20th like Gayromeo or Grinder.²⁴ century.

Prostitution activities declined and leapt into clandestineness as the moral pressure of both war time activities were transferred to Langstrasse.

were penalised with a fine of up to CHF 500.19 Apparand headed for sex clubs. ently, police forces were outnumbered and could not tution areas, did not appear on the map.

closed down by authorities and prostitution was offi- law until 1942. Even after the legalisation of sexual cially forbidden. Almost immediately, illegal establish- intercourse between men, the age of consent was ments came up. Drinking-halls, cabarets, bars and twenty, against 16 years in the case of women. Male pubs soon took over and offered alcohol and sex at all prostitution stayed illegal until 1992. The performative price levels. Between 1893 and 1900, 300 different corporeality and visibility of street prostitution were businesses with parallel functions to bordellos were never an option due to the threat of denunciation. A listed. These were located again in the Niederdorf and slight increase in visibility around 1960 was met by in the Aussersihl around Langstrasse. Those areas police and local authorities with harsh controls, leading seemed predestined for prostitution business, being to house searches and forced coming outs—often with densely packed with beer-halls and small hotels. The disastrous consequences for the privacy, the social reback-rooms of cigar-shops and postcard-shops func- lationships and the housing situation of queer lives.²¹ tioned as a cover for prostitution. In 1913, 34 The police justified the reinforcement of control by «cigar-shops» were registered, and often prostitutes means of surveillance files rhetorically with two murowned the shops themselves. In December 1913 this ders committed by young male prostitutes in 1957 and under-cover business was closed by decree. In general, 1958. Also, the rise of syphilis infections in the early the massive prostitute population in the streets and 1960s served as an argument for the city government places, in cafés, restaurants, Music-halls, Variétés and to enact a dance ban on men,²² with economic theatres, from elegant ladies (demimondaines) at the consequences for—if covered, well institutionalised— «Corso», winking young girls on Bürkliplatz and meeting points and platforms for gay men.²³ Nowadays poorly-dressed street-prostitutes on Limmatquai, in the main pick up spots for the so-called «escorts» the streets and bars of Niederdorf or installed in the beyond established contact bars in the Niederdorf area Aussersihl confirmed a spatially extended and mobile are on Internet platforms and smartphone applications

Beautification and migration tendencies

periods and post-war were not favourable to legali- When the project «Langstrasse PLUS»²⁵ was launched sation. However, typically, Langstrasse, Niederdorf in 2001, it was in response to the organized outcry of and its extension Seefeld16 were stigmatized as prostilocal residents and shop owners concerned about the tution areas throughout the 50's and 60's. As the 1973 growth of street sex trade in the Langstrasse area. After oil crisis escalated, the working immigrant population ten years the city government argued that the goal of was sent home as the inland work market deteriorated. Langstrasse PLUS had been reached and the project Consequently, a void in the housing area formerly was phased out. Its goal had been to achieve a better rented by this population was produced, namely in the life quality and a safer environment for its inhabitants. 4th district-Langstrasse. The prices of rents were The instruments employed concerned legislation as plummeting and the milieu took over, as the autho- well as real estate management, with a constant rities' control was low. At the end of the 80's, lax drug promotion through advertising campaigns. To cut policy created the so-called tolerated open scenes, down the sex-trade establishments, the city bought draining drug-addicted prostitution activity around the pieces of real estate and restructured them with offices, railway-station, Letten and Limmatplatz. After having trendy bars and standard flats. This has upgraded given up on hopes that a policy of tolerance would lead the area, chasing out some of the sex-trade related to self-regulation and containment, those areas were businesses, although there are still some 250 brothels police-cleared in 1995.¹⁷ The dealing and prostitution in the district.²⁶ Street prostitution is not tolerated in the area. The legalisation of contact bars was seen as yet Switzerland legalised prostitution in 1992, another measure to keep prostitution off the street. A and in 1998 the first legal brothel, called 'Petite Fleur' recent initiative to include Langstrasse in the newly (Small Flower) re-opened in Zurich. Street prosti- drafted Strichplan was rejected the city council in tution remained illegal for the moment outside the 2016.²⁷ In practice, this program intensified the represtolerated areas. In 1991 the city authorities issued a sion of outdoor sex markets, thus redirecting part of «Strichplan»¹⁸ that identifies 14 street portions dedi- the consumers to the indoor sector, a move facilitated cated to streetwalkers where they were allowed to pro- by online technologies. In fact, many of the women pose sexual services from 7 PM to 5 AM. Contraventions who had been working in the streets got mobile phones

This can partly explain the phenomenon of guarantee the respect of this Strichplan²⁰. Langstrasse the migration of prostitution toward the periphery of and Niederdorf, even though both recognized as prosti- Zurich. Those sex clubs are now established in the suburban areas of the city²⁸. Dispersed in the outskirt The urban and moral spatiality of gay prosti-villages, housed in quiet residential neighbourhoods, tution on the other hand has its own history in Zurich, these types of services are strongly internet based, and functioning very differently; not least because of the display on their website to potential clients the locaprevailing criminalization of homosexuality by Swiss tion of the club, how to reach it, types of proposed

attempting to draw attention.

