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Towards an Abolitionist Europe? The EWL, the Nordic Model and the Shaping of Emotional Norms Regarding Prostitution

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I. Introduction

On 14 February of this year, Ireland joined the ranks of other European countries – including Sweden, Norway, Northern Ireland, Iceland, France, Finland and the United Kingdom – that have adopted the Nordic Model of prostitution which makes it illegal to purchase sexual services, but decriminalizes the activity of prostitution itself. The Nordic Model was pioneered by the Sex Purchase Act enacted in Sweden, a country known for its feminist politics and social welfare state model, in 1999. The aim of this legal device is twofold: firstly, to abolish prostitution – seen as sexual violence deeply rooted in the patriarchy and incompatible with a gender equal society - and secondly to combat sex trafficking – seen as a direct consequence of the former. These objectives lay at the heart of a transnational movement known as abolitionism (or neo-abolitionism) and for which the Nordic Model has become the keystone.

During their annual general meeting in September 2001, the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), the largest umbrella organisation of women’s associations in the European Union, passed a Resolution that their member organisations lobby both nationally and regionally at the European Parliament (EP) for adopting a law “mak[ing] it a crime for men to buy and use women in the context of prostitution” combined with efforts to help and not to punish the prostituted woman - “the victim” – all the while offering to “provide their members with the information they need (EWL 2001 cited in Ekberg 2004)”. This official acceptance of the Nordic Model boosted it: nationally, by mandating that its members support it; regionally, through its validation as a respected expert authority with consultancy status for the Council of Europe; and internationally by combining efforts with governmental and non-governmental institutions sharing this worldview in which “prostitution is part of the continuum of male violence against women (EWL 2012)”.

Like all public policy, the Nordic Model is a normative device; however, its primarily pedagogic aims is based on a very exacting worldview. Thus by advocating for the Nordic Model on the European level, where prostitution has been left to the discretion of Member States, the EWL is cultivating a set of new collective European values and norms. This paper aims to provide further insight into this process by looking at the development of the abolitionist lobby in Europe through the lens of emotions. More specifically, we will look at how EWL advocacy for the Nordic Model has shaped emotional norms regarding prostitution in Europe.

II. Towards an Abolitionist We-Mode Group

By adopting an assembled phenomenological, enactive and social constructivist approach to emotions (Ahmed 2006, Scheer 2012, Rosenwein 2006, Colombetti & Thompson 2008, Pernau 2017), emotions can be understood as ever-present in our daily lives. They are forms of dynamic engagement between an agent and his or her social and material environment. This engagement is “sense-making” for the agent in that it, through the experience of emotional episodes, constructs an intentional and meaningful life (Szanto & Moran 2016). It is in this way that

[t]he things of the world are not simply neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation. Each one of them symbolises or recalls a particular way of behaving, provoking in us reactions which are either favourable or unfavourable (Merleau-Ponty 2004:63)

Patterns of these meanings become embodied in symbols (Geertz 1979); these and the reactions they provoke tend to be socially and culturally contingent (Mead 1934, 1938) and regulated by emotional norms. These are learned along with others as part of an individual’s socialization within multiple social groups¹ to which he or she will have varying and dynamic levels of identification. It is indeed in this way that emotions are constitutive and sense-making, as they fashion both subjects and subjectivities¹¹.

Social groups - religious, political, ideological, etc. - often arise when the emotions of several individuals converge on an important subject, urging them to act in accordingly (Salmela 2014). In this process, collective emotions contribute to the formation of goals, values, and evaluative beliefs – an ethos (Tuomela 2007) - that are, as such, to some extent constitutive of those groups. An ethos will dictate “emotional norms”, which are understood here as prescribed rules of appraisal (i.e., what incites an emotion, which emotion is incited, whether this emotion is valued or devalued), expression (i.e., how an emotional experience is verbalised) and action-tendency (i.e., what behaviour is evoked) which shape an emotional episode. These in turn reinforce an ethos to enhance an individual’s identification with the group, as well as to facilitate decision-making by aligning

decisions and their outcomes with a collective goal or, broadly speaking, intentionality. There are thus very recognisable benefits to the effective “emotional” management of a social group. As we will see, the Nordic Model provided a common intentionality upon which today’s abolitionist movement could consolidate and develop.

