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Murders In the German Sex Trade: 1920 to 2017

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Abstract

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Keywords

Prostitution, Germany, Violence, Murder, Legalisation, "Sex Work", Decriminalization, Demand

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MURDERS IN THE GERMAN SEX TRADE: 1920 TO 2017

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ABSTRACT

This research report is the result of collecting and evaluating data on cases of homicides and attempted homicides in the German sex trade from 1920-2017. The findings show violence against prostituted women and the attitudes of the sex buyers who commit most of the violent acts against the women. The report discusses the media coverage of murder cases, complication of cases, and a critique of methods of criminal evaluation by the police. From 1920 to 2017, 272 victims of murder and attempted murder were identified. Liberalization of prostitution occurred in 2002. From then until 2017, there is a decrease in the number of victims who died, however, the number of victims of attempted murder dramatically increased. It appears that victims were more likely to survive an attempted murder. Profiles of the victims are included as well as the locations (indoors v outdoors) of the murders. The authors conclude that legalization of prostitution does not eliminate the murders or attempted murders of women in the sex trade in Germany.

KEYWORDS

Germany, murder, homicide, prostitutes, prostituted women, prostitution, brothel, sex worker, decriminalization, legalization, liberalization, documentation

It is often claimed that violence against prostituted women would be prevented if prostitution was legalized or decriminalized. In 2016, the international human rights organization Amnesty International claimed that decriminalization would make sex work safe.

[Our policy] recommends the decriminalization of consensual sex work, including those laws that prohibit associated activities—such as bans on buying, solicitation and general organization of sex work. This is based on evidence that these laws often make sex workers less safe.

There are no international comparative statistics on violence against women in prostitution, so the basis of this assertion is not clear. Comprehensive global studies on the scope of violence committed against prostituted women, as well as on death rates resulting from the sex trade, would be required in order to arrive at conclusions about which type of prostitution law creates the “safest” environment for the affected women.

The German Law

In 2001 the German Bundestag (federal legislature) liberalized the prostitution market¹ by adopting *The Prostitution Act*, with the aim of improving conditions for individuals in the sex trade. (The new law went into effect in 2002.) The *Act* intended neither to abolish prostitution nor to enhance its status (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, 2007). Under the *Act*, criminal liability was restricted only to cases of exploitation, such as sex trafficking. The government explained:

By concentrating on the criminal prosecution of actually punishable matters and shedding light into the grey area of prostitution, as was the intention, it would become easier to combat violent and degrading forms of prostitution such as trafficking in human beings, forced prostitution, prostitution by minors, exploitation of prostitutes and violent crime in the “scene” (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, 2007, p. 9). (translation by author)

Research on Violence Against Women in Prostitution

Empirical data on the sex trade in Germany are lacking. To date, the only study conducted is the non-representative study by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in 2004. The study, which was carried out by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Women and Gender Studies of Bielefeld University, under the guidance of Monika Schröttle, found that 78% of respondents expressed a fear of sex buyers (p. 56). Thirty-five percent of the women described being locked up against their will, tied up, or otherwise constrained in their freedom of movement (p. 57). About a fifth of respondents (19%) had been severely injured in prostitution in the form of broken bones, sprains, torn muscles, injuries to the face, burns, and dislocated joints (p. 69). Sexual or physical violence in connection with prostitution had been experienced by 41% of respondents (p. 72).

Beyond Germany, there have been a number of studies that have documented the high incidence of violence against individuals in prostitution. One study which gathered data from nine different countries (Farley, Cotton, Lynne, Zumbek, Spiwak, Reyes, Alvarez, & Sezgin, 2004) found that violence in prostitution—irrespective of prostitution law—was high: 70-95% of respondents had been victims of physical violence inside prostitution and 60-75% had been raped within the sex trade. More recently a study on traumatic brain injuries in women and transwomen in prostitution found that 61% had sustained head injuries (Farley, Banks, Ackerman, & Golding, 2018). Salfati (2009) states that people in prostitution are particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual violence: In the UK at least 137 women have been murdered between 1990 and 2009, and women in street prostitution are 12 times more likely to be murdered than the rate of all women in the same age group in the UK.

Research about violence against indigenous women in the prostitution market of Canada came to the conclusion that:

¹ With the exception of a short period of time in the early 20th century, prostitution and brothel keeping were legal in Germany for more than 100 years before the passage of the 2001/2002 prostitution law.

Experiences [of torture] were not exceptional; rather they were normal realities for those being sexually exploited (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2014).

As a result of these findings, organisations like the Native Women's Association (NWAC) and the Indigenous Women against the Sex Industry (IWASI) called for the right to be "safe not safer" (IWASI, 2014).

METHODS

This research study seeks to explore whether decriminalization of prostitution and brothels in Germany has accomplished its goal of making prostitution safer for women by examining homicide data of individuals in prostitution. It is important to note that murder is only one form of violence against women.

