

**SCHOOL OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL POLICY
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Module code: SLSP 3981

Module title: Globalisation and the Sex Trade

Question number and title: Q1) "The sex workers' movement has been labelled 'a failure' and its gains 'illusory', 'uncertain' and 'disappointing'." Using France as a case study, to what extent is this an accurate assessment of sex workers' organising? (Note: received permission for additional text in question re France)

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Q1) “The sex workers’ movement has been labelled ‘a failure’ and its gains ‘illusory’, ‘uncertain’ and ‘disappointing’.” Using France as a case study, to what extent is this an accurate assessment of sex workers’ organising?

(Note: received permission for additional text in question re France)

Introduction

France illustrates the effects different countries’ social, political and economic relations/historical traditions have upon the success of the sex workers’ movement. However, there is a commonality across the international sex workers’ movement regarding the problems they face organising to gain rightful recognition as workers; nevertheless, this fails to undermine the importance of sex workers’ collective action. Whilst the essay will focus upon France, there will be a consideration of sex workers’ movements across the world to provide a complex analysis of how sex workers’ organising has in parts been ‘a failure’/’illusory’/’uncertain’/’disappointing’. To provide a contextual background, the essay will briefly consider male and transgender sex workers, as women sex workers will be the essay’s focus, followed by a brief description of the different sex workers’ markets. There will then be a detailed outline of France’s sex industry policies (with some comparison to the UK) to place the movement within a legal context.

Following this will be an outline of the theoretical framework that will be utilised throughout the essay when assessing sex workers’ organising. This framework is anarchism (there are many traditions; anarcho-syndicalism, ecoanarchism and anarcho-communalism will be the traditions focused upon) alongside Judith Butler’s ethics. France’s labour movement has strong historical ties to anarchism; however, it will be argued that the dominance of radical feminism undermines anarchism’s potential for engaging and assisting with the sex workers’ movement, as does the

actual anarchist movement's arrogant behaviour towards sex workers. Nevertheless, the essay will illustrate the similarities of the anarchist traditions with the sex workers' movement. To do this, the essay will consider the effect of the state upon sex workers' organising (particularly French sex workers' distrust towards the state); alongside a consideration of how sex workers' organisation can assist with self-liberation, creativity and counter-posing the prevailing power structures.

For a specific consideration of sex workers' organising, there will be a critical assessment of various worldwide collective and trade union organisations/movements, with a focus on France. Again, anarchism's potential to influence sex workers' organisation will be illustrated. The author was fortunate to speak to a sex worker from France, Thierry Schaffauser (personal communication – note, I received permission to use his name), the information gathered through this online interview will be utilised when discussing the nature of organising in France, especially when addressing the role of confederation unions and the sex workers' relationship with anarchism. There will be a discussion of the importance discourse has for sex workers' organisation, followed by a recap and embellishment of the problems the sex workers' movement faces. It should be noted that the author has used Google Translator to translate the French texts, so the translation may not be completely accurate.

Background

Most research has ignored male and transgender sex workers (Sanders *et al* 2009), but this is beginning to change (see Whowell (2010) for male sex workers, and Slamah (1998); Ochoa (2008) for transgender sex workers). There is an array of markets within the sex industry (something that will be discussed throughout). To be

brief, there is an overwhelming focus by the state upon street sex work, even though a relative minority of sex workers work on the street (Sanders *et al* 2009). Indoor sex work varies from brothels to independent flats, male sex workers are more likely to work indoors and when outside, near busy areas (relates to Whowell 2010); whereas women make up the biggest proportion of street sex workers, but also a sizeable share of indoor sex work (Sanders *et al* 2009). Furthermore, as Sanders *et al* (2009) state, many women buy into the sex industry, so it would be wrong to see them as solely sex workers (which this essay is focusing on).

To assess how successful sex workers' organisation has been, it is important to consider the effects a country's legal status, as part of wider cultural/social/economic relations, has (Agustín 2005). Most sex workers' organisations advocate for decriminalisation (see Prostitutes Collective 2004); however, this has been largely ignored by governments around the world and so could be attributed as evidence that sex workers' organisation has in parts been 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'. Nevertheless, whilst certain countries have changed the legal status of sex work because of sex workers' organisation (New Zealand is an ideal example, see Sanders *et al* (2009)); sex workers' organisational success should be judged by much more than the legal status of sex work.

There is often confusion when defining a country's legal approach to sex work, with authors using different words to explain the same country (Mossman 2007).

