

Global pressures, local measures: the re-regulation of sex work in the Antwerp Skipper's Quarter

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the changes in the Antwerp Skipper's Quarter, one of the oldest and largest red light districts on the European continent. While the geography of sex work has received considerable scholarly attention since the 1970s, such analyses have focused upon the interplay between market pressures and sexual values in the production of sexual spaces. This paper takes a different stance, as it analyses the Skipper's Quarter's restructuring in the light of the globalization of the sex industry. This analysis reveals how more attention should be paid to globalization's local mediation (glocalization) in the analysis of the changing urban geographies of sex work. Such an approach not only supports the interpretation of local diversity in the urban geographies of sex work. It also conveys a more politicized understanding as it

zooms in on the political struggles in which new urban geographies of sex work unfold.

Changing geographies of red light districts

Throughout the urban west, the spatial form and location of prostitution zones appear to be changing. From Times Square to Soho, from Place Pigalle to the Reeperbahn, since the 1990's once notorious 'skid rows' are in transformation . These changing geographies of sex work have attracted considerable scholarly attention (Papayanis, 2000; Ryder, 2004; Cameron, 2004; McKewon, 2003; Hubbard, 1997; 1999; 2004a; 2004b; Hubbard et al., 2008; Hubbard and Whowell, 2008; Löw and Ruhne, 2009; Aalbers and Deinema, 2010). Relying heavily on the theoretical fundamentals laid by pioneering geographers like Symanski (1974; 1981), Shumsky and Springer (1981) and Ashworth et al. (1988), the literature generally deploys a two-pronged framework, emphasizing either local market dynamics or changing local sexual values and policies to explain sex work geographies. What is lacking in these accounts is a sensitivity for supralocal, in particular global processes affecting sex industries. In this article, we will attempt to fill this gap by analyzing how the globalization of sex work sets in motion a set of local processes that change the local geography of sex work.

In terms of local market dynamics, authors have emphasized proximity of clientele, availability and affordability of premises and agglomeration economies. Symanski (1981) was the first to introduce an economic perspective to the location of sex work. He emphasized how sex workers and sex businesses operate as savvy business strategists seeking to locate where access to a large enough clientele is available, for example, in areas where there are high levels of male employment.

Ashworth et al. (1988), in a most comprehensive attempt to model the geography of prostitution in Western Europe, added the availability (and affordability) of suitable premises (i.e. land rent dynamics) as an important location factor. Ryder (2004) and Hubbard (2004a) describe how recent redevelopment of inner cities for gentrification and tourism is threatening inner-city red-light districts because of the rising land rent (and hence declining profit margins for the sex industry) it provokes. Consequently, profit-maximizing sex entrepreneurs seek out cheaper sites, or, if possible, upgrade their businesses and integrate them into the wider entertainment and tourism industry (Van Straaten, 2004; Hubbard et al., 2008).

Ashworth et al. (1988) also reveal how prostitution tends to aggregate with other functions, such as adult entertainment venues, hotels, nightlife industries (see also Gilfoyle, 1992, on 'male sporting districts' in 19th century New York). These agglomeration advantages have been explored more systematically by Cameron (2004). Defining prostitution as a club good, he identifies eight different situations where the clustering of prostitution or the clustering of prostitution with related activities can provide competitive advantages.

Simultaneously, geographers have emphasized how the enforcement of sexual morals has had important spatial effects. Analyzing the migration of sex businesses in San Francisco between 1880 and 1915, Shumsky and Springer (1981) concluded that the geographic distribution of sex work is related directly to changing law enforcement policy. For Symanski, high mobility of sex workers partly reflects a strategy of avoiding police repression: 'Where repression is strong prostitutes walk a lot. Walking cuts down on the possibility of arrests, as it is an effective method of reducing visibility' (Symanski, 1981, p. 165). For Ashworth et al. (1988), surveillance

and social control constitute a constraint on potential location, limiting prostitution to those 'immoral places' or transition zones where such marginal activities are tolerated.

Recent policy pressure on the visible presence of the sex industry in inner cities is equally explained by a renewed conservative sexual moral. After the 'tolerant' 1960s and 1970s, public opinion has become less lenient towards public visibility of the sex industry. Consequently, policy makers have attempted to repress sex work from public life (Papayanis, 2000; Sanchez, 2004; Hubbard, 2004a; 2004b; Löw and Ruhne, 2009). Moreover, as the social geography of cities in general is changing, red-light districts formerly located in 'working class' neighborhoods are now confronted with new populations that generally show less tolerance to non-normative sexual activities (Pitcher et al., 2006). For instance, immigrant populations that settle in these neighborhoods sometimes reveal themselves as virulent opponents of overt sex work (Hubbard, 1997). Middle class gentrifiers might insist on a 'revanchist' kind of cleansing of public space from all sorts of 'nuisance-producing' activities (Smith, 1996; 2002; Papayanis, 2000; Hubbard, 2004a; 2004b). Attempts to close sex businesses or displace street prostitutes are widespread, and in urban regeneration discourse, quality of life for residents seems hard to reconcile with the sex industry. Prostitutes themselves, to avoid harassment by police or protesters, explore new geographical tactics (Whittaker and Hart, 1996; Sanders, 2004). The appearance of new communication technologies such as mobile phones and the internet (Datamonitor, 2002) have made dispersal, hidden and even aspatial forms of prostitution more viable (Cameron, 2004), leading some commentators to announce the end of the classic central city red light or adult entertainment district (Ryder,

2004). Profit-maximizing sex entrepreneurs seek out sites where land rent is less burdensome and where no repression is to be feared.