To ascertain whether the German approach has reduced violence in the sex trade requires an analysis of other forms of violence, abuse, and coercion, which this project cannot address. Official data are not kept by the German government or the federal or state police. The Federal Office for Criminal Investigation explained, in an email to the authors, that it no longer collected murder data in an effort not to contribute to the stigmatization of these women. Therefore, the data presented in this survey represent only what the researchers could find from other sources. We know the data are not complete. The identified cases provide some important information about the lives of individuals in the sex trade in a decriminalized venue. Most importantly, in a country in which prostitution has moved indoors, the sex trade may be largely invisible to the average citizen, and the deaths of these individuals pass unnoticed.

This research is an effort to give meaning to the women's lives, to recognize their deaths, and to compile statistics that could help prevent future violence against women in the sex trade.

In 2013 an abolitionist activist compiled a list of 22 murders of prostituted women in Germany. All of them had occurred since the liberalization of the market 10 years previously. The collection contained the core data about the murders, such as the victims' age, the date and site of the crime, and other specificities (Sex Industry Kills 2014). *Sex Industry Kills* wiki was launched in 2014 on the Wiki platform (<https://sexindustry-kills.de/doku.php>). The goal was to uncover and publish details and background information about the individual murders, to humanize the victims, and to educate the public about their living situations.

The site continues to be operated and maintained by a small group of volunteers (four) consisting of abolitionist activists, including prostitution survivors, all from the Rhein-Main area in Hesse. Since then, the list of cases has grown as other cases have been identified and added to the platform. Eventually, a wiki page was created for each individual case. Also, profiles of serial killers that specifically targeting prostituted women were added (<https://sexindustry-kills.de/doku.php?id=prostituertenmoerder:start>).

The following are the methods the group used to search for murdered women in the sex trade. The final date of data collection was December 7, 2017. The results on the success of these research methods are discussed.

Internet Research

The following keywords were used to search for information on murdered women in Google Search: “prostitute + murder,” “prostitution + murder,” and “prostitute + murdered.” Police press release pages were searched. *Google Alerts* were set up using these terms so that new cases would be found.

Most cases that were found were uncovered by these direct Internet searches. Frequently, the finding of one case led to the discovery of other cases, as local newspapers referred to previous regional cases. The research was hindered, however, by older online newspaper articles being hidden behind paywalls. Uncovering cases was also made difficult by limited digitalization of articles prior to 2002.

Inquiries to Newspaper Editorial Offices about Archives

Enquiries to newspaper editorial offices seldom resulted in new findings, as most newspapers do not have their own archives, but rely on external archiving. Occasionally a newspaper would offer to do time and cost intensive investigations. They had to be turned down, as the editors of the wiki lacked the financial resources required. A small number of newspapers, however, did provide extensive lists for key word matches, which enabled a search of articles in their online data bases (e.g. the daily newspaper *Neues Deutschland* provided such a list for cases in East and West Berlin prior to 1990).

What was surprising during the research for this project was the carefully considered, respectful, and non-judgmental way in which many newspaper articles and TV documentaries described the murder cases and victims, especially since it is often the rather sensationalist or tabloid formats that report these cases, even going back to the 1950s and 60s. The tone and choice of information when speaking about prostituted murder victims changed drastically post-liberalization, as the media began to keep the victims anonymous, faceless, and the public mostly in the dark.

Inquiries to the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation

A newspaper article published in *Der Spiegel* on April 7, 1965 (“Hausen und Hegen”) stated that the Wiesbaden Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt) had gathered 88 individual cases of murder of prostituted women in its statistics between 1950 and 1965. The wiki-team could only find records of 11 cases for this time period. Details for the other 77 murders are unknown. Although the federal government does not collect data, the office recommended an enquiry to state offices (telephone conversation with the press office, July 2017).

Enquiries to State Offices of Criminal Investigation

Enquiries to the state offices of criminal investigation also brought a few cases to light. The majority of agencies of the federal states responded that there simply weren’t any statistical studies into violence against “prostitutes” (Bremen, Rhineland-Palatinate, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Hamburg). The state offices of Baden-Württemberg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania provided extensive lists, which contained information about the date of the crime, the location, short profiles of the victim as well as the perpetrator and the murder method. The offices of Hesse were originally going to do an internal investigation, but never responded to further inquiries. The other six offices (Berlin, Bavaria, Schleswig-Holstein, Saarland, Thuringia, Saxony) did not respond.

The project found that police forces were inclined to use new and modern crime-solving technology to solve cases of murder committed against prostituted women, often successfully. In 1984 the Automated Fingerprint Identification System was first introduced. It is a computer databank program to analyse and identify fingerprints, which enabled law enforcement to identify several murderers.