Fortunately, Mossman (2007) has provided a sophisticated breakdown of legal statuses adopted by countries when constructing, or not, laws for the sex industry. Prohibition is when all forms of sex work are illegal; abolition is when the actual practice of buying sex is legal but many of the related practices are illegal; legalisation/regulation is when the state imposes conditions upon the sex industry,

and only if these conditions are followed are the practices legal; decriminalisation sees all laws relating to sex work removed (with safeguards for underage sex work, for example, kept), as sex work is recognised as a proper job, thus falling under the country's existing legislation for work; and, unregulated is where no laws exist in relation to sex work . It is important to remember that these categories are 'ideal' types with a country possibly falling into several.

Mathieu (2004) refers to this conflict between legal frameworks within France, as the abolitionists' desire for commercial sex to be independent of the state clashes with the increasing state regulation of the sex industry. Mathieu states that sex workers are controlled by the police, social work and 'community health organisations'. The police target soliciting and pimping. Social workers take the abolitionist view that sex work is 'abnormal', with the state providing funding for the social workers to 'help' sex workers exit or prevent those seen as vulnerable from entering. Since the 1960s, when public health files of sex workers were ended, the health surveillance reduced. However, with the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, the regulation was reintroduced with calls for mandatory health checks for sex workers returning. However, instead France saw the introduction of preventative services i.e. the 'community health organisations'; but unlike the social workers, these organisations did not focus on encouraging sex workers to exit, causing conflicts between social workers and 'community health organisations' (the *Mouvement du Nid* have been central to criticising the 'community health organisations' and strengthening the abolitionist movement). The 'community health organisations', influenced by the sex workers' rights movement (1970s/80s - commonly called 'prostitutes' rights movement), argued that sex work is a job resulting from exclusion, not 'abnormality'.

Therefore, at a national level, France's sex industry policies are shaped by a conflict between abolitionism and regulation. However, Allwood (2004) states that this is a false dichotomy, as they should work together to improve sex workers' conditions. On the other hand, many see France's recent sex trade laws (discussed below) as prohibitionist (Hubbard 2004). Furthermore, sex workers have to pay for social security, similar to normal work, contradicting the moralist approach (Mazur 2004).

Allwood (2004) states that in 1960, with the end of sex workers' health files being stored, France officially adopted an abolitionist approach to sex work. Allwood argues that up to 1946, France had a regulatory approach to sex work and from 1960-1990 sex work was rarely discussed. In the 1990s, a moral panic formed due to an 'influx' of Eastern European sex workers who were controlled by organised gangs, resulting in increased state intervention and European cooperation (Mathieu 2004).

Allwood (2004) outlines the Domestic Security Bill (DSB) Nicolas Sarkozy introduced in 2003, referring to its preoccupation with security considerations and its neglect of social factors that influence sex work. Allwood refers to three Articles that profoundly influenced French sex workers' position and organisation. Article 18 criminalised soliciting (sex workers can receive up to two months imprisonment or a fine) whilst making it illegal to pay for sex with a 'vulnerable' person. Article 28 removes foreign sex workers' permits if they are caught soliciting. Whilst, Article 29 allows foreign sex workers to remain in France if they comply with pressing charges against their pimp, but only remaining in the country if their pimp is convicted. A particularly controversial aspect of the DSB is the introduction of 'passive soliciting', which had been removed from the 1994 New Penal Code, as it passes the 'blame' from clients to sex workers. Many argue the 'passive soliciting' clause, where sex workers' attitude can be used

to convict them for being a sex worker (Hubbard 2004), makes street sex work illegal - especially for migrants. Many sex workers have moved from street sex work to other sexual services that were unaffected by the laws, making it harder for sex workers' rights groups and the 'community health organisations' to reach sex workers, whilst increasing the stigma associated with sex work.

This 'need' to displace sex workers from the street parallels the UK and is something Hubbard (2004) refers to when comparing sex work politics within London and Paris. Paris has been stereotyped as a commercially sexualised area, but the abolitionist system (discussed above) pushed sex workers away from affluent areas such as Paris. Even before 'passive soliciting' was introduced, police attributed the carrying of condoms as evidence for 'active soliciting'. There has been a similar approach in London, with various laws indirectly creating red-light districts, 'tolerant' to sex workers. Soho was one of those red-light districts, with 54 sex shops existing in the 1970s, for example. Various laws were passed which failed to 'clean' Soho's streets. However, by the 1990s, various groups within Soho received the backing of the Labour Party, resulting in zero tolerance policing and laws such as Westminster City Council's amendment to the Unitary Development Plan (1999), reducing the visibility of Soho sex workers. Through this 'urban renaissance', both Paris and London have reduced sex workers' rights to public space in a bid to rebrand urban spaces as middle class, family focused, 'safe' commercial areas. Sex shops have been particularly affected by this 'cleansing' approach (Hubbard 2004). However, Coulmont and Hubbard (2010) argue the vagueness of the UK and France's definition of sex shops has resulted in sex shops becoming more commercial through their adaption to risk/legal ambiguity.