In fact, today’s movement dates to an earlier turn-of-the-20th-century crusade headed by British social reformer and liberal feminist Josephine Butler to abolish the State’s regulation of prostitution which included registration with the police and regular medical exams. It was, however, hindered by its diversity of actors – radical imperialists, progressive liberals, medical and moral hygienists, and humanitarian Christians - which caused internal rifts over issue framing and strategies (Walkowitz 1982, Limoncelli 2006). This ultimately led to its quasi-withdrawal from international concern; where national abolitionist actions persisted, it was characterized by local sociocultural settings and institutions. The influence of such groups was however mitigated by the rise of professionalized social services which presented formidable competition over the ownership of prostitution as a public problem (Gusfield 1981). By the time the abolitionist cause was remobilized internationally in the nineties and 2000s, the potential stakeholders - both local and international – were even more diverse.

The Nordic Model provided a collective intentionality through which - to take further inspiration from Raimo Tumela’s (2007, 2016) “We-Mode theory” – abolitionists may be understood not as constellations of agents, but as a group agent in we-mode. Ontologically individualistic yet conceptually collectivistic (Tumela 2016), this implies looking at social reality from a top-down perspective, that is to say, individual members are understood as having relinquished some agency so as to belong to the group and be cooperatively committed to its activities – making it useful as a conceptual device to discuss collective actionⁱⁱⁱ.

III. AN ABOLITIONIST ETHOS

The commitment of an individual to a group in we-mode is predicated upon the development of a common intentionality informed by a group ethos. If not, then the group is said to be in “i-mode” – characterized by a weak commitment of an individual to a group (Tumela 2007). The evolution of abolitionism from i-mode to we-mode is rooted in American and Swedish second- and third-wave feminisms. Despite their strong presence in the abolitionist movement both past and present, feminists are far from unanimous on the subject of prostitution, as demonstrated by the feminist Sex Wars of the seventies and eighties over the issue of prostitution and pornography, among others^{iv}.

It was indeed these debates which gave new life to the abolitionist cause in the United States, where radical feminists like Dorchen Leidholdt, Kathleen Barry and Laura Lederer developed a discourse portraying prostitutes as victims of violent sexual exploitation:

Far from being about similarly situated individuals, prostitution is a paradigm of sexual and racial inequality. In fact, prostitution doesn’t have much to do with individuals. Individuality is the very attribute that prostituted women are denied – along with that related characteristic, humanity (Leidholdt 1993:135).

As suggested here, in their victimhood, prostitutes lose their individuality and become a symbol of female repression and exploitation. This evokes one of the major ideological tenants which rekindled and revamped the abolitionist movement that prostitution – an offense against human dignity - should not be normalized. As there is no distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution (Barry 1996), to normalize prostitution would be to normalize rape. Another tenant was the understanding that the unhinged sexuality of men, and society’s permissive attitude towards it, was to blame for this continued exploitation of women:

Why do men do these things to women? Because, in part, there is nothing to stop them. Norms and sanctions are rarely applied against female sexual slavery. And so, like the child who tests every limit he or she discovers until there is adult interference, there are men who will trample on every human value, every standard of human decency, every vestige of respect for human life, beyond almost every taboo (Barry 1979:215).

Therefore, according to Barry, societal structures and patriarchal norms maintain this abuse and violation^v.

By the mid-nineties American abolitionist feminists had shifted increasingly away from the Sex Wars debate and towards the issue of trafficking in the human rights field, which was increasingly dominated by institutionalized NGOs (Bernstein 2010). Barry and Leidholdt founded the transnational NGO Coalition Against Trafficking in Women in 1988 which has since enjoyed special status as consultant to the UN’s ECOSOC. As related by Elizabeth Bernstein’s study of the American anti-trafficking movement, radical feminists found themselves “strange bedfellows” in the evangelical Christian-right where a “shared commitment to carceral paradigms of social, and in particular gender, justice [...] and to militarized humanitarianism (2010:47)” saw a reframing of the sex trafficking issue which aligned it with state interests and catapulted their movement to a “position of

political and cultural prominence (2010:51).” Namely, this implied “discourses of criminalization, democracy building, naming and shaming, and family values [...] (2010:54)”

Much like the early abolitionist movement under Butler which connected the state’s regulation of prostitution to the continuance of the “white slave trade”, the portrayal of sex trafficking as an overwhelming phenomenon has demanded a strong international response^{vi}. With their government’s support, the influence of the American anti-trafficking movement abroad has been profound, especially in countries where the vestiges of the abolitionist movement remained. For example, in France with Malka Marcovich who was a prominent member of the International Abolitionist Federation until she left to set up a French chapter of the CATW in 1999 called Movement for the Abolition of Prostitution and Pornography (MAPP). The American anti-trafficking movement also has found resonance where local women’s movements had taken established stances against sexual and gender violence. For example, the Swedish and U.S. governments funded a joint CATW/EWL project in 2006 entitled “Promoting Preventative Measures to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings for Sexual Exploitation”. Indeed these local interests translate into the regional and international levels, where the CATW collaborates regularly with the EWL and other like-minded European organizations.