The globalization of sex work

While recent analyses have explored in depth the local determinants of the urban geographies of the sex industry, supralocal processes are lacking from these accounts. This is all the more striking since the globalization of the sex industry has, recently, attracted considerable scholarly (and political) attention (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998; Sassen, 2002; Altman, 2001; Thorbek & Pattanaik, 2002; Agustin, 2007; Agathangelou, 2004; Day & Ward, 2004, Hubbard and Whowell, 2008). Two mutually related 'global' processes are emphasized in the literature: first, a growing international mobility of sex workers; second, the establishment of a 'transnational sex industry' dominated by multinational, highly structured organizations giving sex work more than before a 'big business' character.

Symanski already emphasized how the "demand for diversity has been a significant reason for the [interurban and international] mobility of prostitutes" (Symanski, 1981, p. 184) in the late twentieth century. Since the time of his writing, international migration and tourism has been facilitated even more (e.g. by the expansion of low-cost flights or the creation of the EU-Schengenzone). This increase of migration and tourism includes growing numbers of sex tourists and migrating prostitutes (Ryan and Hall, 2001; Thorbek and Pattanaik, 2002), giving a new boost to the sex industry. Constituting new spaces of action and erotic/exotic pleasures for sex buyers, transnational sex markets greatly stimulate demand (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001; Marttila, 2008).

But globalization also resulted in a transformation of the organization of the sex industry. The past decades have witnessed deep transformations of local economies in developing countries, resulting in growing male unemployment and decreasing government budgets for social services. In search for new survival strategies for their families, women have increasingly sought to migrate to work in global economic centers, where they are in great demand, for household and service jobs, but also in the sex industry (Truong, 1990; Sassen, 2001). Migration to work in a different country is not an evident endeavor, even when enhanced transport and communication technology lifted some of the technical obstructions. Most migrants depend upon external help from intermediaries (Goss & Lindquist, 1995). This might involve the provision of passports, visas, change of identity and work permits. But it also includes lending money for the trip or acquiring know how about interacting with foreign authorities. Most importantly, migrants also need information about where to get a job, which might include names and addresses, transport, translation, technical and cultural information,.... Migrant sex workers in particular, often already working in the margins due to moral regulation, need support from intermediary organizations to enter foreign markets, which opens up possibilities for economic exploitation and profit making by these organizations on the backs of dependent migrants (Agustin, 2007, pp. 27-30). Consequently, Sassen (2001) identifies the emergence of a global sex industry, increasingly dominated by large transnational (often criminal) organizations seeking to connect to and invade more and more local 'markets' (see also Sanchez, 2003). Whereas globalization is now generally acknowledged as deeply transforming the character and organization of contemporary sex work (Hubbard and Whowell, 2008), the resulting transformation of local sex markets and local urban geographies of sex work remains largely unexplored. Notable, but still

fragmentary exceptions are Sanchez (2003) on the link between the visibility of commercial sex and a city's integration in the world city network; Berman (2003), describing how racist attitudes towards migrant sex workers emerge within local markets; O'Neill et al. (2008), who emphasize how reactions to street sex work are increasingly informed by media discourses about their 'Otherness' and Bernstein (2004) who describes local policy reactions towards globalization. The focus in these analyses lies on the reactions to the presence of racial or ethnic 'others' in the global city.

Conversely, we convey a wider 'glocalization' perspective to examine changing urban geographies of sex work as a result of the local mediation of globalised tendencies. In a very general sense, the concept of 'glocalization' emphasizes the *interplay* between global and local processes to produce different kinds of political, social, and economic spatial interrelations. In this contribution however, we deploy a political economy approach on 'glocalization' which explores the political dimensions of this interaction.

The glocalization of sex work

Political economic work on 'glocalization' has focused on the interaction between global structures and processes and local politics and institutions. Swyngedouw (1997) introduces the 'glocalization' concept to avoid prioritizing a global or a local perspective, but to emphasize their mutual constitution through social struggle.

These interaction processes are conceived in two complementary ways: first, the effects of global processes are considered to be 'mediated' locally by local institutions; second, global processes are supposed to feed or translate into locally

particular political mobilizations and struggles. Both processes have the effect of creating 'locally distinct' paths of globalization.

