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### Betrayed Partners and Men with Poisoned Souls: Interview with a Former Sex Buyer in Germany

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### Acknowledgements

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## BETRAYED PARTNERS AND MEN WITH POISONED SOULS: INTERVIEW WITH A FORMER SEX BUYER IN GERMANY

Ingeborg Kraus

*Trauma Psychotherapist*

### KEYWORDS

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In front of the largest furniture store in Karlsruhe (a large city in southwestern Germany), two advertising placards stand side-by-side: one for a brothel and the other for a restaurant, promoting its venue for celebrations of marriage (See Figure 1). In Germany both stand together and apparently that does not shock anyone any more. However, prostitution does not only have disastrous consequences for the women in prostitution, but also has consequences for betrayed women in relationships with the buyers of sex.



Figure 1: Advertisements for a Brothel and a Restaurant with Celebrations for Marriages

A former buyer of sex contacted me, Ingeborg Kraus, a Karlsruhe, Germany psychologist and anti-prostitution advocate, after reading some of my work on the Internet. Eventually a telephone interview ensued.

The interviewee, an independent entrepreneur, is a 56-year-old man who was an active sex buyer for six-and-a-half years, quitting in 2015, nearly four years ago. Married for 36 years, with three adult children, his wife separated from him in 2017, and a divorce is in process.

In this interview, which follows, I focus on the realities of prostitution on society, and specifically on the harm of prostitution on the sex buyer's wife and on relationships between men and women. The interview demonstrates that what the buyers are doing to their wives is an incredible harm, causing huge mental health damages. These collateral damages of prostitution have not come into focus until

recently. Given the fact that there are a great number of married men, or those living in a firm relationship, who buy sexual services, the number of psychologically injured women in these relationships probably reaches the two-digit millions.

From his active participation on Internet forums, the interviewee tells me that he believes he is typical of many users of women in prostitution.

**Kraus:** You were a buyer of sex for over six-and-a-half years. How did you come to it?

**Former Sex Buyer:** I had consumed pornography in print form. In most cases these were the dirty magazines that one can get at gas stations. I didn't feel happy with that and only did it now and then. There was always a dissatisfaction because masturbation with pornography is not the real thing. The unavoidable solution that I then sought was strong stimulation-to begin with, explicit representations, later then pictures on the Internet, then soft pornography videos, later hard-core videos and the eventual step to contact a real woman for the kick. The thing took its course.

**Kraus:** You say that pornography was the essential reason for your consuming sex. What did it do for you? How did it change you?

**Former Sex Buyer:** I did not understand how pornography works. In any case there was an increase in my stimulus threshold and with that, the push to consume more and more explicit representations. I did not know that bonding attachment hormones are turned off with pornography consumption. The consumer of pornography gets an emotional bond with the setting in which he is correspondingly busy, instead of caring about his partnership. Pornography absorbed me. In the course of being involved with it I was spending more and more time with it. That had also increased during the time I was consuming prostitution. I spent hours nearly every day searching and corresponding with online prostitution platforms and imagining how it would be.

**Kraus:** What kind of understanding of sexuality did you have at this time?

**Former Sex Buyer:** I demanded satisfaction of my needs. From, "It is totally normal and manly," to "Should I sweat it out of my ribs?" I had no self-confidence. I certainly did not trust myself to speak with my wife about my wishes, for fear of being injured, also anxiety that I would be rejected. In the everyday I noticed her turning away from sensuality. I had explicitly told my wife many times that she was telling me that she didn't desire me. Then the online world of prostitution was just right for me. Here I didn't have to really show myself, here I didn't need to take any risks. Here I subversively lived my narcissism.

**Kraus:** You have bought women in order to live it up with your sexuality. Looking back, how have you perceived it, and what did you fade out?

**Former Sex Buyer:** In this respect I had illusions about the life circumstances of the women. Predominantly I was in private dwellings, in which mostly German women lived, and most only for a time I ignored what are the hallmarks of civilization. A sad highlight was my prostitution visit on one Christmas Eve. The woman had left her children along with her partner for Christmas Eve and had traveled to the rental apartment. After I myself left the apartment, I visited my terminally ill

father in a nursing home and then traveled home and cooked, as if nothing had happened. Nothing was holy to me.

And I had a relatively high opinion of myself as a buyer of sex. I was after all the gentleman, who never knowingly would do something with a coerced woman. And still I had visited prostituted in women in Hong Kong and also in Germany, whom in retrospect I knew must have been trafficked. There were discrepancies between presentation and reality with almost all the women whom I visited. I knew from my regular woman in prostitution-she had told me-that as a small child she had been sexually assaulted by her father. In spite of this, she let her daughter, close to puberty, 11 or 12 years old, live with her parents. Another woman, who in her online advertisement promoted her own exclusivity, was within two minutes after our encounter, while I was putting on my clothes, already in conversation with the next buyer. An apparently successful interim manager obviously suffered from anorexia. And another, who likewise presented an exclusive image, posted on another platform, "Special offer for a furniture fair." Particularly often was the discrepancy between suggested exclusivity and the frequency that the telephone number was busy or the answering machine responded.

Another point was that I naturally had completely false misconceptions about my supposed qualities as a lover. Obviously, I was some kind of guy who satisfied all the women he visited, and I felt I came up to expectations.

Not least, I violated the fundamental rights of my wife. To a degree I had unprotected relations, a few vaginal, but in practice always unprotected oral sex. I simply denied all risks. I finally infected my wife with herpes.