In Sweden, some like the anthropologist Dan Kulick (2003) have linked the rise of interest in prostitution and trafficking to concerns over invasion by migrant sex workers associated with Sweden’s entry in the EU. As he writes:

The combination of ‘Eastern bloc’ women eager for intercourse in Sweden and ‘pro-prostitution’ policies in other European countries raised the truly frightful specter of Sweden being penetrated on all fronts (2003:200).

The scope of this research does not permit us to weigh in on the validity of such suggestions, but suffice it to say that detractors of the Nordic Model do refer to as having an anti-migrant stance. Most notably, Dutch pro-sex work Marjan Wijers (2015) who sees this reversion to Butler’s “white slavery” rhetoric as unwittingly “highly morally biased” but also “racist and nationalistic”. This has had an impact on abolitionist discourse and action in two ways. First, through a re-emphasis of the radical/Marxist/structural feminist principles laying at its core – which we shall see in a moment. And second, through a noticeable shift towards intersectionality, as can be seen in this EWL press release:

We strongly believe that the system of prostitution is at the core of the current neoliberal /patriarchal/neocolonial system and plays a key role in perpetuating it. We know from evidence that the vast majority of persons in prostitution are women, from minority groups, including transgender persons, from Indigenous communities, from low-caste communities, from poorer countries [...] This is not by chance: the system of prostitution makes the most of the multiple inequalities and discrimination. And it is perpetuated by a demand constituted of those having power and resources: mainly men. (EWL 5-8-2015).

A year after Kulick’s paper – whose claim mentioned above she cites as “remarkable (2004:1214)” – Gunilla Ekberg, instrumental in the passing of the law in Sweden and as special advisor on issues of prostitution and trafficking to the government at the time (Skilbrei & Holmström 2016), outlines the development of the Swedish Sex Purchase Act as the “concrete and tangible expression of the belief that in Sweden women and children are not for sale (1205).” Instead, the main objective is to protect prostituted persons (the Act is gender-neutral) regardless of whether it be consensual or not, as “[n]o prostitution can be said to be of a voluntary nature (Ekberg 2004)”. The issue is viewed as systemic and thus the prostitute, while blameless due to their victimization by societal circumstances, is also without agency: “It isn’t up to individuals to decide whether or not they want to sell their bodies”, as the Swedish Minister for Gender Equality was quoted as saying during a discussion of European policies on prostitution (Kulick 2003).

Ekberg also makes numerous accusatory statements regarding wonton male sexuality, echoing American radical feminist discourse:

[The Sex Purchase Act] effectively dispels men’s self-assumed right to buy women and children for prostitution purposes and questions the idea that men should be able to express their sexuality in any form and at any time (2004:1205).

This evocation of the historical male patriarchy with “self-assumed right” paired with the caustic tone mirrors the indignant words of American radical feminists in the anti-trafficking movement. Further, the “carceral” emphasis identified by Bernstein (2010) in the American anti-trafficking movement also appears in Ekberg’s discussion of how the Swedish Sex Purchase Act’s aim to punish clients originated in Swedish women’s movement as early as the thirties, consistently so since the eighties (Ekberg 2004).

IV. A Common Intentionality: The Nordic Model

The compassionate, indignant and punishing discourse of the American anti-trafficking movement and similar discourses found in the local women's movement found their translation into Swedish policy which through its international circulation and adoption became the Nordic Model, now promoted as the preferred device against prostitution and trafficking^{vii}. It marks the strategic divergence of today's abolitionism from that of the past by shifting from protecting prostituted persons from State and police abuses and curtailing prostitution by encouraging a double moral standard to protecting prostituted persons by punishing the perpetrators of this violence to educate them^{viii}.

The Nordic Model as public policy proposed to govern the social (Foucault 1980) is a socializing device with a normative function which actively constitutes what citizens call reality (Wedel et al 2005)^{ix}. Therefore, studying the way in which it frames prostitution as a public problem using emotion-as-discourse is of paramount importance to understanding the collective intentionality of those promoting it, as well as that of those who support or condone it. Indeed, in we-mode, group identity is performative in that dispositions are created based on declarative speech acts which hold the power to create institutional facts by representing them as true (Tumela 2007, Salmela 2004).