The local mediation thesis explains the variegated impact of globalization on particular localities as a consequence of its mediation by local 'regulatory regimes' (Swyngedouw & Baeten, 2001; Le Galès, 2002). These are the relatively coherent and stabilized sets of institutions, rules and practices that regulate social and economic processes; They have acquired a locally specific character as a consequence of their path dependent historical development (Brenner & Theodore, 2002).

However, this perspective risks of giving an impression of presupposing an already existing stable and coherent local 'regulatory regime'. To avoid such a static approach, MacLeod & Goodwin (1999, p. 706) advocate focusing on the 'becoming' of particular regulatory processes and modes. This entails a more political focus, emphasizing the way globalization supports the development of new political actors and struggles (Oosterlynck, 2010). Global processes may be translated to local politics in case they affect the content of localities which makes them into crucial 'spaces of dependence' for people (providing conditions which are crucial for the wellbeing or sense of significance of a certain group), or if localities provide significant resources for mobilization for certain social groups and hence turn into 'spaces of engagement' with global processes (Cox, 1998).

A strong tendency in the political economy literature on globalization sees both processes as interrelated. It regards the regulation of societies not as a separate domain of state policies, but as intensely connected and resulting from the contentious and collaborative interaction between actors and groups with particular

interests (Le Galès, 2002; Jessop, 2002). This strategic relational approach emphasizes how local regulatory regimes are the arena in which local political struggles unfold, an arena which is strategically selective in that it structures the power relations between different actors and regulates their struggle. For this reason, it will simultaneously be a target for these struggles, as different local groups attempt to rearrange regimes to alter its mediating effects on global tendencies and restructure the local power balance.

Drawing upon these formulations, we can imagine a hypothetical 'glocalization' scenario for the sex industry: how global changes in the sex industry incite local political struggles and regulatory changes to produce new spatial structures. Such a stepwise scenario is a useful heuristic tool which allows us to analytically distinguish the various factors involved (see Loopmans, 2008; Loopmans et al., 2010).

Theoretically, we can discern 4 different steps in the process:

First, we suppose a relatively stable *existing regime* of regulation for sex work. A regime which has had time to develop a compromise between different political interests and which stabilized in a set of organizations, rules and traditions.

Second, new *global processes* exert influence on local social structures and create tensions. Global processes are 'localized' in two ways. First, local institutions and regulations affect the way global processes are translated in changing local social structures and tensions. For instance, increased international migration might have been more susceptible of inciting racist reactions in Amsterdam, where window prostitution takes place in the middle of the city, as compared to Rotterdam, where

both window and street prostitution have been forbidden and transnational sex workers remain hidden for the wider public. Second, local reactions to these tensions depend upon the way social groups consider themselves as being locally affected by these tensions, and upon the extent to which they succeed in organizing themselves as relevant local collective actors in order to defend their local interests. Brussels hosts two areas where sex workers are active on the streets. In the first, a traditional upper class neighborhood, this has never caused a stir. In a second, recently gentrified area, new middle class residents put up a decade long struggle against street prostitution (Loopmans et al., 2008).

Third, local political mobilization and struggle will result in the development of new policy experiments which attempt to respond to new political claims; the form and content of these experiments is not only dependent upon the content of political struggles, but also upon the type of *organizations and actors* available locally to develop specific policies. In Rotterdam, contestation of street prostitution resulted in new measures by the Municipal Health Service, whereas in Glasgow, the local Police took a more prominent role resulting in more security-oriented initiatives (Loopmans et al, 2008). Simultaneously struggles will unfold over the local power relations embedded in the existing regulatory structure which, if successful, will also introduce new actors involved in the regulation of sex work.

