

**PREVIST PROJECT: THE PASSAGE FROM THE "OBJECT PARADIGM" TO THE "CHOICE PARADIGM". A SWISS CAMPAIGN WITHIN THE GENERAL POPULATION FOR CRIME PREVENTION IN SEX WORK**

Lorena Molnar<sup>1</sup>, University of Lausanne

Published in E. Casado-Patricio et al. (2021). *Forjando nuevos caminos: Investigaciones noveles en Criminología*, pp. 130-136. Tirant-lo-Blanch.

*Recommended citation (APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition):*

Molnar, L. (2021). *Previst Project: The passage from the "object paradigm" to the "choice paradigm"*. A Swiss campaign within the general population for crime prevention in sex work. In E. Casado-Patricio et al. *Forjando nuevos caminos: Investigaciones noveles en Criminología*, pp. 130-136. Tirant-lo-Blanch.

**Abstract**

This paper discusses a campaign called "We don't buy a body but a service", part of a crime prevention program in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland). The campaign aimed to prevent antisocial behaviour towards prostitutes by encouraging population's more realistic view of the sex work and by minimising the excuses for crime -the neutralisation techniques as defined by Sykes & Matza (1957). With the slogan "we don't buy a body but a service", we installed a panel in the prostitution neighbourhood in Lausanne (the capital of the canton of Vaud). We also organised four artistic performances in the city centre and we advertised the campaign through interviews with the media. Although the impact of this campaign on the behaviour of the population is difficult to assess, we estimated that the number of local citizens reached is non-negligible. We suggest that sex workers should be encouraged to participate in further campaigns towards the general population as well as the academia should collaborate with practitioners for evaluating the impact of such projects.

---

<sup>1</sup>PhD student in criminology and research assistant at the University of Lausanne (Switzerland) and coordinator of the *Previst* project (2018-2019); ID ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8692-9256>; e-mail: [lorena.molnar@unil.ch](mailto:lorena.molnar@unil.ch)

**Keywords:** applied criminology; prostitution; neutralisation techniques; situational prevention

## 1. Introduction

In Switzerland, sex work is a legal activity regulated by each canton. According to the prostitution law of the canton of Vaud, sex work must be a freelance activity (Loi 943.05 sur l'exercice de la prostitution, 2004), allowed in two places: on the street and in the salons for erotic massage (indoor prostitution). In Lausanne (the capital of the canton of Vaud), street prostitution is allowed in the neighbourhood of Sévelin, every day from 10 PM to 5 AM (Ville de Lausanne, 2016).

Based on situational crime prevention strategies, the *Previst* project (Molnar & Pongelli, 2019) aimed to reduce the victimisation of sex workers by the development of workshops with prostitutes and a prevention guide for their clients, called "How to be a SuperClient". This paper<sup>2</sup> aims thus to present the last part of this project: a campaign within the general population for the minimisation of the victimisation of sex workers (for multimedia material from the campaign, see Molnar, 2021). This project has been developed by the association *Fleur de Pavé*, whose main objectives are the reduction of risks related to prostitution and the protection of the rights of sex workers in this canton.

## 2. State of the art of the victimisation and stigmatisation of sex workers

Several scholars found that sex workers feel stigmatised because of their occupation and therefore they are reluctant to share their work-related experiences with their family or friends (Eleuteri et al., 2018; Fitzgerald-Husek et al., 2017; Földhazi, 2010; Mitjans Núñez & Molnar, 2016; Scambler, 2007; Sprankle et al., 2018; Weitzer, 2018). The hypothesis of the stigmatisation of prostitutes was as well corroborated by studies within the general population in Italy and the United States of America (Eleuteri et al., 2018; Sprankle et al., 2018). For instance, in the United

---

<sup>2</sup> For a French abstract of the campaign in an social work journal see Molnar & Pongelli (2020).

States, Sprankle et al. (2018) conducted an experimental study with undergraduate students (N=197) about their perception of sexual assault survivors. To half of their sample, they provided news about sexual assault when the victim was a prostitute and to the other half, news which described the sexual assault experienced by a non-prostitute. According to their results, the students who received the paper about sexual assault towards a prostitute showed less empathy and manifested more victim-blaming than the other group.