The Nordic Model creates institutional facts through making the prostitute a symbol of women's violent exploitation by the patriarchy and the sex-profiteer (client, pimp or trafficker) a symbol of sexually dangerous men. Emotional norms are constructed around each of these: for the prostitute, compassion as a victim requiring a protective response; for the sex-profiteer, scorn as a perpetrator requiring punishment. For instance in a 2015 press release from the EWL:

As long as we don't transform our societies and mentalities (including through legislation), we will continue to see the most vulnerable ones being used by a system driven by profit. Decriminalising a whole system which benefits from inequalities will not strengthen the human rights of the persons in that system. On the contrary, it will strengthen the impunity of those benefiting from inequalities and injustice. (EWL 5-8-2015).

Encouraging a worldview depicting the exchange between prostitute and client in such a way by abolitionists is an emotional practice to regulate the emotions surrounding these subjects. As French sociologist Lilian Mathieu remarks in a study of the abolitionist framing of sex-profiteers in France

With their status going from that of a social inept to a victim of violence, the prostitute sees the economic and social context of her activity stamped out in favor of a decidedly moral condemnation. Here, prostitution is no longer the result of social inequality but of an intrinsically violent interaction between a victim and a perpetrator, meriting an individualized punitive action (author's translation 2015:52).

The "moral condemnation" of prostitution by the abolitionist position which Mathieu refers to is based on the radical feminist discourse discussed above which makes it so that prostitution cannot exist in a gender equal and democratic society – a key phrase in abolitionist rhetoric.

Moral emotions are more complex and pro-social emotions requiring considerable reflexivity and are implicitly tied to belief systems and power structures. By casting the prostituted person in such a way, the anticipated emotional reaction is compassion. Compassion, according to political scientist Margaret Nussbaum (2001:301), requires that the emotive agent recognizes that the suffering of another is serious, and that the suffering other does not deserve the pain he or she is experiencing (2001:306ff.). This demands that one passes judgement on what he or she is witnessing according to existing moral orders and assign blame. In this case, the abolitionists point to sex-profiteers – which may involve states as MEP Marianne Eriksson stated in her address to EP in 2004 discussed later. Similarly, other moral emotions of anger and resentment, although often seen as unsocial^x, are both forms of moral indignation, which philosopher Adam Smith (1759) posits is experienced by those who wish perpetrators to be made aware of the pain they have caused others. Anger and resentment can be thus pro-social in that they too help the "emoter" to identify those to blame, but also to will them to repent and repair the previously severed social bonds arising from moral transgressions. Implicit in both of these examples is how emotion may both reify social structures and may hold the potential to provide pathways for social change.

Considering that abolitionists aim for social change through normative change as encapsulated by the Nordic Model – the emotional norms implied within we have just discussed – , their appeal to the moral systems entrenched in gender equal and democratic ideals is important, as for most contemporary social and identity movements. However, it is important to bear in mind that while compassion is an important motivator for sustained individual and joint action, it also lead to the exclusion of others and the reinforcement of existing power inequalities (Pernau 2017). In our case, the compassion felt for prostituted persons contributes to the vilification and ostracizing of those seen as perpetrators or as facilitators of what is causing their suffering – from sex-profiteers to states, organizations or persons defending an alternative view.

This is especially problematic when the detractors to the abolitionist cause are the very prostitutes which they intend to protect. Indeed, since the EWL is campaigning for a prostitution-free Europe - which is to deny sex

workers the very right to exist (Wijers 2015) -, it seems best to listen to what they have to say. However, here – much like in feminism - we see an extreme polarization between associations like the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) and survivor groups like SPACE International based in Dublin – which manifests itself often on Twitter^{xi}.

One disadvantage to the sex worker cause lies in the historically ingrained stigma in our society and as such even the most visible activists tend to not use their real names. As such, is it really possible to successfully promote a worldview which dissents from that of a professionalized and institutionalized organization like the EWL? As the ICRSE stated:

EWL calls itself a feminist organization but, nonetheless, dismisses the voice of women, trans women and men, who have a direct experience of working in the sex industry and actually calls for a Europe free of us (ICRSE 2012).

The EWL was established in 1990 as part of the European Commission's initiative to develop a European Civil Society to democratize the EP. However, its representativeness for women's issues in Europe is often questioned on the basis of the formalising and excluding effects of its meta-organisational structure, which in turn affects national chapters^{xii}, and of its privileged relationship of its Brussels-based Secretariat with the EU (Ahme & Brunsson xxxx, Karlberg 2013, Strid 2009, Rolandsen Agustín 2012). Indeed, on the issue of abolitionism, not all EWL member organizations agree, as demonstrated by the Dutch Council of Women (Nederlandse Vrouwen Raad) which supports the pro-sex cause (Ward & Wylie 2017).