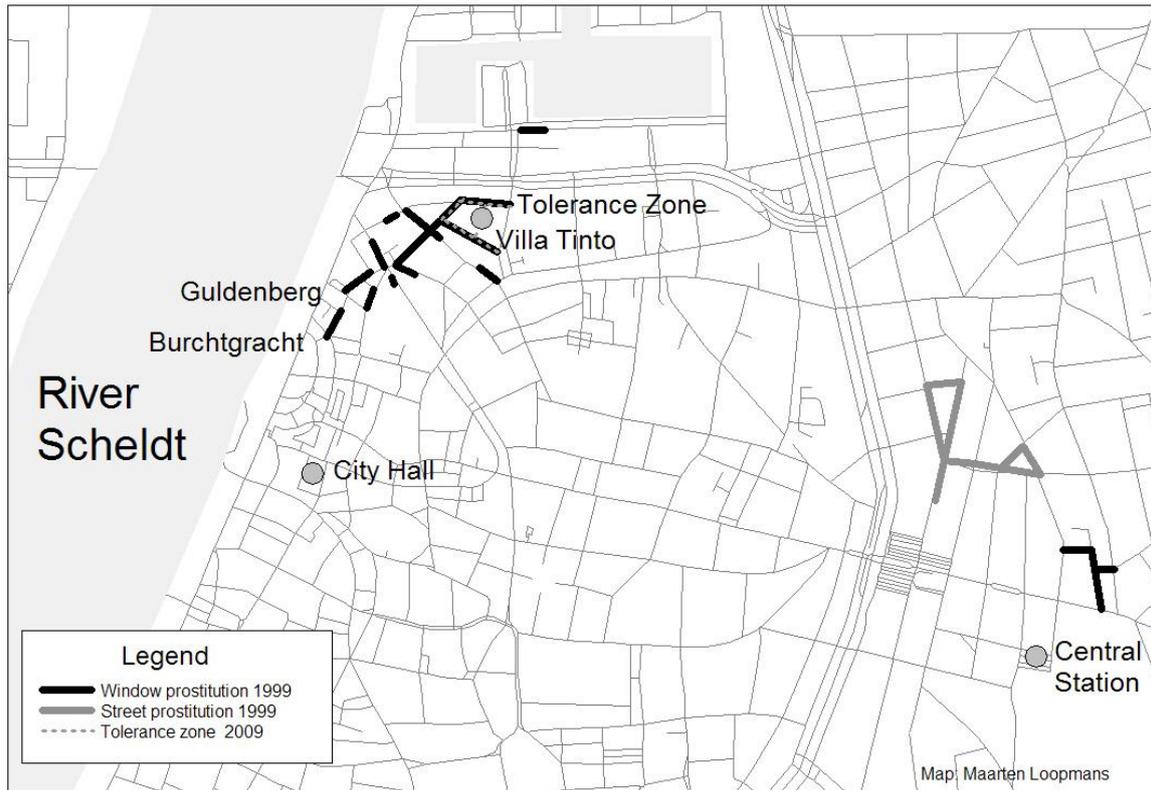
Fourth, the diverse set of policy experiments is consolidated into a *new regulatory regime* which succeeds in establishing a temporary compromise between various political interests. This new regulatory regime will result in a different mediation of global processes, resulting in a new spatial organization of the sex industry with its own distinct social and political effects.

The city of Antwerp, where recently, important changes have been introduced in the regulation of its traditional red-light district, serves as a case to explore how this hypothetical scenario fits glocal reality.

Antwerp and its 'Skippers Quarter'

The Antwerp 'Schipperkwartier' (Skippers' Quarter) is one of the oldest red-light districts in Europe. According to Prims (1935) the sex industry took root here when, in 1403, a city ordinance relegated prostitutes to the area of the Guldenberg (figure 1). During its long-lasting history in one of the oldest parts of Antwerp, the Skipper's Quarter underwent different transformations. We will focus on the most recent transformation that completely reshaped the area. In the mid 1980s the Skipper's Quarter was an expansive zone reaching northward from City Hall up to the port area (figure 1), infamous for its mix of prostitution, gay disco's and "chav bars", intermingled with dilapidated working class housing and black market stores for all kinds of goods. Today, most of the former red light zone has been turned into a quiet residential area, where small scale social housing and up market lofts alternate with fancy restaurants and cafés. Window prostitution is concentrated in three, intensely renovated streets to the north – known as the 'zone of tolerance'.

We reconstruct the history of these changes through the double method of document analysis (both primary –government reports, council minutes, etc...- and secondary – press reports, research reports,... documents have been collected) and oral history, recorded from interviews with relevant key actors in the process.



Phase 1: geographies of 'unregulated tolerance'

The introduction of abolitionist national law in 1948 ended a long history of official regulation of prostitution. The law (1) forbade municipalities to regulate prostitution, (2) abolished the existing municipal regulations and (3) changed the Belgian criminal laws making the exploitation of prostitution by third parties (but not prostitution itself) a crime, but (4) left the municipalities a competence to intervene with prostitution to protect public order and public moral. The abolitionist law intended to eradicate prostitution without punishing the prostitute; the prostitute was considered an unwilling victim of criminal exploitation and needed rehabilitation and support instead. Punishment was strictly reserved for brothel owners, pimps, traffickers and other third persons benefiting from- the prostitution of others, hoping, thereby, to make prostitution impossible. In countries like the Netherlands and Belgium however, such

abolitionist visions never succeeded in fully winning the hearts and minds of local governors expected to implement the law (Brants, 1998). Taking the liberty not to prioritize the prosecution of these offences, they informally tolerated brothels and other sex work premises as long as these did not cause public nuisance and outrage. In political debates about the overwhelming presence of prostitution in the Antwerp historic centre, even advocates of abolitionism admitted the historical connection between Antwerp and its red light district, the important position of the latter in the city's night life and its traditional relation with the city's harbour.