The DSB was framed by the desire to attack migrant sex workers through the 'fear' of immigration (Allwood 2004). As mentioned, 1990s witnessed an increase of illegal immigration. For example, Lévy and Lieber (2008) refer to immigration from Northern China to Paris of mainly middle age/class women who, through losing their jobs, wanted to move to France in the hope they would obtain better jobs and even a family. However, their expectations were not met, and after experiencing the Chinese work market in France, many entered the sex market, illustrating Mai's (2009) point that many migrants enter sex work to escape non-sexual exploitation. It also illustrates the problems of conflating chosen (within limits) and coerced migration, as countries such as France and the UK do; as the stigma and lack of rights makes sex workers' jobs more dangerous (Mai 2009). Due to the DSB, as illegal migrant sex workers, they were particularly vulnerable; therefore, they utilised adaption strategies such as avoiding wearing 'sexualised' clothes (illustrating the 'passive soliciting' clauses' attack on human rights).

Theoretical Debates

After considering the legal context of the sex workers' movement within France, it is important to outline the theoretical background that will be utilised whilst arguing it would be unfair to undermine the sex workers' organisation through focusing on what could be considered 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'. However, it will be argued that these theoretical debates can help address problems that sex workers' organisation has experienced, whilst also helping to reclaim anarchism from the individualistic path it has sadly resorted to (see Bookchin 2002). Anarchist theorising can help sex workers' organisation, and vice versa, reclaim public spaces so that people who are deemed to have 'unliveable' lives can have 'liveable' lives (Carline 2009). By this, Carline drew on Judith Butler's work into ethics and how currently sex

work is approached unethically, as sex workers' lives are not seen as meeting the 'norm' of what is 'liveable'. Central to this, is the acknowledgment that everyone is vulnerable, whilst different groups have different experiences, this is what creates an ethical relationship between people. Those, such as sex workers (as they challenge 'intelligible' genders and 'morality'), whose lives are constructed as 'unliveable', are not recognised as vulnerable, resulting in ethical problems. Carline's answer is for managed zones, as designed by Liverpool council. Whilst most sex workers want the ability to work where they choose (something Carline acknowledges), there is recognition that specific areas on the street could be constructed as well (Sex Workers in Europe Manifesto 2005).

Bookchin's work on ecoanarchism and communalism is relevant here. Bookchin (2004) talks about the importance of self-liberation within mass movements/revolutionary change. Self-liberation is central to many sex workers' political activity; consider Momocco's (1998) (a sex worker) argument that sex workers' networking/organising has helped sex workers "empower ourselves to create our own lives and work" (p.181). Bookchin (1982) documents the arrival of hierarchy, and whilst there are anthropological weaknesses (Rudy 1998), provides a useful analysis of the state's psychological and physical power. In Bookchin's later work, there is much more focus upon the ways that radical change can be brought about through counter-institutions challenging the state. These counter-power structures could assist sex workers' organisation, especially given French sex workers' distrust of the state, with reclaiming the public space often denied them. Bookchin's (1994) power structures are modelled on Athen's model of non-hierarchical face-to-face democracy, coordinated internationally through confederations, with a respect for minority views as citizens contribute to policy

formation. However, the emphasis placed upon civic engagement ignores the problems sex workers can experience from community-based groups/organisations (see Sanders *et al* (2009); or Mathieu (2004) for a French example).