Monitoring of Relevant Television Documentaries (*Aktenzeichen XY Ungelöst* and *Anwälte der Toten*)

Murders of prostituted women routinely appeared in the TV series *Aktenzeichen XY Ungelöst*, which aims to aid police in solving crimes. Videos about older cases have been uploaded to *YouTube* and provided detailed information about the crimes. Other TV formats also specifically dealt with the documentation on murders of prostituted women.

Requests to Activist Networks to Share Relevant Information

As the *Sex Industry Kills* project became more widely known, links to articles about missing cases were sent to the research team by email or *Facebook*. (<https://www.facebook.com/sexindustrykills/>)

December17.org: International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers

The Internet site *December 17* compiles annual lists of cases for the *International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers*. Further research on the contents on this list have shown that cases cannot be accepted without additional checking of sources, as it frequently contained mistakes about names, dates, and locations or even includes cases with no distinguishable connection to prostitution.

As this project continues, more cases are being found. In June 2017, for example, a newspaper article was uncovered (Nordbayern, 2017), which reported two murders in the city of Nuremberg, with the police referring to eight additional murders—of which specific information could only be identified—for three cases. A request to the local police press officer then resulted in quick access to information about the remaining five.

The fact that older cases are routinely discovered leads to the conclusion that despite best efforts for complete documentation, the list collected here can neither be considered comprehensive nor complete. It remains entirely unclear how many cases of murder and attempted murder really occurred up to December 2017. The fact that new cases are discovered routinely as well as the observation that many cases are only reported in local media points to there being a high number of undocumented cases. Usually, cases are only publicized in the media when the police require public support to identify victim or perpetrator. A comprehensive realistic evaluation of the scope of deadly violence against women in German prostitution cannot be made on the basis of this information.

Crimes perpetrated by intimate partners were only included in the documentation when there was a clear connection to prostitution, such as when the murdering partner was a former sex buyer, a pimp, or motivated by jealousy relating to his partner's prostitution.

The maintenance of the documentation page took hundreds of hours over the past years. Additionally, profiles for the wiki page have since been created on social networks such as *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Instagram* to inform the general public about

violence against prostituted women. A *Google Map* geographically marking each case onto the world map has been added and expanded as well. All these pages are routinely updated and maintained by the unpaid volunteers of the documentation team through numerous hours of work every month.

FINDINGS

This research study documented the number of prostituted persons who are the victims of murder and attempted murder in Germany from 1920 to 2017 who could be identified. The socio-demographic data sex, age and ethnicity of the victims are reported. Information about whether the victim was a foreign national or German is included. Crime sites are mapped, and the location of the crime, such as whether indoors or outdoors is reported. Also reported, if known, are the roles of the perpetrator and the method of murder. There are several descriptive case reports following the data reports.

Numbers of Murders and Attempted Murders of Prostituted Persons

In every time period from 1920 to 2017, murders and attempted murders of prostituted persons were found. During these years, 272 victims were identified. In the first 20-year period, 1920-1949, nine murders were found in the sources that were searched. This is a low number, but considering that almost 100 years have passed, finding these victims are worth noting. See Table 1.

Ninety-four victims were documented from 1950-1969. As noted above, 77 of the victims were mentioned in a 1965 article, "Hausen und Hegen." This is the highest number of victims for any time period.

From 1970 through 1999, the numbers of victims increase in each time period, with 20 victims in 1970 to 1979; 38 victims from 1980 to 1989; and 61 victims from 1990 to 1999. After that, the number of victims that died decreased, but the number of victims of attempted murder rose.

The number of victims of murders and attempted murders is quite consistent from 1990 to 2017. Although the number of victims that died during each period decreases, the number of victims of attempted murder increased. Overall, the combined number of victims of murder and attempted murder in three decades from 1990 to 2017 were almost the same: 65 victims 1990 to 1999; 62 victims from 2000 to 2009; and 59 victims from 2010 to 2017.

Table 1:

Cases of Prostituted Women Who Are Victims of Murder and Attempted Murder, 1920 to 2017

Time Period	Murder	Attempted Murder	Total
1920-1949	9		9
1950-1969	94*		94
1970-1979	20	1	21
1980-1989	38	1	39
1990-1999	61	4	65
2000-2009	50	12	62
2010-2017	36	23	59
Total	231	41	272

*1950-1969 includes the before mentioned 77 cases of the Federal Office of Criminal Investigation

Liberalization of prostitution occurred in 2002. Although there is a decrease in the number of victims who died from liberalization until 2017, the number of victims of attempted murder dramatically increased. It appears the change is that the victims were more likely to survive an attempted murder. Also, some murders are not reported until they are solved as cold cases.

Victim Profiles

Over 98% of the documented victims were female. Two victims were transwomen (one case in Düsseldorf in 2004 and another in Hamburg in 2007). There was a single case with a male victim.

The age of the victims ranged from 15 to 67, with the youngest victim being 15 (She was murdered in a brothel in Frankfurt in 1994), and the oldest being 67 (She was murdered in Mannheim in 1999). In total, five victims were underage (younger than 18). In addition, there were 16 adolescent victims (younger than 21). Four victims were over age 60.