on a private platform that replaces the public platform hood that should ideally neither be adjacent to public with which they cannot physically advertise. In fact, parks, nor to churches. An infrastructure consisting of spatially, those suburban brothels sport a quiet, access road as the garage-like boxes, a café and the office buildings. They only become identifiable at night «neighbourhood security»³¹. when their character is red-neon-proclaimed. This semi-anonymity might be partly due to the increase of cumulating in a popular referendum initiated by the communication and mobility that leads to separate conservative right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP). The places of contact and places of transaction, thus Zurich electorate, however, accepted a credit for sex reducing the need of visible display. It might also be boxes with 52,6 percent. The sex boxes are open daily the wish to be mapped out from moral geography in from 7pm to 5am. The site is accessible by car excluorder to avoid stigmatisation and reaction of the local sively, that is no entry for pedestrians. Sexual interauthorities. The loophole in the cantonal regulations course has to take place in one of the nine car boxes, those clubs are exploiting might be filled as soon as the two «Stehboxen» or the four caravan-areas. The site civil society once again files a complaint. If the Internet is run by services within the social department of the can bring advantages to the self-organization among city of Zurich. Its staff is periodically present to observe prostitutes, for example chances to inform each other «district compatibility», controlling licences and about abusive clients, 29 it also fosters the neo-liberali- enforcing the borders of the site by fining transgressation and isolation of prostitution in general.³⁰ Also, sions and spatial migration.³² Beside theses boxes, the this migration into virtual spaces and the invisibility of new Strichplatz picked the historic prostitution area prostitutes in the streets makes it more difficult for within Niederdorf and the Allmend Brunau as the sole NGOs to contact alleged victims of women trafficking remaining zones for legal street prostitution.³³ or to track down exploitative structures now out of view, yet still existing.

Out of the city into the box: Prostitution spatial ordering

After the number of street prostitutes at Sihlquai had crucial at times, whereas communication nodes and reached a new peak in 2011, complaints by inhabitants axes became more and more attractive for prostitution and media pressure to shut down the area grew business as mobility was expanding. Nevertheless, the stronger. The fact that a growing number of prostitutes inertia of persistent entertainment areas is high, as came from Hungary, Slovakia and other countries that one can see with the case of the Niederdorf, having were recently granted freedom of movement within been identified with the sex-trade for more than the extended Schengen space—deemed as unwelcome hundred years. work-migrants—fuelled arguments of right-wing political circles. Whereas, from a left perspective the observed in the phenomenon of migration of prostiincreasing number of reported cases of women traf- tution: on the one hand, the increase of communificking, and sexual assault called for a re-evaluation of cation and of client mobility, together with beautificathe legal framework. A taskforce consisting of several tion programs led by the authorities partially caused a members of the police department and city planning peripheralization of prostitution, especially towards mapped out a new Strichplan in correspondence with the north-western areas of the city, the airport area and the new prostitution commerce regulation, the the Glattbrugg neighbourhood, out of range of munici-«Prostitutionsgewerbeverordnung» (PGVO), concer- pal jurisdiction. Certainly, officials are concerned that ning the use of public and private space for prosti- this migration from city to periphery may head even tution. First of all, this meant a radical ten kilometer further towards remote locations that are dangerously reduction of legal zones for street prostitution in total, isolated for women involved in prostitution. But the as well as changed legislations for salons that needed a fact that part of the sex trade is out of cities and out of building permit of late, in addition to the usual prosti- citizen's view is without a doubt satisfying for the tution permit.

in 2000. If street prostitution and brothels can today cation strategies might as well function as demagogic

services and pictures of the girls. Graphic codes used be located in areas with less than 50% residential ratio on those web pages are very colourful and catchy, only, for the site in Altstetten it was even less-20%. Further requirements included the absence of educa-Basically, the Internet advertises those clubs tional institutions and youth centres in the neighbourcommon, innocent appearance of family houses and advice centre «Flora Dora» was to be installed with

This provoked political and civic opposition

Conclusion

Through time, the migration of prostitution in Zurich has been shown by different tendencies. Certainly, poles of business, such as theatres or barracks were

However, two opposite tendencies could be Zurich municipality. On the other hand, authorities In summer 2013 the «Strichplatz» in the out- still seem to favour centralized, clearly defined and toleskirt quarter of Zurich, Altstetten, opened its doors. rated (sacrificed) red-light districts such as Niederdorf The new «Strichzonenplan» was enacted in 2013 after and Langstrasse in order to operate control as well as urgent measures like the reduction of the legal time- to maintain a certain offer of sex outlets in the city. frames for street prostitution had been taken in 2012 Therefore, credits allocated to programs are limited on already. It replaced an earlier version of 1991, updated purpose, or so it seems.³⁴ Beautification, or gentrifitools to calm down public opinion.³⁵ Officials' contradictory and ambivalent positions typically demonstrate the complexity of the topography of prostitution. Scarcity of geographically reliable information in addition to the factors' intricacy makes it indeed difficult to draw ultimate conclusions about this changing matter. Nevertheless, one can stress that migrations of this activity in urban space are interdependant of laws and moral control, tolerance issues, accessibility factors and spatial ordering. As all of these elements are subject to vary, prostitution adjusts through migration—migrations that illustrate the conflicted relation between sex and the urban space.

Nota Bene: This research was initiated in 2008 within the context of the seminar «Urban Mutations on the Edge» with Prof. Marc Angélil, and Deane Simpson at ETH Zurich (Federal Institute of Technology) and updated as well as extended for this issue of *trans* magazine. Earlier versions of the text have been published in *MAS Context*, and *Camenzind*.

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Annex: Zürich Strichplan 1991/2000