The French sex workers' collective organisation, which will be detailed, illustrates the potential to help reclaim anarchism from its individualistic orientations (what Bookchin (1995) calls 'lifestyle anarchism') that has been steadily working away at the tradition since the 80/90s (but was a part of anarchism from the start) (Bookchin 1994). However, aspects of individual anarchism can also assist the sex workers' organising; such as anarcho-feminist, Emma Goldman's (1897), 'free love' approach – which argues that people should be able to form several intimate relationships at the same time, aside from state regulation. However, ironically, Goldman (1910) deems sex work as 'evil' and a result of capitalism's control over subjective experiences of sexuality (similar to many other 'free love' theorists such as French anarchist, Emile Armand – see Manfredonia and Ronsin (2000) for more). Thus, a central weakness of many anarchists' theorising is the belief that once we enter an anarchist society, phenomena such as sex work will disappear. However, whilst Ericsson (1980) recognises benefits a relaxation of sexual morality could have on demand for sex work, she argues it is unrealistic to assume sex work will disappear; even if social relations change and money no longer exists, there will be other forms of commercial exchange. Furthermore, individualistic anarchism's inability to affect the social order (Bookchin 1995) is a serious problem.

Bookchin's (2004) focus on the middle and working classes coming together, through a coordination of movements, illustrates the potential for collective organisational mobility as the sex workers' movement is not only made up of working class sex workers (see Bernstein 2007). However, despite Bookchin's (1992) critique of

anarcho-syndicalism, which was dominant in countries such as France within the 19th/20th century, for its focus upon economics and the working class as agents of radical politics through the control of economic units (essentially factories); anarcho-syndicalism does have its own helpful contribution to sex workers' organisation. As will be shown, sex workers' collectives and trade unions have helped sex workers gain control over their life, thus assisting with their reclamation of public space. Whilst there is truth in Bookchin's (1986) criticism of collectives' centralisation and subordination to trade unions' bureaucratic structures, he ignores their creative and emancipatory potential for sex workers. Nevertheless, there are tensions between anarchism and sex workers, with leading anarcho-syndicalist, Noam Chomsky (see ChallengingMedia 2008), criticising pornography as a humiliation to women whilst proclaiming his desire to eradicate it, for example.

However, there have already been movements towards combining anarchism with radical sexuality politics. For example, Shannon and Willis (2010), in a special *Sexualities* anarchist-themed journal, argue queer theory can assist anarchism's critique of hierarchies through challenging sexual identity hierarchies, reducing the stigma groups such as sex workers have. Regardless, radical feminism and its dislike for sex workers' organisation, dominates French politics. Radical feminists argue sex workers' can never consent to their work (rejecting the term sex worker, preferring 'prostitute'), equating it to violence (Scoular 2004). They have an essentialist perspective, where sexuality is *the* definition of a person's identity (Kesler 2002); whilst ignoring the problems criminalisation, which their perspective is central in helping introduce, creates (many of which, they campaign against) (Scoular 2004). Because of this isolation, many sex workers revoke any association with feminism (Kesler 2002). Weitzer (2010) argues radical feminism is the

oppressive paradigm, where atypical examples of sex workers' are utilised as 'representative' alongside pre-scientific and inadequate research designs. However, whilst it is too simplistic to argue all sex workers are exploited, it is equally simplistic to ignore the constraints on sex workers' choice (Sanders *et al* 2009).

Critical Appraisal of Sex Workers' Organisation/Movement

Sex workers have been organising for hundreds of years, but often for no avail; however, since the 1970s there has been increasing interest in sex workers' organisations as they advance from collectives (for example) to trade unions (Hardy 2010). Trade unions have a different structure to collectives and other sex workers' organisation such as NGOs, as they are much more democratic (sometimes too bureaucratic) with accountable leadership (Gallin 2003). The HIV/AIDS epidemic was a crucial influence upon the sex workers' movement, with governmental organisations created to help prevent sex workers from contracting HIV/AIDS (Gallin 2003; and Sanders *et al* (2009) regarding HIV/AIDS epidemic influence upon Second World Whores' Congress). However, these organisations, whilst improving sex workers' position/organisation (consider the positive effects 'community health organisations' had on the French sex workers' movement), are too focused upon prevention (Gallin 2003). Murray and Robinson (1996), referring to the 'peer educator' HIV/AIDS prevention model (using Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) in Sydney as an example), illustrates sex workers' gains through prevention schemes, can to an extent, be considered illusory; as whilst sex workers' organisations receive funding, it has reinforced the stigma associated with sex work. Furthermore, HIV/AIDS prevention organisations often ignore wider structural/legal factors; however, the 'community health organisations' did acknowledge this through calling for decriminalisation.