However, these practices of informal tolerance did nothing to resolve the legal void prostitutes found themselves in as a consequence of abolitionist law. The criminalization of exploitation made it difficult to officially rent premises for prostitution or sign legal working contracts; abolitionist law de facto informalized prostitution. Non-regulation increased the social and spatial marginalization of prostitutes. Depending upon the benign neglect of policy makers and police officers, prostitution concentrated in the marginalized and long neglected Skipper's Quarter to the north of City Hall. But tolerance, being unregulated, always remained temporary: prostitution was under constant threat of relocation by various attempts to purify and renew parts of the area (see e.g. Migom, Veekeman & Van der Auwera, 2004; Tijs, 1993; Vanreusel, 1990). Demolitions near City Hall in the 1960s and 1970s, in preparation of a modernist large scale renewal scheme were followed, in the 1980s, by different phases of smaller scale social housing construction and private urban regeneration. Prostitutes, having no legal basis to resist, were the first to be pushed out. Each measure displaced the red-light district further north towards the port area; simultaneously, uncertainty dissuaded the sex industry from long-term investment in

the urban environment, stimulating the further marginalization and downgrading of the area.

Phase 2: the challenges of glocalisation

The practice of unregulated tolerance came under pressure when, in the 1980s, the two previously discussed dimensions of the sex industry's globalization process (international mobility and industrialization) affected the Skipper's Quarter.

Resultantly, social tensions increased on various fields, and gave rise to two different, successful mobilizations by actors affected by the changes: a sex workers' union, and a residents' committee.

The first and foremost sign of globalization in the Skipper's Quarter was an influx (or rather through-flux) of foreign sex workers. In a first stage, sex workers from the Filipinas, Dominican Republic, Brazil and Africa occupied more and more windows, followed by Eastern Europeans after 1989. As elsewhere, international migration of prostitutes to the Antwerp Skipper's Quarter was supported by trafficking networks and involved a Taylorization¹ and increase of scale of the sex industry (Fijnaut, 1994). As newly arriving prostitutes were often also unaware of their social rights and had difficulties in getting access to health or other facilities, exploitation and working conditions aggravated.

¹ We use the word Taylorization to evoke an analogy with the productivity increase realised by a stricter 'scientific' management of labour in early 20th century industries; for sex work, the growth of transnational 'sex businesses' in Antwerp has been related by Fijnaut (1994) to stricter management of the activities of sex workers to increase revenue.

A first reaction to this situation was the emergence of a sex workers' union in Antwerp. In 1988, inspired by the sex workers emancipation movement for social recognition and rights and touched by the situation of many foreign prostitutes, local community activist Patsy Sörensen and Yolande Grensson, a former prostitute, founded the NGO 'Payoke'.

"There was another eviction pending (closing windows in the Burchtgracht), but there was also the nonexistence of specific services helping prostitutes and the lack of protection for the women. I wanted to set up a prostitutes union and Yolande wanted a place where women could find a shelter without being criticized for being a prostitute. PA from Patsy, YO from Yolande and KE because we like diminutives: Payoke was born." (Sörensen, 1994, p.59)

Payoke's purpose was to defend the rights and interests of prostitutes, to give legal, health and administrative advice and to help prostitutes gain access to existing social and health services (Payoke, 2005).

The sex workers' union rapidly gained political strength and leverage, and was integrated in local policy networks. Originating in the midst of the AIDS-panic, Payoke soon received funding for AIDS-prevention, enabling the organization to professionalize. Besides its aid to prostitutes Payoke started lobbying and networking and regularly developed actions against the city and against criminal involvement in prostitution (Coenen, 1998; De Smedt, 1997, Payoke, 1997, Sörensen, 1994).

Sörensen, a member of the Antwerp social-democrat party, was elected for the City Council in 1988.

In 1991, invited by the alderwoman 'for the emancipation of women' Ivonne Julliams, Payoke joined the newly developed municipal consultative group 'STOEP', involving the city administration, the police, social services and Payoke. STOEP was to develop proposals for a more coherent and effective local prostitution policy. However, STOEP's recommendations did not result in policy measures and by the end of 1993, after a fierce struggle between prostitutes and the municipal government over the eviction of prostitution from the southern, increasingly residential part of the neighborhood, STOEP was put on hold (Florijn, 1998:127).

Meanwhile, Sörensen, in collaboration with journalist Chris de Stoop, succeeded in drawing considerable attention to the impact of criminal networks on the prostitution sector, more in particular in relation to trafficking. De Stoop's writings on trafficking in the Flemish journal Knack between 1990 and 1992 inspired King Baudoin of Belgium in 1992 to visit Payoke, speak to a number of trafficking victims and to urge for a national policy against trafficking. The royal visit and national political attention for trafficking boosted Payoke's local political relevance as a spokesperson for the Antwerp prostitutes. In 1994, Sörensen (now switching to the green party) succeeded Julliams as alderwoman. Although she formally resigned as Payoke's chairwoman, Sörensen kept pushing for a prostitute friendly prostitution policy in local government and reactivated STOEP in 1995.