The number of foreign nationals murdered in the sex trade was counted. While foreign victims only sporadically appeared among the victims before 1990 (a Polish woman in 1921, a Moroccan woman in 1975, a Thai woman in 1982, and a Peruvian woman in 1985), the number of foreign women steadily increases after that. At least a fourth of all victims between 1990 and 1999 were of foreign origin (27.5%, n=19); between 2000 - 2009 they made up half (48.5%, n=32); and from 2010 to 2018, almost three-quarters of all victims were from abroad (60.7%, n=37). See Figure 1. Because personal information isn't available for all the victims, the actual number of foreign women may be higher.

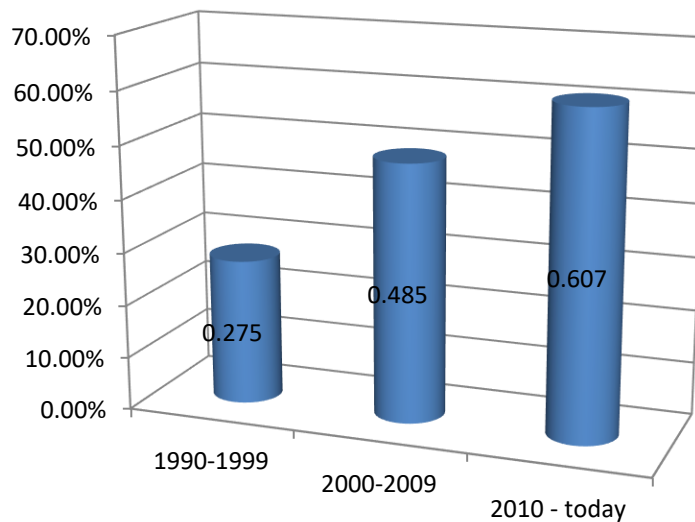


Figure :1 Percentage of Total Foreign National Victims Murdered in the Sex Trade in Germany from 1990 to 2017

The most common countries of origin for foreign victims murdered in the 1990s were Russia, Poland and Slovakia. From 2000-2009 the murdered women predominantly came from Thailand, Poland and Ukraine. Since 2010, the countries of origin are predominantly Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine, and Poland.

Crime Site Locations: Indoors and Outdoors

Some researchers suggest that indoor prostitution involves less exploitation and risk of violence than outdoor prostitution (Weitzer, 2004). Other research findings counter this claim. They have shown that the rates of physical and psychological violence among prostituted women in indoor and outdoor prostitution are comparable (Farley 2005, p.955). We looked at our data to see if we could determine in which locations prostituted persons were more likely to be murdered in Germany.

The location of the murders was documented for 141 victims. The locations were: the street; in a caravan; in an apartment; in a brothel; and “other.” The locations were then grouped into “indoors” or “outdoors;” streets and caravans were “outdoors,” while apartment and brothel were “indoors.”

Between 1990 and 1999, which is the decade before the legalization of brothels, 50% (25) of murders took place on the street, 6% (3) took place in caravans, 28% (14) took place in apartments, and 12% (6) took place in a brothel. For this time frame most murders were committed against women in outdoor prostitution (street and caravan, 58.3%) compared to indoor prostitution (apartment and brothel, 41.7%). See Figure 2.

In the following decades, mostly after prostitution and brothels were liberalized, this pattern reversed. Since then, more than three-fourths of the murders committed between 2000 and 2009, 77.6% (38) of murders occurred in indoor prostitution, comparing to 22.4% (11) for street prostitution. See Figure 3. The numbers for the time frame 2010-2017 show similar percentages with 25% of murders occurring outdoors, while 76% occurring indoors. See Figure 4.

In Germany, there are large brothels known as *megabrothels*. These are multi-stored brothels of thousands of square meters, where sex buyers can find more than one-hundred prostituted women at the same time. Even though well-known *mega-brothel* chains such as the “Pascha,” “Paradise” or “Eros-Center” chain present a clean image to the public and despite the obligatory presence of panic buttons inside brothel rooms, there were at least 13 publicly known murders or attempted murders of women inside those legal prostitution establishments. These brothels include: Pascha, Cologne, 2003, 2006 & 2015; Hinter dem Bahndamm, Düsseldorf, 2004; Immenburgerstraße, Bonn, 2008; Eros-Center, Bonn, 2009; Linienstraße, Dortmund, 2009; Düppendeckerstraße, Hagen, 2010; Lamour, Halberstadt, 2011; Das Rote Haus, Osnabrück, 2014; Paradise, Stuttgart, 2016; Freudenhaus, Hamburg-Harburg, 2017; and Breite Gasse, Frankfurt, 2018.

With the appearance of *megabrothels* there may be fewer women on the street, so now more murders of women occur indoors. This may indicate that the murder rate of women in prostitution has remained steady, but now occurs in indoor locations where the perpetrators and women are to be found.