Despite sex workers' HIV/AIDS organisational problems, Sonagachi, Kolkata's (formerly known as Calcutta) intervention project (a cooperative run by sex workers), with over 60,000 members, illustrates the potential for such a movement (when linked to wider issues other than health) to empower sex workers, specifically with its assistance in dramatically reducing HIV/AIDS (Bandyopadhyay 2005). Furthermore, illustrating the connections to anarchist theorising, the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, which runs the project, launched a civic bank for sex workers (Usha Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited), as sex workers are often denied credit/banking service – Bookchin (1991) advocates civic banks as part of his communalism. These counter-power structures have helped diffuse negative perceptions of sex workers (Bandyopadhyay 2005), illustrating their potential to challenge the state and their limitations if not framed within a civic context.

Gall's (N.D.) likens the 70/80s sex workers' rights organisations to pressure groups, governed by charismatic leaders, arguing that unionisation is about making sex work recognised as work. Nevertheless, Gall (2010) argues that the sex workers' unions, which developed out of the rights movement, suffer from many of the same problems the rights movement did. This includes a lack of resources and an inability to change consciousness, undermining the central aim of unionisation: collective action.

France is a perfect example of the increased sophistication of the sex workers' organising/movement, with the Union of Sex Workers (STRASS) forming in 2009. The French sex workers' movement has been central to the development of global sex workers' organisation (Sanders *et al* 2009). Essential was the French sex workers' rights movement (1972-1975), which Mazur (2004) outlines. This related to a national crackdown on sex work and police corruption. Sex workers, taking over Catholic churches in Lyon, protested against the police corruption/violence towards

sex workers. This movement helped radicalise/organise sex workers across France and in other countries (specifically England – as French sex workers received backing from the Wages for Housework Campaign, who in 1975 became part of the International Wages for Housework Campaign; and in 1976, renamed themselves as the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) after the French Collective of Prostitutes (FCP) that formed in 1975 from this French sex workers' movement (Valentino and Johnson 1980)). Furthermore, the movement influenced the First World Whores' Congress (1985), where a World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights (1985) was created (Sanders *et al* 2009). However, the movement has problems that can be deemed 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'; including the Pinot Report, constructed in response, resulting in no legal change (Mazur 2004).

Regardless, this counter-movement illustrates the potential for collective resistance, as demonstrated by the book, *Prostitutes, Our Life* (1980), written by six sex workers involved in the 'French National Hookers' Strike'. Valentino and Johnson (1980) argue the utilisation of the church allowed for a counter-posing morality, illustrating the potential such a movement can have when reclaiming public space unethically denied sex workers. Furthermore, the movement helped change people's opinions through two months of national/international coverage, with many sex workers' developing their self-confidence - paralleling Bookchin's work into self-liberation. Therefore, whilst the French sex workers' movement may not have equated in legal change, the organisation transformed sex workers' consciousness and propelled sex workers across the world into forming counter-posing forces to the state.

However, the authors' interview with a French sex worker Thierry Schaffauser (personal communication) illustrates further weaknesses of the movement, with the French Collective of Prostitutes no longer existing as most involved have either died

or disappeared with one even becoming an abolitionist social carer. Regardless, there are many existing organisations within France that undermine claims the movement is 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'; specifically, the establishment of STRASS (Schaffauser (personal communication) says there are around 300 members). Whilst there is limited research into the union, given its recent formation, their website has substantial information about their achievements/goals.

The unions' focus is to repeal the DSB, whilst reflecting a wider civic orientation, as they are against pimps and trafficking whilst promoting sex workers' cooperatives, for example (STRASS N.D.). Interestingly, Schaffauser (personal communication) referred to the hostility of the French anarchist groupings, with their predominately abolitionist perspective (see STRASS (2010) for STRASS's response to anarchist orientated *Alternative Libertaire's* attack).

This relates to the French trade union laws, especially as Hardy (2010) illustrates the importance trade union laws and support has in assisting sex workers' organisation. Fulton (2009) is useful for detailing the French trade union movement. In terms of membership, France is one of the weakest in Europe, but generally, French trade unions have considerable support and an important role within organisations through trade union delegates, for example. There are five confederation unions (a confederation is an umbrella national organisation for individual trade unions of different sizes) that are representative at a national, company and industrial level; such status confers extra rights. However, legislation in 2004/2007/2008 has made it harder to become representative.

When asked about whether STRASS has approached representative confederations to apply for membership, Schaffauser (personal communication) stated:

There have been discussions and contacts with mainstream trade unions, mostly with individual members of these unions but none of them seems ready to include us. Most French trade unions in France have a 'women commission' and they are all abolitionist. The mainstream Left in France and so trade unions are all against sex work seen as the commodification of the body and not work.