Another example of dissenting opinions is the rift between the EWL and Amnesty brings us to the important issue of conflicting and competing “expert” stances in European Civil Society. In February 2014, Amnesty International came out in support of the full decriminalization of sex work. As their "Policy Background Document on Decriminalization of Sex Work" states:

Amnesty International does not take a position on the morality of sex work. Our focus is on how to ensure that all human beings, including those who engage in sex work, are most empowered to claim their rights and live free from fear, violence and discrimination (2014:3).

In response, the EWL issued a statement that they were “deeply concerned” by the stance of this organization with which they have done joint work. They accuse them of not taking a strong enough “women's human rights perspective” while suggesting that this is on the basis of AI being reluctant or lacking the strength to see the real issue right before them:

Let us not be naïve about the reality of the sex industry; let us be courageous enough to have a critical eye on its power dynamics, functioning and benefits, and how it fosters trafficking (EWL 5-8-2015).

The feelings of betrayal and deception expressed here are also found in the online petition for AI to change their pro-sex stance initiated by the CATW and signed by the French chapter of the EWL which depicts a woman shackled with the words “Amnesty International: Don't Turn Your Back On Me^{xiii}”. Other abolitionists connected to the EWL had more scathing reactions - primarily demonstrated by a series of memes appearing on various blogs and websites. For instance the UK-based association Nordic Model Now! depicted Amnesty's logo with a phallus instead of a candle with the added caption: “advised by pimps (NMN 2017)^{xiv}”. To date, Amnesty has not retracted their position – even publishing a report in 2016 “The Human Cost of ‘Crushing’ The Market” calling for the repeal of the Nordic Model in Norway. Evidently, from the abolitionist point of view, Amnesty's divergent opinion led to them losing esteem: both for being blind to the former's interpretation of reality and being deluded by the corrupting force of the pro-sex lobby. In rather simplistic but effective ways, such as connecting them to the sex work lobby, detractors to the Nordic Model are shut down. Those who from a liberal perspective argue for a distinction to be made between forced and voluntary prostitution but end up in the very problematic and delicate situation of having to prove consent^{xv}. As we can see here, emotions have the potential to bind together a group of people, all the while excluding others.

V. Truth Claims and Advocacy

Emotions are the driving force behind practices, but they are also based upon and reinforce a specific interpretation of society (Pernau 2017). As such, the defense of the Nordic Model shows how emotions may also relate the transformation of group knowledge into explicit and institutionalized ideologies, propositions and practices (Pernau 2017, Scheer 2012, Jasper 1998) or “truth claims” in Foucauldian terms. If European Civil Society is to be understood as a space of cooperation, it is also one of competition and debate. The EP in particular became the scene upon which the truth claims of those supporting different European prostitution policies - namely the Swedish and the Dutch - were debated between 1997 and 2014. A key event to jumpstarting these debates was the Swedish MEP Eriksson's press conference, public hearing and report on “The Consequences of the Sex Industry in the European Union” in 2004.

The initial reactions to the Nordic Model were that it was preposterous. Yet after building momentum through a series of hearings together with the EWL in 2002 (Mattson 2016), in 2004 Eriksson auditioned abolitionist supporters like the CATW's Raymond but also pro-sex work experts like Wijers to speak to the connection between the sex industry and trafficking. The result was an attack of the porn industry, as well as various NGOs – particularly HIV/AIDS groups - being funded by the EU's initiatives (2003/2107(INI), Raymond 2013). A key point of this event was the accusation levelled against Member States for having “capitulated to the sex industry” instead of fighting sexual exploitation, thereby becoming “yet another profiteer on the market (2003/2107(INI))”. Greggor Mattson argues that this event, “one-sided [...] with its calculated insults to Member States that had legalized prostitution, was ill-designed to craft any sort of consensus on the relationship between prostitution and human trafficking (2016:46)” The defensive position it fostered in the pro-sex work lobby was similarly uncompromising. By way of example, the ICRSW set out in their 2005 “Sex Workers In Europe Manifesto” their rights to exercise their bodies as they see fit and to received equal protection under the law (ICRSW 2005). They lashed out against those wishing to sacrifice them “for religious or sexual morals (2005:1)” and the abolitionist framing of prostitution:

Any discourse that defines sex work as violence is a simplistic approach that denies our diversity and experience and reduces us to helpless victims (2:2005).

The stage was thus set for persistent clashes of growing animosity between these two camps which would characterize the debates to come^{xvi}.