Perpetrator profiles

In a few cases (40) information about earlier violent crimes committed against women by the perpetrators could be identified. The perpetrator profiles match the profile of the usual sex buyer, which covers all ages, walks of life and relationship statuses (single, married, and divorced.). In cases where the relation between victim and murderer could be clearly identified, the majority of perpetrators turned out to be sex buyers. Other common groups of perpetrators were pimps and intimate partners, who usually had first met the prostituted woman in a prostitution setting.

Motives

The murder motive for many cases remains unknown, which is why no statistical data has been calculated for this segment. Known motives range from explicit misogyny, to attempts to cover up other crimes (rape and robbery), to jealousy, anger over disinclination to perform specific sexual practices, and fights resulting from price haggling.

Murder Methods

Changes and trends can be observed in the murder methods most commonly used by perpetrators. Up until the year 2000 perpetrators tended to utilize instruments to stab or strangle the victim. After the turn of the millennium (2000) there appears to have been a shift to hands-on methods of murder, such as strangling by hand or beating to death.

Between 1990 and 1999 only three women were strangled by hand and six were beaten to death (together 15%), while in 85% of the cases knives (n=12), blunt objects (n=10), or poison (n=2) were used or the women were strangled by utilizing cables, ropes or the like (n=13).

Between 2000 and 2009, 22% of the victims were strangled to death with bare hands. In about a third of the cases the perpetrators used knives. In about half of the cases knives (n=23), blunt objects (n=7), guns (n=2) or poison (n=2) were utilized.

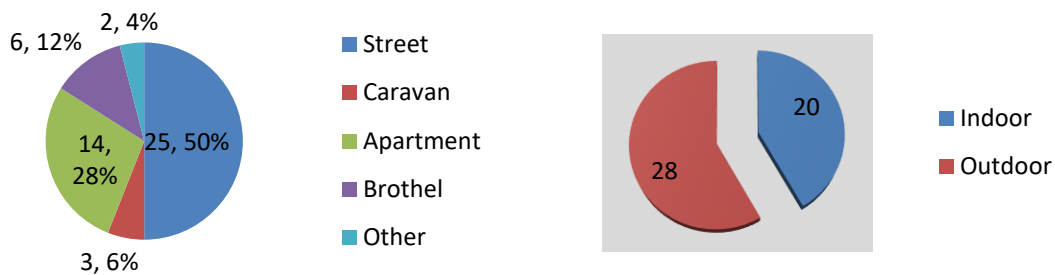


Figure 2: Murders in the different forms of prostitution between 1990 and 1999 in Germany

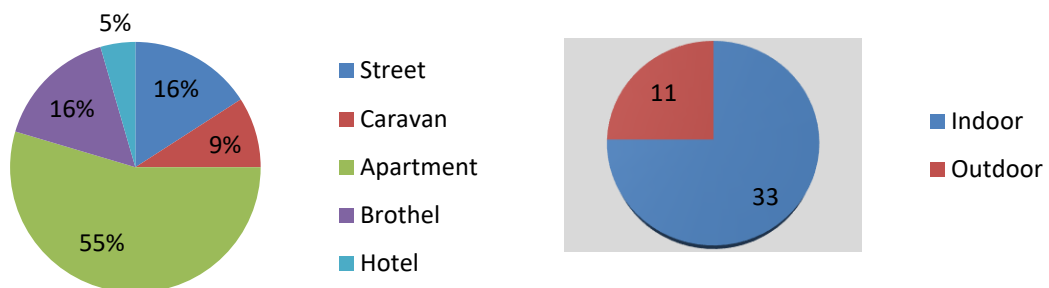


Figure 3: Percentage of murders in the different forms of prostitution between 2000 and 2009 in Germany

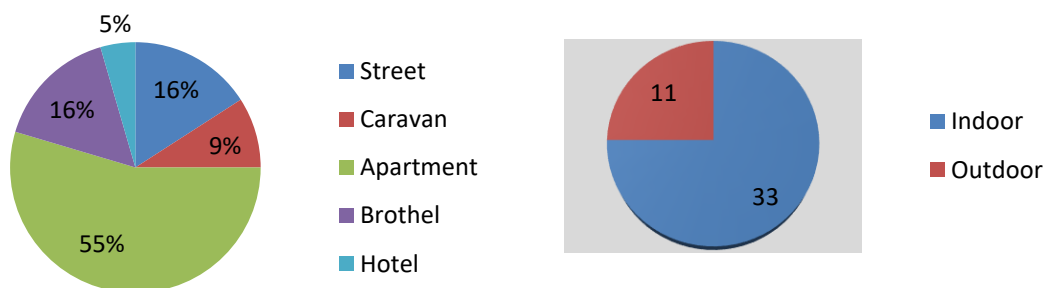


Figure 4: Percentage of Murders in the Different Forms of Prostitution Between 2010 and 2017 in Germany

Since 2010 in about one third of the cases (n=14) the victims were strangled to death with bare hands and another three women were beaten to death. Knives remain the main instrument to murder (n=18), before blunt objects (n=6), guns (n=2) and poison (n=2).