Thus, whilst he highlights people within the union that support sex workers, unions are overwhelmingly hostile to sex workers' organisational potential. Furthermore, whilst not a representative union, Schaffauser (personal communication) refers to how STRASS sent a letter in 2006/2007 to the CNT (*Confédération Nationale du Travail*), a French anarcho-syndicalist union, but received no response. Likewise, the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) is one of the five representative trade unions, but despite its anarcho-syndicalist origins (Ray 2006), it has also failed to see the potential of supporting sex workers. This illustrates a specific weakness of the French sex workers' movement that may be termed 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'.

Schaffauser (personal communication) refers to how collectives and 'community health organisations' have better links with street sex workers, but that STRASS is much more political because of the health organisations' reliance on public funding. Regardless, he states that STRASS has a good relationship with these organisations, for example, *Le Bus des Femmes* ('community health organisation') has helped with STRASS's membership recruitment. There is a useful list (see *Les Travailleu(r)ses du sexe* N.D.) of sex workers' organisations within France, with most forming after the DSB. Following, is a brief summary of some of the main organisations, illustrating the sex workers' potential for building a movement, outside

mainstream politics, to counteract the state's actions – but so far, it has had limited success influencing laws.

Femmes de Droits/Droits des Femmes (Women's Rights/Women's Rights) (2007) has the central aim of repealing the 'passive soliciting' clause of the DSB, referring to how everyone has solicited in life (either knowingly or unknowingly). *Cabiria* (N.D.), a 'community health organisation', forming through participant action research with sex workers in Lyon, provides HIV/AIDS prevention services as well as researching into how to improve sex workers' lives (illustrating connections to Butler's work on the need to consider the ways in which sex workers' lives could be made more 'liveable'). However, they provide other services, such as legal advice, whilst focusing on challenging the social relations. *Cabiria* are associated with *L'Université Solidaire* (University Solidarity), which provides groups such as sex workers with personalised/flexible education. However, when the author looked for details regarding the university, a recent update said that due to inadequate funding the classes had been suspended. This is disappointing, and given Bookchin and other anarchists' emphasis upon constructing a new society through consciousness changes, the development of empowering outlets like this for sex workers is important; illustrating the benefits a convergence between anarchism and sex workers could have for both. Furthermore, Allwood (2004) criticises *Cabiria* for focusing too much on agency whilst ignoring the realities of exploitation. Other 'community health organisations' include *PASTT* (Prevention, Action, Health, Work for Transgenders), *Stella* and *Autres Regards* (*Les Travailleu(r)ses du sexe* N.D.).

The pro-sex work organisations are not the only ones who were against the DSB, with the abolitionists criticising it for introducing regulation. Nevertheless, the inability of the abolitionists and sex workers' movement to work together in opposition

actually sadly assisted the DSB's adoption (Mathieu 2004). However, sex workers' organisational pressure can have an influence on the government's actions; such as the crackdown on French pimps because of sex workers' criticism of the DSB helping pimps (Lichfield 2005).

A contentious debate within France's history is the status of brothels. Since 1946, when state-run brothels were closed, there have been repeated calls for them to be reopened (Mazur (2004); also see STRASS (2009)). The sex workers' movement has been overtly critical of state run brothels, with some seeing legalisation as worse than criminalisation (Valentino and Johnson 1980). Whilst being much more than an opposition to the state, the sex workers' antagonistic relationship with the state again shows parallels to anarchism and the need to ethically reclaim public space. Whilst STRASS (2009) favours women working together in groups indoors, they are against the oppression and control that third parties would have within state-run brothels. Furthermore, STRASS believe that brothels divide the sex workers' movement, undermining the unity of their organisational ability. Instead, STRASS advocates open, not closed, brothels where sex workers can work indoors without an employer (Schaffauser 2010).

STRASS (2009) refers to the historical tradition's influence upon their decision to disagree with calls for state-run brothels to return. This relates to Corbin's (1990) work into the history of French sex work. The *maison de tolerance* (akin to closed brothels) existed before the 1946 Marthe Richard Law, with strong regulation - including regular mandatory health tests. Whilst the sex workers' movement has successfully resisted calls for the reopening of state-run brothels, it is uncertain whether they will always be able to do so; illustrating the need for a broader counter-

movement to the prevailing institutions to overcome aspects of their organising that may be considered 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'.