Scholars researched sex workers' victimisation in different contexts and countries like Canada, England, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland and Thailand, among others (Barberet, 2000; Bungay & Guta, 2018; Földhàzi et al., 2007; Mitjans Núñez & Molnar, 2016; O'Doherty, 2011; Plumridge & Abel, 2001; Ratinthorn et al., 2009, 2009; Sanders, 2001; Shannon et al., 2009). In Switzerland, according to the qualitative research of Földhàzi et al. (2007) with 36 prostitutes, some clients disrespected the professional boundaries of the sex workers by imposing sexual practices or taking out the condom without their consent, some of them stole from the sex worker if unseen, and others refused to pay for the sexual service.

Organisations conducted worldwide prevention projects to minimise sex workers' victimisation (Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2012), in Mongolia (Carlson et al., 2012), India (Beattie et al., 2015) and Brazil (World Health Organization et al., 2013). To our knowledge, none has taken place towards the general public.

### **3. Theoretical framework: neutralisation techniques and situational prevention techniques**

First, we use as a general theoretical framework Sykes' and Matza's (1957) *neutralisation techniques theory*. These techniques are defined as excuses that people use when they commit a crime for not feeling any remorse. There are different techniques such as 1) denigrating the victim, 2) denying the negative consequences

of the crime or 3) condemnation of those who condemn. The question that remains unanswered is if the neutralisation techniques are the cause of the criminality or the result of it (Killias, Aebi et al., 2019). In that sense, it has also been argued a reciprocal effect between the criminality and the neutralisation techniques, resembling a vicious circle (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, the commission of an offence would call for justifications which remove remorse; and they also would facilitate the continuation of crime and even with more severe crimes (Agnew, 2016).

Regarding the link between the neutralisation techniques and the victimisation in sex work, some part of the general population, the media and researchers –for example, Farley (2018)– still consider the prostitutes as “objects” that can be sold and bought. Even the so-called abolitionist feminism stands for this idea (Ripa, 2016). In our view, this representation of sex workers (which we called as “the object paradigm”) might increase prostitutes’ risk for work-related victimisation. In this sense, according to this view, if a client perceives the prostitute as a product, it seems more likely that he imposes non-consensual sex. However, it looks more likely that a customer behaves prosocially if he perceives the prostitute as a full-fledged worker and if he is aware that the authorities will prosecute any violation of the legal framework.

Second, the situational prevention strategies updated by Clarke & Homel (1997) and Cornish and Clarke (2003) complement our framework. These authors completed the situational prevention strategies proposed by Clarke & Mayhew (1980) and Clarke (1997). *Grosso modo*, these scholars proposed 25 prevention techniques and classified them in five types: 1) increasing the efforts for committing a crime, 2) increasing the risks of getting caught, 3) reducing the rewards of offending, 4) removing the provocations and 5) removing the excuses. According to Medina Ariza (2011), removing the excuses of offending can be vital in ambiguous situations with no clear moral framework, which might facilitate the offending. Besides, in a former publication, Mitjans Núñez & Molnar (2016), aiming to decrease

the victimisation of sex workers in Spain, proposed these prevention strategies towards the general population:

There are also techniques concerning strengthening moral convictions. Being aware that not all situational prevention techniques are acceptable in the rule of law and not wanting to carry out intrusive or moralistic measures, we propose the installation of posters in sex work areas or advertising spots with slogans such as "You do not buy a woman, you buy a service" or "Paying for sex is not a crime. Yet, it is an offence not to pay the sex worker what you agreed upon" (Mitjans Núñez & Molnar, 2016, p. 360).

#### **4. A campaign to prevent violence towards sex workers**

As mentioned in the introduction, the association Fleur de Pavé organised a campaign with the slogan "We don't buy a body but a service". We aimed to reach the general population and to increase the awareness of the Swiss prostitution legal framework. This campaign was part of a larger prevention project, the *Previst* project (for further information see Molnar & Pongelli, 2019).

Firstly, we installed a panel with the slogan of the campaign ("*For the respect of the sex work: We don't buy a body, but a service*"). in September 2019. The panel was located at Sévelin Avenue, Lausanne's prostitution area. The panel was visible for the neighbourhood, the passers-by, the customers and the prostitutes for two weeks. The neighbourhood is a semi-residential area, composed by blocks of flats, several buildings for offices, a high school (*Gymnase de Bugnon*), a centre for professional formation (*École des Métiers*), a Skate Park, a Bar (*Base-Bar*), a Fitness studio and a hall concert (*Les Docks*), among others. In this neighbourhood at night, sex work becomes legal and prostitutes tout for clients. Therefore, the population that frequents the area, both during the day and the night, is diverse in age, sex, formation and employment.