A second political reaction to globalization was related to the social externalities of increased mobility and exploitation in the sex industry. In the mixed area the Skipper's Quarter was, this put stress upon the longstanding cohabitation between residents and prostitutes. The rapid circulation of prostitutes from city to city inhibited them from integrating into local networks. Increasingly driven by a need for quick

profit, they no longer respected local conventions and rules of behavior. Still modest contestation by residents in the early 1980s of the unruly behavior of some prostitutes in areas destined for social housing, led to the introduction of the 1982 municipal 'Curtain Regulation', which formulated rules on the public behavior of prostitutes and the appearance of prostitution windows, and forbade prostitution in residential areas. However, in the 1990s, after the fall of the iron curtain, immigration for sex work increased. . More and more houses were turned into prostitution windows, crowding streets with car-driving clients; . Increased competition between and professional exploitation of prostitutes led to more aggressive soliciting. Meanwhile, permanent uncertainty about municipal tolerance led to disinvestment in the building stock, while criminal networks, expanding their sphere of activity to illegal trade, drug- and weapon dealing fought out bloody gang wars over who was to control the neighborhood. Residents mobilized against these problems. Nonetheless, -and in contrast with other neighborhoods with visible prostitution in the city (see Beaumont and Loopmans, 2008)- resident organizations kept emphasizing that they did not want to get rid of prostitution or prostitutes as such; sex work was too much part of the neighborhood's social history. They merely wanted the nuisance and related crime to be tackled, as illustrated by the reaction of an action committee leader:

"I'm a Catholic. I don't like prostitution. I mean I'm not against the girls themselves, but against their exploitation. We were not against the girls, we didn't want to get rid of them. It's part of the neighbourhood. We wanted to get rid of the nuisance and the crime. If there was a killing, or somebody got robbed, it was all 'tolerated'. The

municipality introduced the idea of a concentration zone, not us. But it was necessary to make it liveable” (Interview resident committee leader, 07/03/2005)

Residents gained voice with the advent of Leona Detiège as a mayor in 1995. Pressured by the rise of an extreme-right electoral competitor, social-democrat Detiège, who had strong clientelist ties amongst Antwerp social renters, was forced to take residents’ concerns into consideration and would become their main ally in the policy network. Together with her head of cabinet (Mrs. Knockaert) and alderman Sörensen she reinvigorated local prostitution policies, but emphasized a more repressive approach. She introduced the issue at the zonal police consultation committee (the so-called pentagon-committee, bringing together the gendarmerie, local and judicial police, the public prosecutor and the mayor) where she introduced prostitution as a priority in the local safety charter and incited police forces to become tougher on trafficking, pimps, brothel and house owners and violation of public sexual morals. The purpose is to end the prostitution-related crime and nuisance residents were suffering from (Snacken et al., 1999); but not to ban prostitution as such, as mayor Detiège testifies:

I supposed, and I was not the only one, that it was an illusion to eradicate prostitution in a city like Antwerp. Therefore we made the choice, but we needed support from the judiciary for that, merely to control it. The excesses had to end. That meant everyone who is illegal, of minor age, etc..., but it also meant that we didn’t want the exploitation as it was anymore. There were houses where windows were sublet several times, where millions were earned with no more than hovels, in fact. The whole neighbourhood was in bad repair

and we wanted to do something about that too, we became more demanding in terms of hygiene and sanitation. (Interview Detiège 13/03/2007)

Phase 3: Experimenting with a new regulatory framework: institutionalization and consolidation of interests

Both mobilizations, once they gained access to the local policy network, succeeded in instigating new policy experiments which reflect the gradual institutionalization of their respective interests. It took some time, however, before these were consolidated in a coherent policy framework which could reconcile both sets of claims and conflicts remained.

STOEP, Payoke's main access point to local policy makers, regained momentum, but had to take into account the mayor's concern with public order. Hence it was involved in the closure of a smaller window prostitution area near Central Station and anti-streetwalking measures in the same area. Finally, an earlier recommendation by STOEP to create a zone of tolerance in the Skipper's Quarter where stricter control of exploitation is possible, was resuscitated. Meanwhile, Antwerp police forces increased their actions, against both trafficking and prostitution as such. They regularly raided red light districts to arrest illegal prostitutes (considered prime 'victims' of trafficking) and to scare off clients; Roadblocks were set up to stop car traffic by clients. These apparently indiscriminate actions were contested by prostitutes, property owners and some residents (setting up an action committee called 'Rosse Buurt-Toffe Buurt' - 'A Pleasant Red-Light District'), as well as by Payoke, who argued that the actions had negative effects on the wellbeing of sex workers, while nuisance and crime were hardly affected. These early policy

experiments had great difficulties reconciling sex workers interests with the claims of residents throughout the city.