Internationally, the sex workers' movement also requires alternative strategies to overcome aspects that may be considered 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'. As mentioned, the ECP was influenced by the FCP. Since then, British sex workers' organisation has developed, with the International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW) joining the GMB (Gall 2010). Their primal focus, so far, has been the unionisation of lap dancing clubs, however, resources have been limited and the IUSW has a disappointing record in organising sex workers (Gall 2010). The ECP is more focused on housework, arguing sex workers are paid for many of the jobs that women at home do for free (Davidson 1998). However, this conflation of work conditions can undermine sex workers' organisation (Davidson 1998). Despite ECP's and the IUSW's distinct focus, they have worked cooperatively, such as their joint (albeit unsuccessful) protest in 2000 against the Westminster City Council's attempt to evict sex workers from properties (Hubbard 2004). Lopes (2005) states that the IUSW was not recognised as a trade union at the beginning, after being rejected by several unions. The IUSW also suffers from tensions between the bureaucratic trade union and grassroots' organisations. Additionally, there are problems with who can join the union, with a membership application form enabling pimps to join, for example (Elliott 2009).

Gall's (2010) analysis illustrates the disappointing and uncertain features of the sex workers' movement. For example, despite Canadian sex workers working in coordination with unions to improve their labour rights, it has failed to result in unionisation *per se*. Likewise, although Germany's trade union, *Verdi*, allows sex workers to join; the sex workers' resistance to public identification and the growing

pressure in Germany to reverse their legalisation of sex work has reduced the unionisation's success. Additionally, Gall refers to the sex workers' movement within Australia, where Workers in the Sex Industry and the Prostitutes Collective of Victoria joined the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union in 1995. However, again, there were problems as resources became scarce, with different union bodies disliking resources going to sex workers.

Regardless, there are positive organisational advancements within and outside these countries. For example, USA is a particularly good example of sex workers' organising, where Lusty Lady (a peepshow club in San Francisco) was unionised (by the Exotic Dancers Union – part of the Service Employees International Union) with the dancers eventually turning the club into a collective/cooperative (Looking Glass Collective) in 2003 (Gall 2010) in response to the employers' sexist and derogative attitudes (Borda 2009). Borda (2009) considers the Lusty Lady's unionisation as an expression of the movement within third wave feminism restoring collective action in opposition to the wave's prevalent individualism. Illustrating parallels to Bookchin's work, there was a particular focus upon non-individualistic, self-liberation, portrayed artistically within the documentary the dancers produced.

Argentina's sex workers' movement is another good example of sex workers' organisation. Hardy (2010) undertook research with the Argentine sex workers' union, *Asociación de Mujeres Meretrices de la Argentina* (AMMAR) - which formed in response to police harassment. Interestingly, they want to challenge the social, economic and political relations, which they argue may eventually eradicate sex work.

Whilst there have been various successes through sex workers' organisation, some of the examples discussed illustrate problems for the sex workers' movement that can be seen as 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'; specifically if sex workers' only utilise trade unions and collective/health organisations. Much like Bookchin's critique of anarcho-syndicalism, there needs to be a broader movement to challenge the prevailing power structures that are central to sex workers' problems, as nicely put by Gall (2010):

Despite varying employment laws and body politics in the different nation-states, the economic, political and social conditions for creating and sustaining sex worker labour unionism remain uniformly difficult (p. 298).

Additionally, discourses are important for sex workers' organisational movements to reclaim/purport to challenge the stigma associated with sex work. This is specifically true in France, where Corbin (1986) refers to several discourses that have influenced the legal context and attitude towards sex workers. Firstly, the French word for 'prostitute' is *putain*, which refers to someone whose body smells 'bad'. It relates to other discourses, including the view that sex workers need to excrete fluids as their body is like a drainage system/corpse and the source of syphilis. There is an emphasis on the need to tolerate sex work, in isolation (historically through the *maisons de tolerance*), to 'sterilise' public places. Therefore, sex workers' organisations need to reclaim and resist these negative stereotypes, replacing them with their own discourses. This relates to the importance of the 'sex as work' discourse for sex workers' organisation (see Hardy (2010) for a good example). This discourse emerged around the sex workers' rights movement and is about recognising the choices women have within structural arrangements (Sanders *et al*

2009). However, the limited use of the discourse amongst sex workers themselves creates problems for sex workers' organisation (Gall 2010).