Distribution of Crime Locations in Germany

The frequency of crimes appears to correlate consistently with density of population. For example, there is an accumulation of cases in the large metropolitan areas like Berlin and Hamburg, and in the high-density regions like the Ruhr Basin and the Rhine-Mine-Area with many mid-population cities next to each other. Nonetheless women in prostitution are murdered in all 16 federal states and not only in the big red-light districts of the cities but also in rural areas.

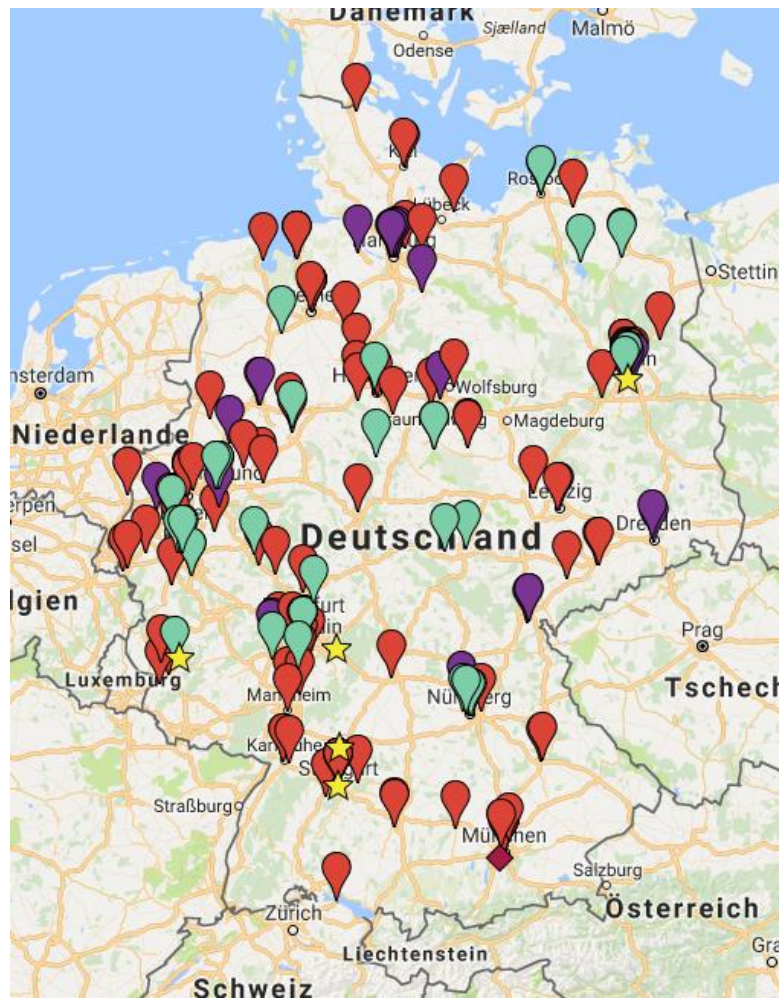


Figure 5: Geographical Distribution of Murders in Germany Red: Murder; Purple: Murders with Known Exact Address; Turquoise: Attempted Murder; Yellow star: Missing person

CASE STUDIES

We present three exemplary case studies to provide more insight into the attitudes of sex buyers and how they take advantage of the most vulnerable women. Entitlement, egoistic satisfaction of sexual desires, and the systematic crossing of boundaries can be found in their comments and actions. The cases also show how legal prostitution and official brothels with all their attempts for harm reduction fail to protect the women in prostitution from physical and psychological harm.

Case 1: Murder of a 25-year-old Romanian Woman at the “Paradise” Megabrothel

On July 17, 2015, after brothels were legalized, a 25-year-old Romanian woman, who went by the names “Linda” and “Gerit” and was prostituted in the megabrothel “Paradise” near Stuttgart (Baden-Württemberg). She was murdered in front of the brothel by a 53-year-old sex buyer (He was married with four children). He consequently committed suicide. According to newspaper reports she was the sole breadwinner for her family in Romania. Prior to committing the crime, the murderer wrote extensive entries on two sex buyer forums under the pseudonym “Chiquita” and “Sofaficker” (=couchfucker). In these entries he is frank about his view on his own prostitution consumption and attitude towards the victim.

He kept a diary of his prostitution use of the victim. His writings give us insight into his expectations of the victim and how he treated her.