**Kraus:** How did your behavior affect your relationship? What did it do to your wife?

**Former Sex Buyer:** During my double life my wife had now and then said that everything was so bleak. She perceived a certain dullness, an authenticity and liveliness were missing, not only in the everyday, but also at holidays like Christmas, which earlier were experienced with innocent euphoria. But she said, maybe that stems from age. With the discovery of this meticulously planned and lived double life she broke down completely. To her the basis of trust that she believed made her marriage safe was thrown away by the person to whom she had given her unlimited trust. Probably she actually had broken heart syndrome. What seems so harmless can be medical symptoms of a heart attack, which under certain circumstances can also cause death. Yes, one can really die of a broken heart. The mortality rate is over 3%.

For a long time, she suffered severe posttraumatic stress disorders-as, for example, victims of torture do- and developed heart rhythm problems, which still have not dissipated. Since the experience my wife has not been able to work. Her ability to concentrate has severely suffered and over the two years since the discovery has not completely been restored. She divides her life into "before" and "after." And with that she is not alone. That goes for women who have been betrayed, also women who have been betrayed by their men through prostitution. My wife says I have put our common life into ruins. At any rate, these tragic collateral damages of prostitution until now have not come into focus.

**Kraus:** You have participated in therapy. What important insights have you won through this?

**Former Sex Buyer:** It was a long time before I could distance myself from this time. In a session of partner counseling I had said, “But I had terrific sex!” In my memories I had glorified the time, built a shrine around it. I also saw myself in the role of a victim, meaning that I couldn’t do anything differently. In the course of the therapy I realized how little my participation in prostitution really had to do with sex and how much with the fundamental holes and pain that I felt and wanted to numb. I grew up in a partially dysfunctional family and always had the feeling somehow that I came up short. These were feelings from childhood, with which my actual life didn’t really have anything to do. Consequently, I had a monstrous greediness in me. This addictive life I led helped me temporarily not to feel the pain and uncertainty, the anxiety, and the feeling of being unworthy. I had to take on board the idea that prostitution is anything other than satisfying. It gives more or less a heavy rush, but directly afterwards this empty feeling-and with it the need to anesthetize myself with intoxication once more as soon as possible.

**Kraus:** With this experience what would you do differently in your relationship? What would you advise other men?

**Former Sex Buyer:** I hold it important to make clear that one cannot claim a right to sexuality, that it is instead a matter of free choice. You must not only be clear about your needs, but you must also speak about them, discuss what is possible, accept that which is always not possible or only sometimes. A marriage or a partnership does not provide a recipe for automatic wish fulfillment. Naturally sexuality is not just anything you like, and on the side of your partner there is always a difference in sexual desire, but one can work on that. The life as a buyer of sex massively harms a love relationship and is absolutely incompatible with a promise of faithfulness.

**Kraus:** What attitude do you have today toward buying sex?

**Former Sex Buyer:** Buying sex is abuse and was always, without exception. When sexual relations only happen because money changes hands, an asymmetry of the people participating occurs that cannot be denied. After the money is exchanged, the customer has a right to the fulfillment of the contract. The prostituted individual does not have the right to break off the process or to fail to do what the buyer has negotiated for. The prostituted woman renounces the basic right of individuals to self-determination. The idea, discussed in the press, that health insurance should cover sexual assistance is prostitution too-the Trojan horse of the sex trade industry.

**Kraus:** Do you think that a ban on buying sex should be introduced in the law?

**Former Sex Buyer:** Definitely yes! The normalization of prostitution leaves behind scars for all participating individuals. The prostituted people, who are forced to work or who force themselves, who in order to stand the strain, must take drugs to conquer the everyday, who prematurely age, are one group of damaged participants. The betrayed wives, who experience the most severe trauma and in no way have asked for this deception, are another severely damaged group.

I count the buyers as damaged, and not only as perpetrators. They lose their souls. Empathy vanishes. Narcissism rises. Women’s shelters at the same time burst at the seams, because it is normal that women are treated this way. The whole society suffers with all these damaged and injured people. A society that permits this sorrow is sick, in the true sense of the word.

In this context and looking back on my experiences I can see prostituted women, betrayed partners, and also the buyers with dangerously and cunningly poisoned souls. The asymmetry of the encounter in conjunction with the payment of money spoils the sensitivity for a real loving relationship, in which two equal partners can freely choose, in an understanding of the limits of the other and in responsibility for oneself and the partner. In my opinion, this concerns every man, naturally also singles, not only men who are in a marriage or a monogamous relationship.

With the legislation still on the books [in Germany], and advertisements for brothels to be found everywhere, we are making it clear to our children that it is fully in order to buy a woman every time to fulfill our sexual needs, and we communicate and manifest this with the permission a general ranking system gives us, in which the man is the ruler and decider. Now every store thief, who steals a pack of gum is punished, and the actions of a man, who traumatizes a person with whom he interacts, is tolerated. Should that really be so? Do we want to keep tolerating such an abuse? Where is the outcry of groups in society, from the alleged Christian political parties to the humanistic enlightened liberals? Is our Constitution worth so little?

A ban on sex clearly and unmistakably signalizes that it is not only a little grubby, but also unacceptable and also not legal. We do not want an injured, damaged society and such an injuring and damaging industry. A ban on buying sex is a step out of the objectification of the woman as a sex object, a step in the direction of a healthier, happy society.

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Ingeborg Kraus**, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and expert in psychotraumatology. From 1995 -2002, she did humanitarian work in Bosnia and Kosovo, especially working with women victims of sexual violence. She assisted in setting up one of the first shelters for women victims of domestic violence in Kosovo. Since 2011, she has her own counseling practice in Karlsruhe, Germany. In 2013, she co-founded the Stop Sex Buying Network in Germany; in 2014, she started the appeal of the German Psychotraumatologists Against Prostitution; and in 2015, she initiated a petition to abolish prostitution in Germany. She is a member of the German Society for Psychotraumatology, the German Society for Trauma and Dissociation, and the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. [www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu](http://www.trauma-and-prostitution.eu)

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