Before concluding, it is important to provide more focus to the aspects of the sex workers' movement that can be seen as 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'. Problems, such as funding/resources, ability to remain anonymous or the unrealism of any assumption that an anarchist system will abolish sex work (see Comella (2010) for further illustration that sex work can sometimes be a positive choice for sex workers) have already been considered. Furthermore, the problems of achieving collective resistance with so many feminist/sex worker divisions have also been discussed (for more see: Kesler (2002); Sanders (2004) discussion of divisions amongst sex workers regarding condom usage; Brents and Hausbeck (2005) discussion of violence amongst sex workers; *Prostitutes, Our Life* (1980) about the strengths and limitations of sex workers' collective resistance; and Gallin (2003) regarding elitism of sex worker union members/representatives – illustrating the need for wider civic politics).

Other problems include the ambiguity sex work has as a concept, considering the effects divisions such as sex, gender, age and ethnicity have upon a sex workers' identity and experience (Murray and Robinson 1996). This can undermine collective organising, along with the sex workers often having no mutual employer (Hardy 2010). Hardy (2010), specifically assessing Argentina's sex workers' organisation, raises problems that are applicable to the sex workers' movement in general. For example, discrimination often undermines sex workers' healthcare provision – this is something sex workers' health organisations have helped address (as illustrated with the French 'community health organisations'). However, there are problems with funding from official bodies/states attempting to influence the political perspective of

an organisation as a condition of providing funding (see Womyn's Agenda for Change & Women's Network for Unity 2005).

Central to sex workers' organisational problems is the stigma attached to their work (Hardy 2010). Most protests, such as the Soho march mentioned earlier, see sex workers' covering their face up with masks. Hardy (2010) refers to how sex workers in Argentina took their mask off, but illustrating the stigma of sex work, the General Secretary's family did not speak to her for two years after. Dale and Whittaker (2010) argue that stigma is more damaging, psychologically, than sex work itself; and that central to stigma is the marriage and family institutions and the related state (illustrating the need to radical restructure political systems). Essentially, sex workers' struggle is not so much for sex workers' rights, but for the right to have such rights (Ochoa 2008).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the essay has attempted to illustrate the potential for a convergence of anarchist and sex worker theorising/organisation. Whilst anarchist theory should not be the only theoretical grounding sex workers utilise to further their rights, it can help the sex workers' develop their organising in a broader civic context. However, it is important to remember that the essay has advocated for a specific type of anarchism, especially the anarchism associated with the work of Murray Bookchin. Whilst sex workers can utilise the work of individualistic anarchists, there are problems with individualistic anarchism's ignorance to the wider social, political and economic relations that threaten sex workers' rights.

The essay has utilised France as a case study to illustrate this connection. There has been an analysis of the historical and legal context the French sex workers' are

organising within, and how their success should be assessed in correspondence to this. Whilst the law has had a negative effect upon sex workers' rights, there are a series of organisations, including a union for sex workers (STRASS), which have originated largely due to the DSB. France was central to the origins of the sex workers' rights movement within the 70s/80s, and is a perfect example of the sex workers' movement's ability for development. Furthermore, the sex workers' distrust of the state, framed historically, illustrates areas of convergence with anarchism.

However, anarchism itself needs to become more receptive to sex workers' organisation, as illustrated by France, there is considerable hostility by anarchists towards sex work. This relates to wider problems of sex workers' organisation that could be deemed to be 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'. French sex workers' are alert to the possibility that France may yet bring back the closed brothels that undermined their rights, as well as facing the disappointing problems they have had in trying to facilitate the inclusion of their union within a confederation. Community resistance is another problem, especially considering anarchists' emphasis upon community/civic centred power structures. Furthermore, civic power structures are undermined by the funding problems that organisations such as the 'community health organisations' suffer from, as to receive various funding they often have to take a harmful stance towards sex work.

However, as Bookchin criticised the anarcho-syndicalist movement for being too narrow, sex workers' need to see cooperatives and trade unions as one aspect of a larger struggle. The social, political and economic relations that influence sex workers' rights are central to their problems; sex workers' need to continue building a counter-movement to the prevailing power structures, in order to reclaim the public space unethically denied to them. However, trade unions and cooperatives are

essential for helping sex workers to be ethically reconsidered in the present. Furthermore, these organisations are important for promoting the sex workers' discourse amongst sex workers and the public, enhancing sex workers' self-liberation whilst challenging negative perceptions. Regardless, it would be naive for anarchists to assume that sex work will just disappear within a new system, especially as this would undermine many sex workers' own self-determination. Thus, whilst sex workers' organisation has in aspects been 'a failure'/'illusory'/'uncertain'/'disappointing'; sex workers' have the potential to build on their existing success, constructing a broader movement to challenge the prevailing power structures that often damage their rights.

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