Online he declares he has spent 10,000 euros to buy “long-term exclusive access” to “Linda” for the duration of four weeks. The perpetrator took the victim to Istanbul for one week, where he paid for cosmetic surgery for her nose. He said that “Linda” was unable to move for two days and required him to care for her:

In the course of this week there was quick sex two times, but sadly there’s been nothing but rejection when trying for some more affection. [...] This week I offered her to call the whole thing off twice, and to have her give the rest of the money back to me [...], since she’s not really in a state to take care of my needs. [...] And the week after, at my home [...] there were 2 quick and bad attempts at sex (27.06.2016, BW7 Forum).

After two weeks, “Linda” broke off the agreement.

The sex buyer further elaborates and claims to have paid a total of 51,250 euro over the course of two-and-a-half years for 900 hours of access to “Linda.” He created an Excel spreadsheet to document these expenses. Many posts by him online describe the prostituted woman’s vagina and give further insight into the mentality behind his choice to buy sexual access:

She really has a unique thing between her legs, if you ask me. I’ve shagged about 185 women over the last 4 years, 37 of them without a condom. None was as fleshy, soft and tight as Linda’s thing (27.06.2016, BW7 Forum).

Repeatedly he complains about her supposed lack of respect towards him—the well-paying client—and reveals the level of entitlement he feels about the woman:

Even when she's not up for fucking me—as a well paying CUSTOMER, I should reasonably be able to expect her to get her act together and deliver a manually skilled job anyways (05.07.2016, BW7 Forum)

The perpetrator reveals that he is aware that “Linda” is at the same time violently victimized by her intimate partner and pimp. He even admits to committing violent acts against “Linda” (such as penetrating her while she was asleep).

While most news outlets stated “jealousy” as the motive of the murder, since “Linda” “also slept with other men,” these forum entries reveal that this was not the case because the murderer recommended her to other johns. Other prostituted women report that the perpetrators harassed and stalked victims for an extended period before the murder. It appeared she had broken off their “business relationship,” which he was unwilling to accept.

The reactions of fellow online forum users are additionally revealing. One commenter going by the name of “Armato005” expressed admiration for the perpetrator, prior to the murder for only being verbally aggressive to “Linda.” After the murder, many commenters did express compassion for the victim, nonetheless a frightening number showed understanding for the actions of the murderer, such as the commentator “Adonidas” who wrote:

I'm actually more surprised, that this sort of thing doesn't happen more often. [...] When a john stabs a hooker to death, she probably deserved it. The kind of hookers who not only rip you off, but enjoy playing with the feelings of 'unstable' men—well, they're literally playing with fire. [...] Sometimes that means a smack in the face... or a knife between the ribs (18.07.2016 AO Huren.to)

Numerous sex buyers ascribed at least partial fault to the murdered woman, as this comment by user “Thrust SCC” showcases:

In my opinion, Linda carries joint guilt in this whole drama. She should have either dropped that fool in love early and effectively or continued the business relationship and provided decent professional service (30.07.2016, AO Huren.to)

Speaking about the crime in the media, the brothel keeper said that “basically this has nothing to do with us at all” (Stuttgarter Zeitung, 2016).

The various entries into and the response to this case on sex buyer online forums showcase the range of deeply entrenched entitlement and expectations that men feel and express towards prostituted persons. Through the sex buyer's payment the prostituted woman temporarily becomes the man's possession and is expected to behave subordinately and to carry out his demands without protest. Any behaviour which is received as an injury to his ego is later used to justify his actions or even a crime and is classified as provocation, which puts her at least partially at fault for any acts committed against her.

Case 2: Murder of a 28-Year-Old Thai Woman in the “Pascha” Megabrothel

The following case dismantles the myth of the safe legal prostitution system. Repeatedly, *megabrothels* are labelled as some of the safest prostitution establishments,

since they have installed security cameras, panic buttons, and an in-house security service. However, victims are still murdered in the legal brothels.

“Cat,” a 28-year-old Thai woman, was stabbed to death and robbed by Cihan B., a 20-year-old high school student inside the well-known “Pascha” brothel in Cologne on July 13, 2003, a year after the liberalization of the prostitution market. As a motive for the murder, the perpetrator claimed that he had been in desperate need of money for car repairs. He was sentenced to 6 years and 9 months in juvenile prison for murder. The court considered his unhappy childhood and years of being labelled a “failure” by his parents as mitigating circumstances.

The security measures inside the “Pascha” were consequently strengthened, but nonetheless, three years later another prostituted woman was severely injured in a knife attack and murder attempt by a 23-year-old sex buyer (Kölner Stadtanzeiger, 2006). Despite the cameras and in-place security personnel it is possible to smuggle weapons into the brothel. The presence of security personnel, often men who are members or affiliates of criminal gangs, such as Hells Angels, Bandidos, United Tribunes, do not prevent perpetrators of violence from attacking prostituted women.

Case 3: Murder of the 27-Year-Old Sonja M.

Sonja M. was raised by her grandmother and suffered from learning and psychological disorders in her youth. She married young and had two children with her husband. The marriage failed, however, and when the father received custody of both children, M. sought refuge in alcohol and drug addiction and began prostituting herself on the streets of Hannover. She attempted to escape her situation but did not succeed. At the time of her disappearance, she weighed 45 kilograms and was sick with tuberculosis.