Author's personal copy. Please find the original publication [here](#)

One month after the beginning of the campaign in the prostitution neighbourhood, we organised four artistic performances on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2019 in downtown Lausanne. In each performance, a giant puppet (symbolising a sex worker) occupied the centre of the Saint-Laurent Square. The puppet was accompanied by dancers, who, carrying a paper bag on their head, represented “the object paradigm”. In that sense, when dancing, they expressed several reactions to the stigmatisation: falling on the ground, withdrawal, struggling and running away. Suddenly, switching from the “object paradigm” to the “choice paradigm”, they tore the bag off their heads. All the participants began to dance, symbolising protection, defence, taking our own spot and setting boundaries. At the end of the performance, loudspeakers spread the message of the campaign to the audience. The slogan of the campaign was verbalised by sex workers and supporters of the NGO through the audio system in several languages, since 43% of the inhabitants of Lausanne are foreigners:

“A campaign for the respect of sex work. A negotiated contract is a respected contract. Sex work is a freelance activity in which the proposition "satisfied or reimbursed" does not apply. Any violence or disrespect towards sex workers can lead to legal action. You don't buy a body, but a service”.

For increasing the audience of the campaign, we also collaborated with the media. Two journals covered the performance and interviewed social workers and prostitutes working for the association (Haddou, 2019; Kabacalman, 2019). As well, the director of the NGO, Silvia Pongelli, discussed the aims of the campaign and the legal status of sex workers in Switzerland on the local radio (Radio Django, 2019). The local press commented on the show in the following way:

“An unusual street show enlivened Lausanne on Saturday. It highlighted the violence suffered by sex workers from clients, pimps or street passers” (Kabacalman, 2019, p. 1).

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This humble campaign illustrates an example of the application of criminological knowledge for preventing violence against sex workers. As well, we demonstrate that the situational prevention techniques are an interesting inventory of measures that can be applied in diverse contexts.

Nonetheless, one clear limitation of this campaign is the lack of evaluation of its impacts on the behaviour of the population towards the sex workers. One of the reasons for the impossibility of evaluation is that the NGO received funds for developing a crime prevention project in prostitution but not for evaluating it scientifically. An alternative evaluation would have been to compare the rates of victimisation before and after the campaign took place but no official statistics on the victimisation of sex workers are available. Moreover, the Swiss studies with sex workers Földhàzi et al. (2007) were qualitative, therefore the extent of their victimisation is unknown.

Despite the evaluation difficulties, some figures on the reach of the campaign are available. As mentioned, the prostitution neighbourhood is the intersection of different professional, training and leisure activities. The flow of people frequenting the area is relatively large and therefore also the number of persons reached by our message. Moreover, during the street performances, we witnessed around 40 or 50 spectators during each show, in total, approximately 160-200 people. Since the press and radio covered the campaign, before and during the performances, we believe that we have reached, at least, a non-negligible part of the local population. The local press commented on the reactions of the passers-by in the following way:

"The performances are linked every hour. The show challenges. The passers-by stop and look, the opinions are divergent. "Dialogue helps understand difficult situations, especially those which are taboo. I always wondered how they [prostitutes] deal with violent people"" (Kabacalman, 2019, p. 4).

For further programmes, we think it is necessary to perpetuate this type of campaign by also encouraging prostitutes to participate in. Involving sex workers might increase the population's awareness of the reality of prostitution and its challenges. In that sense, we encourage the formation of a syndicate of prostitutes in Switzerland. Last, we believe that collaborations between practitioners and scholars would allow the effective implementation and evaluation of prevention programmes.

### **Acknowledgements**

We express our gratitude for the generous financial support of the Swiss Federal Police and the foundation Emilie Gourd without whom, the Previst project could have not been implemented. Many thanks to my colleagues from Fleur de Pavé, notably to Silvia Pongelli, Sandrine Devillers and Sandra Muri. Furthermore, to the editors of this book, Maria Izco, Elena Casado and Ana Páez for their assistance and collaboration. Finally, to Korbinian Baumgärtl and Laritza Mitjans for their unconditional support.