The resulting media coverage of Eriksson's hearing and report helped bring the framing of prostitution as a public problem within the purview of the EU and the Nordic Model as the best solution to the scene. In response, a number of reports and studies were commissioned by various parties – governmental bodies on all levels, NGOs representing various interests, academics, etc.^{xvii} Such practices stress the performative and subjectivizing dimensions of emotion in the form of bodily actions, language and speech, as well as written texts, in which the notions of self and others reciprocally and continuously inform and shape each other through social interaction (Guntram & Zeiler 2016). It must be understood, however, that expressions of emotion are shaped by the spaces – social or material - in which they take place.

In the case of lobbying efforts by the EWL – whose Observatory on Violence Against Women produces regular reports on the issue - and others in European Civil Society, this space is highly institutionalized and professionalized by the “culture of expertise” (Mooney Nickel 2012:13). Typically to be convincing scientific or expert discourse, as Joseph Gusfield argues, “must be emptied of feeling and emotion. The tone must be clinical, detached, depersonalized (1976:20).” This is particularly true when the speaker is female or the subject matter is “gendered^{xviii}”. As Mathieu (2013) pointed out in his study of French abolitionist movement, an “abolitionist style” exists in which awareness-building communications aim both at being not only informative, but also emotional. Sandwiched therefore between cognitive (“prostitution is the result of these causes and exists in these forms”) and moral (“prostitution is an unacceptable reality that must be fought”) discourses, moral sensitivities are ironically affected by the use of hard data as an awareness technique (Mathieu 2013:124).

As Claude Gilbert and Emmanuel Henry (2012) wrote, to define a problem is to appropriate it. However, the successful appropriation of the ownership of the “prostitute and trafficking problem” by the EWL and others involved here also relies on relations of power and status. Sweden's international reputation for its policies promoting gender equality and more generally as a social welfare state gives credence to the Nordic Model which is its “brain child”. Between its high rate of women in the public sector – according to a 2016 UN report, 43.6 percent of its Parliament members and 54 percent of its government ministers are women - and its proven support of gender equality, it is difficult to argue with Sweden's self-proclaimed status as “the first feminist government in the world” (www.government.se/a-feminist-government). Today, governments considering prostitution reform – but also other gender equality measures - visit Sweden^{xix}.

This is due in part to the symbolic power enjoyed by Sweden as well as its acuity in marketing their Sex Purchase Act. Strategically, its promotion by both governmental and non-governmental actors was part of a larger agenda to endorse gender equality which accompanied Sweden's entry into the EU, but also targeted the international community in general (Dodillet & Östergren 2011). In fact, to better coordinate these efforts on the regional level, the Swedish Women's Lobby was founded as a European mouthpiece^{xx} for Swedish women's associations using the EWL meta-organizational structure as a model in 1997, thus facilitating coordination (and influence over) the latter.

But what is most impressive about today's abolitionist movement is how quickly and completely it came to dominate how prostitution is framed as a public problem in the EU^{xxi} – culminating in 2014, when in February the EP passed a non-binding resolution recommending that Member States adopt policies to attack the demand for prostitution by punishing the clients, not the prostitutes (EP P7_TA(2014)0162). In their introduction to an edited volume entitled *Feminism and the State: The Politics of Neo-Abolitionism* Eilis Ward and Gillian Wylie

(2017) apply Kikkink and Keck's (1998) study of norm life cycles to the transnational spread of the penalization of clients through international UN and regional EU structures. Using a vocabulary of "norm entrepreneurs" and "norm battles", they suggest that the norm of penalizing clients is close to reaching "critical mass" – a tipping point from which, if more countries follow suit by adopting it, it will "cascade" into the international system in such a way that a government will rapidly adopt it because of being aware that this "has become an expected aspect of legitimate behavior (2017:14)". The end of this life cycle is achieved when the norm becomes part of what is understood as commonsense.

From Swedish MEP Eriksson's 2004 report taking a hostile stance towards Member States attempting to normalize prostitution to the EWL's critically disappointed reaction to Amnesty's support of full decriminalization of the sex trade, the abolitionist's definition of "legitimate behavior" is to endeavor to end prostitution because it is not compatible with a gender equal and democratic society. Thus, deviation from this is qualified as illegitimate or aberrant behavior. Collective entities and states are subject to socializing processes too, as demonstrated by Brian Greenhill (2010) in his study of participation in intergovernmental organizations affects states' human rights behavior. The best demonstration of this in the case of the EWL's "norm entrepreneuring" may be the Brussels' Call "Together For A Europe Free From Prostitution" planned from 2010 and launched in December 2012 in concertation with French abolitionist groups Le Mouvement du Nid and Fondation Scelles (EWL 2012).