Early 1997, while tensions were rising, alderwoman Sörensen coincidentally encountered Paul Lohmann whose consultancy firm Seinpost had assisted in the development of prostitution policies in a number of Dutch cities and who was willing to discuss the approach to follow in Antwerp. In august 1997, STOEP was transformed into BOP (policy development group prostitution), constituted of representatives of the mayor and alderman Sörensen, the head of the social affairs office, the chief commissary of the local police, the emancipation officer and representatives of the social affairs office. Payoke and related civil society organizations and action committees were deliberately kept out. While these organizations contested their exclusion, the installation of BOP at the same time institutionalized the interests they represented. BOP was to translate the recommendations of STOEP into a workable and coherent policy plan which would also direct further police action. From march 1998 onwards, Karin Martens, was appointed as an official exclusively dealing with prostitution-related matters. She coordinated BOP and took care of the contacts with residents and organizations representing the sex industry like Payoke or Rosse Buurt-Toffe Buurt. After a series of meetings with the mayor, Lohmann's consultancy bureau Seinpost was commissioned in 1998 to create a prostitution policy plan for Antwerp. The creation of BOP, the prostitution official and the prostitution policy plan professionalized and consolidated policy development, but also closed off decision making. From 1998 till 1999 Lohmann and Martens, supported by mayor Detiège, Mrs. Knockaert, alderwoman Sörensen and representatives of the police and public prosecutor

developed the Antwerp prostitution policy plan (Seinpost adviesbureau 1999). The plan was approved in March 1999 by the board of aldermen. The approval of the plan signified the consolidation and integration of interests as expressed by the Pentagon Committee, STOEP and BOP. It had three goals which reflect the different political interests involved : (1) to reduce nuisance and related crime and trafficking (2) to offer better working conditions for prostitutes, and (3) to counter the physical deterioration of the area (Seinpost Adviesbureau 1999). The plan would be used, in the first place, to guide and streamline the various policy experiments and initiatives developed in Antwerp. As Mrs. Knockaert testifies,

We soon discovered that if we wanted to make progress with this integral approach, we needed a document. In BOP, we decided that we needed a document. We needed a policy plan. If you send policemen on the streets, you need to have a document which describes to them the policy context for the execution of their tasks. (Interview Knockaert 18/07/2008)

To fulfill the first goal the plan suggested to delineate an official and limited ‘tolerance zone’ of three streets in the Skipper’s Quarter where police control could be more effectively deployed. All prostitution windows outside the tolerance zone had to be closed, while also street prostitution had to be relegated to a Dutch-style ‘tippelzone’ outside residential areas. Seinpost was commissioned to look for a suitable location. Working conditions and the built environment were to be improved by a stricter regulation and control of property owners, stipulating conditions for the interior design of prostitution houses , while public health and social assistance had to be improved and public spaces renewed.

Phase 4: Re-regulation roll-out

In this final phase, the policy plan guided and coordinated all policy measures. They consolidated into a new regulatory regime which, different from the period of 'unregulated tolerance', is now characterized by a renewed local regulationist approach to prostitution. This has strongly affected its geographic organization. It decoupled the sex industry from the 'skid row' habitat it was relegated to in the period of 'unregulated tolerance' and turned it into a highly segregated, strictly controlled area which is well embedded in the gentrified inner city surrounding it.

In a first step, from 1999-2002, the tolerance zone was realized. The local police were the most active partner involved. In 1999, the city gave the window and street prostitution area near central station a final blow by expropriating the premises and turning them into a design center and up market housing. In June 2000, two new regulations were approved by the city council. The first regulation restricted window prostitution in the city of Antwerp to a tolerance zone of three streets in the Skipper's Quarter. The second required owners of prostitution houses in the tolerance zone to thoroughly renovate their properties and to enforce stipulated conditions set on the use of properties for prostitution. Sanitary facilities and comfortable working conditions for prostitutes were to be provided, and, allegedly to prevent trafficking, subletting or letting windows to undocumented migrants and minors was forbidden.

In the second half of 2001 the police closed down all prostitution houses outside the 'zone of tolerance' (about 150 in 14 streets)., Moreover all semi-legal black-market shops in the area were shut down and criminal activities expelled.

This apparently one-sidedly repressive policing ignited a last round of protest. First, people owning prostitution houses outside the tolerance zone resisted their investment going obsolete; second, Skipper's Quarter residents contested the many

empty buildings after the 'clean-up' (and the squatting of one of them by anti-homelessness activists). Finally, resident committees in other parts of the city blocked the development of a similar tolerance zone for street prostitutes.

In a second step however, Karin Martens and Paul Lohmann prepared the implementation the plan's 'soft side'. First, the second regulation was enforced by forcing proprietors in the tolerance zone to renovate their properties and provide the necessary sanitary facilities and working comfort for prostitutes. Only properties that fitted all conditions stipulated in the regulation were given a fitness certificate. If by 2004, no certificate was received, the premises would be closed by the police.