### **References**

- Agnew, R. (2016). Why Do They Do it? An Examination of the Intervening Mechanisms between "Social Control" Variables and Delinquency. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 30(3), 245-266. doi: 10.1177/0022427893030003001
- Ariza Medina, J. J. (2011). *Políticas y estrategias de prevención del delito y seguridad ciudadana*. Madrid: Edisofer.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs: NJ:Prentice-Hall.
- Barberet, R. (2000). La victimización de la mujer prostituta en España. *Annales Internationales de Criminologie*, 38(1-2), 11-47.
- Beattie, T. S., Bhattacharjee, P., Isac, S., Mohan, H., Simic-Lawson, M., Ramesh, B., Blanchard, J. F., Moses, S., Watts, C. H., & Heise, L. (2015). Declines in violence and police arrest among female sex workers in Karnataka state, south India, following a comprehensive HIV prevention programme. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 18(1). doi: 10.7448/IAS.18.1.20079



- Bungay, V., & Guta, A. (2018). Strategies and Challenges in Preventing Violence Against Canadian Indoor Sex Workers. *American Journal of Public Health, 108*(3), 393- 398. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2017.304241
- Carlson, C. E., Chen, J., Chang, M., Batsukh, A., Toivgoon, A., Riedel, M., & Witte, S. S. (2012). Reducing intimate and paying partner violence against women who exchange sex in Mongolia: Results from a randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(10), 1911–1931. doi: 10.1177/0886260511431439
- Clarke, R.V.G., & Homel, R. (1997). A revised classification of situational crime prevention techniques. In S. P. Lab (Ed.). *Crime prevention at the crossroads* (pp. 17-27). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.
- Clarke, R.V.G. (Ed.). (1997). *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies* (2nd ed.). Guilderland, NY: Criminal Justice Press.
- Clarke, R.V.G., & Mayhew, P. (Eds.). (1980). *Designing out crime*. London: H.M.S.O.
- Cornish, D.B., & Clarke, R.V.G. (2003). Opportunities, precipitators and criminal decisions : A reply to Wortley's critique of situational crime prevention. *Crime Prevention Studies, 16*, 41-96. Available at: [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/Responses/crime\\_prevention/PDFs/Cornish&Clarke.pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/Responses/crime_prevention/PDFs/Cornish&Clarke.pdf)
- Eleuteri, S., di Santo, S. G., Fava, V., & Colombo, M. (2018). Sexual Rights and Stigma of Sex Workers in Italy: A Snapshot of Reality and Sociodemographic Characteristics Involved in the Recognition and Denial. In *18th Annual Conference of the European Society of Criminology. Crimes Against Humans and Crimes Against Humanity. Implications for Modern Criminology: 29 August-1 September 2018*: Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.
- Farley, M. (2018). Risks of Prostitution: When the Person Is the Product. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research, 3*(1), 97–108. doi: 10.1086/695670
- Fitzgerald-Husek, A., Wert, M. J. V., Ewing, W. F., Grosso, A. L., Holland, C. E., Katterl, R., Rosman, L., Agarwal, A., & Baral, S. D. (2017). Measuring stigma affecting sex workers (SW) and men who have sex with men (MSM): A systematic review. *PLOS ONE, 12*(11), 1-21. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0188393
- Földhàzi, À., Chimienti, M., Bugnon, G., Favre, L., & Rosenstein, E. (2007). Marché du sexe et violences à Genève. *Sociograph, 2*, 1-122. Available at: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:55373>
- Global Network of Sex Work Projects. (2012). *Documenting good practice by sex worker-*

Author's personal copy. Please find the original publication [here](#)

led organisations. Available at:  
<https://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/DGP%20Violence.pdf>

Haddou, R. (2019, November 10). Fleur de Pavé cible les abus envers les prostituées. *24Heures*. Available at: <https://www.24heures.ch/vaud-regions/lausanne-region/fleur-pave-cible-abus-prostituees/story/18018523>

Kabacalman, S. (2019, October 14). Les insultes font toujours très mal. *Le Courriel*, 4.