The project coordinated by Pierrette Pape, policy officer of the EWL Secretariat in Brussels, has consisted in the production of various lobbying documentation which are available on their website. These include resources which Mathieu (2015) would qualify as "cognitive", such as the leaflet "18 Myths On Prostitution" aiming to cut through misconceptions by providing "human rights evidence based answers to the reality of prostitution and trafficking in women in Europe and in the world (EWL 2014)." Other materials are more "affective" such as a video public outreach project entitled "For A Change In Perspective" developed with Black Moon productions depicting "a steady stream of women visit[ing] a young male prostitute, leaving money on a table in payment for his submission to their desires (EWL 2011)." Intended to shock its public, the spell cast by the visual and sonorial aspects^{xvii} of the man orally pleasuring his customers followed by him rhythmically brushing his teeth is ultimately broken by a voice-over in the end:

If I had to have sex ten times a day with strangers for a living, at what point would I feel sick? From the beginning surely. Yet this is the daily reality for prostituted persons. Prostitution is a form of violence and oppression. I refuse to be a party to it. What about you? (EWL 2011)

Alongside this willingness to put forward their issue framing and remedy is the aspiration to link the abolitionist worldview to that of Europe. This is apparent not only through the quotes from supporters they wish to highlight – like this one from Swedish MEP Mikael Gustafsson

With the Brussels' Call, we clearly see that the abolition of prostitution is a value shared by many across Europe [...] (EWL 2013)

-- but also the decision to preface nearly all campaign materials with this famous quote from *Les Misérables* (1862) by French novelist and politician Victor Hugo

They say that slavery has disappeared from European civilization. That is incorrect. It still exists, but now it weighs only on women, and it is called prostitution.

Adding "He would have signed. What about you? (EWL 2012)" this evocation of this figure known across Europe for supporting social values – despite being somewhat political erratic – is meant to creation an important symbolic connection between the abolitionist cause and the European identity. The message is clear: the prostitute, the lowest among us (a slave), should be protected and to neglect to do so is to be misaligned with European social values. Further, as demonstrated in Brussel's Call lobbying material (EWL 2013), the EU risks being globally culpable of rejecting the prescriptions inherent to its moral system since the persistence of full decriminalization in Member States indicates "the failure at the European level to reach gender equality and promote women's rights (2013 ppt.)".

The Brussels' Call included an extensive lobbying of EP, for instance in October 2013 the EWL arranged a day-seminar for European parliamentarians on the reality of prostitution with the participation of the Swedish and German police, as well as abolitionist activists (Ward & Wylie 2017). The EWL's efforts were facilitated by finding an important ally in British MEP Honeyball of the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee, who was an early and staunch advocate for the abolitionist cause as demonstrated by her blog "The Honeyball Buzz" (<https://thehoneyballbuzz.com/>). Her report on sexual exploitation and prostitution and motion for an EP resolution demonstrates a clear alignment with the abolitionist views – she cites Fondation Scelles, the EWL and American abolitionist Melissa Farley – , which she connected effectively to the convictions and obligations of the EP:

Prostitution is a very obvious and utterly appalling violation of human dignity. Given that human dignity is specifically mentioned in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Parliament has a duty to report on prostitution in the EU and examine ways in which gender equality and human rights can be strengthened in this regard (2013/2103(INI))

The non-binding resolution passed by EP – with dissenting opinions from MEPs from Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Luxembourg, and Austria – recommending the adoption of the Nordic Model by Member States marked a major step towards seeing the abolitionist worldview become normative in Europe.

VI. Conclusion: Towards an Abolitionist Europe

In the debates for and against the Nordic Model we see European Civil Society present itself as a site for fashioning a new European ethos on an issue which, until recently, was carefully avoided by policy-makers. Through making a (sometimes contested^{xxiii}) causation between legalized prostitution and trafficking^{xxiv}, the abolitionist campaign in Europe has made it impossible for the EU to remain silent on the matter due to their directive (2011/36/EU) to combat traffic. Given that public policy is wielded to control the social, the Nordic Model promotes very specific emotional norms regarding prostitution which Europe must decide to authenticate or not. The patterned meanings invested in these symbols of prostitute and client are tied up in those of gender and sexuality which will have an overarching impact on the construction of a European collective identity.

ⁱ On the social identity theory, see Henri Tajfel and John Turner's (1979) *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*.