Simultaneously, more positive measures were developed. In the first half of 2000, prostitution officer Karin Martens secured federal subsidies through the federal 'Large Cities Policy Fund' for prostitution policy and the regeneration of the Skipper's Quarter. From 2000-2007, the Skipper's Quarter received more than € 9, 5 million of federal subsidies. New people with new skills, such as the urban planning unit, joined BOP to form the 'steering committee Skipper's Quarter'. They translated the prostitution policy plan in a spatial development vision for the whole Skipper's Quarter and concomitant actions (Stad Antwerpen, 2002a) and set up a communication strategy to win the hearts of the wider public (Nieuwinckel, 2007). Their intervention seduced new, also private partners to contribute to the policy plan. In the midst of the tolerance zone, the health house 'Ghapro' was realized in 2002, a collaboration with the University of Antwerp providing permanent and specialized health and social care for prostitutes. Public spaces were renovated, and public toilets provided. A second city property, located at the heart of the tolerance zone, was sold to a private developer who turned it into Villa Tinto, a high-tech 51 windows

bordello. Opening in 2005, it was designed by a star-architect in collaboration with city officials and the police to provide maximum safety and comfort for prostitutes (including fingerprint recognition and panic bells in each room, and a permanent police office). Outside the tolerance zone, a squatted city warehouse was renovated and turned into a community centre, and former brothels were renovated and transformed into dwellings by the city's public real estate company. Private renovations in the area received municipal subsidies and logistic support, an old port warehouse was transformed into a medium-scale housing project in collaboration with the private sector, ten streets and two squares were refurbished; gentrification spread across the neighborhood (Haine, 2007a and 2007b and Haine et al. 2007).

By 2007, the Skipper's Quarter had completely changed character. (From a highly mixed, unruly and dilapidated area, it was turned into a totally segregated, highly regulated and fashionably renovated sex work district. Restructured according to a re-regulation logic, the new Skipper's Quarter appears to succeed in restabilizing the sex industry's integration in the city. The new logic and organization embodies and reconciles the main political interests which fed the 1990s struggles over the local regime of unregulated tolerance. Although the final concentration area is considerably smaller than the area of prostitution before, the same number of windows (about 300) are available and the legal demarcation guarantees the sex industry a stable and visible area designated for sex work in Antwerp. Moreover, due to the renovations and strict enforcement of regulations, the working conditions of prostitutes considerably improved and social, health and safety facilities are now provided, while trafficking and exploitation is said to be banned from the tolerance zone.

Clearly, these last results were influenced by the actions, lobbying and networking by Payoke and related people and organizations. The mayor and her cabinet from their part have deliberately and strategically stood up against property owners who profited from excessive rents and neglected their buildings. Simultaneously, the 'zone of tolerance' also embodies the control and public safety logic the mayor, public prosecutor and police forces insisted on under pressure of resident committees (BOP, 1997; Snacken et al., 1999). The most compact and segregated zone possible has been chosen as to contain all possible nuisance and collateral criminal activities. Although stabilized, the new regulatory regime of re-regulation does cause some collateral damage. With a new study on Antwerp prostitution (Van San, 2008), the municipal division on prostitution has pointed at the worsening situation of vulnerable groups: those in more dispersed forms of underground prostitution (to some extent those driven out of window prostitution, such as undocumented migrants), street prostitutes who, after an unsuccessful quest for a tippelzone, remain hunted by the police and deprived from the kind of social support sex workers in the tolerance zone and finally, the long neglected but growing group of underage male prostitutes in the city². In 2008, a new prostitution policy plan has been devised which explicitly refers to the problems experienced by these groups (Stad Antwerpen, 2008). However, with political mobilization proving more difficult than in the window prostitution sector, officials have a hard time securing budgets for the implementation of the measures they propose.

² The neglect of male prostitution is no particularity for the Antwerp case. Men who sell sex are generally absent in local and national prostitution strategies (Whowell, 2010) and research (Hubbard and Whowell, 2008), even though they often make up a considerable proportion of a city's sex workers population (Van de Hazel et al., 2008).

Conclusion: 'glocalizing' prostitution research?

By conveying a political economy approach to the recent history of the Antwerp red-light district, this article serves a two-pronged purpose. First, we wanted to relate the recent literature on the globalization of sex industries to more established theories explaining the urban geographies of sex work. Our article has revealed how the local politics of sex work's spatial regulation is more complex than shifting morals or changing market dynamics (factors external to the sex business itself) would suggest. Local geographies of sex work are also affected by the globalization of sex industries, although the effects of globalization are mediated by local institutions and actors. Introducing the 'glocalization' concept in prostitution research allows for a more dynamic and nuanced understanding of changing sex work geographies that takes into account the interaction between global structural changes, local institutions and the activities of local social and political actors. Understanding changing urban geographies of sex work as 'glocalization' suggests that the outcome is locally contingent, and explains the wide diversity of forms currently produced better than more universal theories about local market dynamics or changing moral values.

Secondly, this perspective serves to politicize our understanding of the geographical organization of sex work. Instead of focusing on abstract forces like market dynamics or changing moral values to explain policy changes, our approach zooms in on the concrete political struggles through which new sexual geographies unfold. Our case study has revealed the indeterminacy of who will win or lose, and emphasized the need for political engagement to secure more inclusive geographies. Our approach does not only serve a more subtle scholarly understanding of changing geographies of sex work. It also allows researchers to strategically explore spaces of maneuver

through which the relevance of their research can be enhanced (see Beaumont et al., 2005) and offers activists and interest groups an insight in how to assess their stakes and potential impact.

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