Available at: <https://lecourrier.ch/2019/10/13/les-insultes-font-toujours-tres-mal/>

Killias, M., Aebi, M. F., & Kuhn, A. (2019). *Précis de criminologie* (4th ed.). Berne: Stämpfli Verlag AG.

LOI 943.05 sur l'exercice de la prostitution (LPros). (2004).

Mitjans Núñez, L., & Molnar, L. (2016). Trabajadoras sexuales: Víctimas de la exclusión. Estudio sobre la victimización de las trabajadoras sexuales en la provincia de Málaga. In P. Laurenzo Copello & A. Daunis Rodríguez (Coords.), *Colectivos en los márgenes del derecho*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.

Molnar, L., & Pongelli, S. (2019). PreVist project: Prevention of victimisation in sex work in the canton of Vaud (Switzerland). Reflections from the criminological praxis. *International E-Journal of Criminal Sciences, Special Issue*, (14), 1-21. Available at: <https://www.ehu.eus/ojs/index.php/inecs/article/view/21307>

Molnar, L., & Pongelli, S. (2020). On n'achète pas un corps mais une prestation. *Reiso, Revue d'information Sociale*. Available at: <https://www.reiso.org/articles/themes/travail/5512-on-n-achete-pas-un-corps-mais-une-prestation>

Molnar, L. (2021). Previst project; a Swiss campaign within the general population for crime prevention in sex work. Zenodo. [https://zenodo.org/record/4434441#.X\\_28\\_9hKg2w](https://zenodo.org/record/4434441#.X_28_9hKg2w)

O'Doherty, T. (2011). Victimization in Off-Street Sex Industry Work. *Violence Against Women*, 17(7), 944-963. doi: 10.1177/1077801211412917

Plumridge, L., & Abel, G. (2001). A 'segmented' sex industry in New Zealand: Sexual and personal safety of female sex workers. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 25(1), 78-83. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-842X.2001.tb00555.x>

- Radio Django (2019). *L'association Lausannoise Fleur de Pavé*. Available at: <https://www.django.fm/2019/10/16/lassociation-lausannoise-fleur-de-pave/>
- Ratinthorn, A., Meleis, A., & Sindhu, S. (2009). Trapped in Circle of Threats: Violence Against Sex Workers in Thailand. *Health Care for Women International*, 30(3), 249–269. doi: 10.1080/07399330902733281
- Ripa, Y. (2016). *Abolitionism*. In *Encyclopédie pour une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe*. Available at: <https://ehne.fr/en/article/gender-and-europe/prostitution-19th-21st-centuries/abolitionism>
- Sanders, T. (2001). Female street sex workers, sexual violence, and protection strategies. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 7(1), 5–18. doi: 10.1080/13552600108413318
- Scambler, G. (2007). Sex Work Stigma: Opportunist Migrants in London. *Sociology*, 41(6), 1079–1096. doi: 10.1177/0038038507082316
- Shannon, K., Kerr, T., Strathdee, S. A., Shoveller, J., Montaner, J. S., & Tyndall, M. W. (2009). Prevalence and structural correlates of gender based violence among a prospective cohort of female sex workers. *BMJ*, 339, 1–8. doi: 10.1136/bmj.b2939
- Sprankle, E., Bloomquist, K., Butcher, C., Gleason, N., & Schaefer, Z. (2018). The Role of Sex Work Stigma in Victim Blaming and Empathy of Sexual Assault Survivors. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15(3), 242–248. doi: 10.1007/s13178-017-0282-0
- Sykes, G. M., & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6), 664–670. doi: 10.2307/2089195
- Ville de Lausanne (2016). Prostitution de rue. Available at: <https://www.vd.ch/themes/economie/police-cantonale-du-commerce/informations-relatives-a-lexercice-de-la-prostitution/prostitution/prostitution-de-rue/>
- Weitzer, R. (2018). Resistance to sex work stigma. *Sexualities*, 21(5–6), 717–729. doi: 10.1177/1363460716684509
- World Health Organization, United Nations Population Fund, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Global Network of Sex Work Projects, & The World Bank. (2013). *Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programmes with sex workers: Practical approaches from collaborative interventions*. World Health

Author's personal copy. Please find the original publication [here](#)

Organization. Available at:  
[https://www.who.int/hiv/pub/sti/sex\\_worker\\_implementation/en/](https://www.who.int/hiv/pub/sti/sex_worker_implementation/en/)