ⁱⁱ See works of the affective turn, for instance *The Affect Theory Reader* edited by Gregg & Seigworth (2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ See also the entry on Tuomela's Theory of We-Mode in Byron Kaldis, ed. (2013) *Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Social Sciences, Volume 1*.

^{iv} See for instance Jane Scoular (2004) "The 'subject' of prostitution: interpreting the discursive, symbolic and material position of sex/work in feminist theory" *Feminist Theory*. 5:3. 343-355

^v For more on this debate, see Ann Ferguson (1984) "Sex War: The Debate between Radical and Libertarian Feminists" *Signs*, 10:1, 106-112.

^{vi} For a recent publication on this issue, see *The International Politics of Trafficking* (2016) by Gillian Wylie and *Feminism, Prostitution and the State: The Politics of Neo-Abolitionism* (2017) edited by Eilis Ward and Gillian Wylie.

^{vii} French abolitionists have been extremely active in promoting their "French Model" abroad since its adoption in 2015. For instance, the French and Swedish governments co-sponsored a side event during the 2017 UN's Commission on the Status of Women, "When Victims Matter: Ending Demand For Prostitution and Trafficking For Sexual Purposes A New Paradigm and Just Policy" (CSW61).

^{viii} See Lilian Mathieu (2015) "Les Monstres Ordinaires" *Champ pénal* 7.

^{ix} See for instance Franz Boas's (1910) study of immigrants to conclude that "race" is a dynamic social construct.

^x See Eric Fassin (2013) in "On Resentment and Ressentiment: The Politics and Ethics of Moral Emotions" *Current Anthropology* 54(3): 249-267, who attempts to rehabilitate what he calls an emotion not only discredited but also repressed in the current moral economy of reconciliation.

^{xi} Follow <https://twitter.com/spaceintl>, <https://twitter.com/GlobalSexWork> or https://twitter.com/STRASS_Syndicat

^{xii} See for instance Eva Karlberg's (2013) MA thesis "The Europeanisation of the Swedish Women's Movement – A Case Study of the Swedish Women's Lobby and its Member Organisations" accessed at sh.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A692951&dsid=3982

^{xiii} <https://www.change.org/p/amnesty-international-vote-no-to-decriminalizing-pimps-brothel-owners-and-buyers-of-sex>

^{xiv} <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2017/01/19/motion-asking-amnesty-to-reconsider-its-prostitution-policy/>

^{xv} See for instance Judith Butler (2010) "Sexual Consent: Some Thoughts on Psychoanalysis and Law" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 21:2.

^{xvi} This can be found on the international, regional and national levels. See for instance in France, the Abolition 2012 campaign was opposed at many turns by STRASS, a union of French sex workers, both in the streets and in auditions before the National Assembly. There was also a campaign led by clients entitled "Touche pas à ma pute" published in *Causeur* in November 2013 in which a petition or "Manifesto of 343 assholes (*salauds*)" was provided for the freedom of sexual expression.

^{xvii} For instance, the Swedish government appointed the Committee of Inquiry to Evaluate the Ban against the Purchase of Sexual Services in 2008 which published a report, the "Skarhed report" named after its chair, on its findings in 2010. The law is said to have been successful: a decrease in street prostitution and "a change of attitude with regard to the purchase of sexual services, which coincides with the criminalization of the purchase of such services (Swedish Institute 2010:9). On the other hand, the Netherlands, which like Germany has decriminalized prostitution, was also the origin of a number of studies, for instance, a report released in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs claiming the benefits of the 2000 legalization and regularization of brothels on sex work safety.

^{xviii} See Mumby and Putnam (1992) “The Politics of Emotion: A Feminist Reading of Bounded Rationality”, *Academy of Management Review*, 17, 3 465-486.

^{xix} Or more: for instance, in France, auditions at the Assembly National included Swedish Procurer of Stockholm Lise Tamm in November 2013 (transcript available at: <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/cr-csprostit/13-14/c1314006.asp>).

^{xxxx} Cf. Europeanisation of the Swedish Women’s Movement.

^{xxi} Of course, the local translation and application of the Nordic Model into different national settings, however, demonstrates varying degrees of faithfulness due to existing local practices and structures. For instance, in Northern Ireland those selling sex in groups of more than one person can be prosecuted for brothel keeping (Ward & Wilie 2017).

^{xxii} A similarly styled video spot was produced by Le Mouvement du Nid “Les Bourreaux” (MDN 2016)

^{xxiii} See for instance Mathieu (2014) *La Fin du tapin*.

^{xxiv} Sweden’s first EU Commissioner Anita Gradin brought human trafficking to the European agenda in 1995 (Wade & Wylie 2017).