Five weeks after M.’s disappearance her corpse was found inside a cardboard box in a public park. The police suspected a sex buyer stole her cell-phone, confined her, and abused her until her death from tuberculosis. Her desolate physical state doesn’t contradict this thesis, as some sadistic men find it to be a specific turn on, as statements from police officers’ showcase:

Those guys get a hard on, even if the woman is HIV-positive or covered in wounds (SPIEGEL Online 2012)

No match was ever found for the murderer’s DNA found inside the cardboard box.

This case clearly shows that sex buyers do not refrain from sexually abusing women who are evidently in precarious living circumstances and in desolate states of health. Women in prostitution are abused even when they’re in obvious need of medical attention. The evidence from sex buyers’ forums reveals that there is a real fetish for picking up women in front of supervised injection sites, using them at one’s own “pleasure” and then leaving them to die. This type of sex buyer specifically appreciates women in search of the next fix who are easy to control and violate without consequence for the perpetrator.

CONCLUSION

These findings indicate that legalizing and decriminalizing prostitution does not make it safe for women in prostitution.

The number of murders being committed inside in apartments or brothels is now greater than the number of murders committed outside in street prostitution in Germany. However, one cannot conclude from this that indoor prostitution has become more dangerous post-liberalization, as there are no statistics to compare how high the number of women in each respective type of prostitution was before the Prostitution Act. Nor do we have any clear data of comparative numbers now. Since the liberalization of the sex industry in 2002 and the striking down of any legal punishment for ordinary pimping, the running of (apartment) brothels has become considerably easier. Additionally, German local governments prefer that prostitution be largely invisible to the average citizen, which may have added to the increase in indoor prostitution. Looking at international trends we can also see the tendency to move indoors as the Internet has rendered solicitation on the street unnecessary.

Almost all victims of murder and attempted murder are female, but there is no clear pattern concerning age, as deadly violence in prostitution appears to affect women of all ages.

Today, an estimated 90% of prostituted women in Germany are of foreign origin (Menkes, 2015). This demonstrates the decreasing presence of German women in the trade and the increase in the number of eastern European women being trafficked to the countries of the European Union.

Nonetheless, it must be reiterated that there are no official peer-reviewed statistics on or analysis of the socioeconomic situation of prostituted people in Germany, which means that all information within this documentation need to be carefully considered.

The violent acts appear marked by increasing brutality, as indicated by the shift from strangulation using an instrument to the perpetrators using their hands and even more often repeatedly stabbing the victim to kill her.

The Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA) should collect statistical data about violence against prostituted women as they used to in the past. It is simply illogical to argue that collection of such data would stigmatize the population in question, when it is actually happening, and an analysis of the data could help develop counter as well as prevention methods.

What was surprising during researching the cases for this project, was the carefully considered, respectful and non-judgmental way in which many newspaper articles and TV documentaries described the murder cases and victims, especially since it is often the rather sensationalist or tabloid formats that report these cases, even going back to cases from the 1950s and 60s. The tone and choice of information when speaking about prostituted murder victims changed drastically post-liberalization, as the media stopped reporting about the often depressing and precarious living situations of the victims and instead kept them anonymous, faceless, and the public in the dark, if cases were publicly reported at all.

Additionally, police forces were inclined to use new and modern crime solving technology to solve cases of murder committed against prostituted women, often, successfully. In 1984, the AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System), a computer databank program to analyse and identify fingerprints was first introduced. The Bavarian State Office of Criminal Investigation was able to use this method to correctly identify the murderer of Carla M., a prostituted woman. This was the first case to use AFIS technology; and a profiler testified in court about the findings. The murderer of Sylvia S., who was in an apartment brothel in Erlangen in 1985, was also identified

through this automated fingerprint analysis tool. Often in cases of murder the perpetrator is a person close to the victim, while regarding prostitution murders criminologists are more challenged to identify the murderer.

In addition, while the crimes of serial killer “Jack the Ripper” continue to receive a substantial amount of public and media attention, similar interest into the motives and murders committed by the serial killers targeting prostituted women in Germany does not appear to exist.

If time and financial resources were available, this documentation could have delved much deeper into the information from newspaper articles and court records, the latter of which could, due to lack of resources, not be accessed at all for this documentation. Nevertheless, the team behind this documentation project hopes that its presentation of these murders may help change public attitudes, to stop viewing the cases as isolated incidents and to start putting them into larger social context, preferably in the context of femicides. It would be greatly appreciated if scientific studies on violence against prostituted people would extend to providing analysis of the data to invigorate this process.

Gradually, the documentation project has been extended to other countries, as the technical infrastructure was already in place and cases found their way to the research group via Google Alerts, and so on. Today, the project is widely known and links to foreign cases are frequently sent to the project and added by the team.

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