The image of Prostitution
In the Icelandic media and its impact on legislation

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In the Icelandic media and its impact on legislation

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Lokaverkefni til 180 eininga B.A-Prófs við Hug- og Félagsvísindasvið
Yfir lýsing

I hereby declare that this final project is all my own work,

except as indicated in the text.

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I hereby declare that this final-project satisfies, in my own opinion, requirements for a
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Abstract

The subject of this thesis is of prostitution in Iceland and its changing image over the years. The thesis also looks at how effective the publicity, the fourth estate is when it comes to legislation in relations to the matter.

The history of prostitution in Iceland is not clear. In the past the matter was a hidden problem, which was not talked or written about. When researching for this thesis it was important to go through the available literature on the matter to be able to reflect the most accurate image of the history of prostitution and its origin. Newspaper articles were used to look at the history of coverage and its time of publication compared to legislation change on the matter. Timarit.is and Credidinfo.is were mainly used to collect information for the essay and the web server was used as well to research the more recent period of 2009-2010. The keyword that was used was “Vændi á Íslandi”/prostitution in Iceland. The main conclusion was that there is a connection between the law changes and how the discussion is reflected in the society.

Útdráttur

Útfangsefni þessa verkefnis er saga vændis á Íslandi og hvernig ímynd þess hefur þróast í gegnum árin. Einnig er skoðað hversu áhrifarík umfjöllunin er og fjórða valdið, fjölmiðlarnir, þegar kemur að lagabreytingum á vændi.

Saga vændis á Íslandi er mjög óljós. Á löngum tíma var þessi vandi mjög vel falinn og ekki talað um hann né skrifað. Til að géra þetta verkefni var farið yfir gamlar sögubækur til að fá sé skýrustu mynd af sögu og upphafi vændis. Til að skoða hvernig umfjöllun hefur þróast var farið yfir gömul dagblöð, alveg til dagsins í dag og það borið saman við tímasetningu lagabreytinga. Til að fá þessar upplýsingar var notast við vefsíðurnar Tímarit.is og Credidinfo.is. Fyrir árin 2009-2010 var einnig notast við vefmiðla og leitarorðið var “Vændi á Íslandi”. Megin niðurstaða þessarar ritgerðar er að það sé samband á milli þess hvernig fjölmiðlar fjalla um málið og breytinga á lögum.
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Introduction

Prostitution has been practiced in Iceland for centuries though it has not always appeared in the same form. It is often called the oldest job in the world and even though one does not find direct references to prostitution in the Icelandic saga there are hints of it existent. The ancient stories of the Viking’s raids of foreign countries, kidnapping women and putting them into slavery or stories where goods were given in exchange for sex implicate that prostitution existed long before the word “vændi” came into Icelandic language.

Today prostitution is a well-known phenomenon in Iceland, the general public is aware of its existence as one can read it advertised in the papers every day.

The main purpose of this BA-thesis is to look at the history of prostitution in Iceland and how it has been reflected in the Icelandic media. More specifically, the essay will examine the changing image of prostitution and the impact these changes have on the legislation. Very few direct references can be found before the 20th century.

First the image of the promiscuous women was created. Then from the middle of the century and up to 1990 the prostitute was portrayed as a happy whore with good financial sense. The first reports of victims of sex slavery in Iceland came in the beginning of the 21st century. This changed public perception had a direct impact on the Icelandic legislations. There is a clear connection between the direction and aggression of discussions about prostitution at any given time and how the laws are subsequently changed.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, where each shows a different image of prostitution in Iceland and how it has been reflected by the media. In the beginning of the essay the origin of the word for prostitution and how it has been defined over the years is introduced. The development of the image is showed and categorized to what the image is being reflected for each time. The paper ends with legal aspects that show how the image has affected the legislation and a closure.
1 The origin of Icelandic prostitution

1.1 Origin of the word

The most common Icelandic word for prostitution is “vændi” or “vændiskona”. There are no good sources on where the word comes from but “vændismaður” is an old word that means a bad person. “Væn” is Icelandic for nice. “Væna” means to expect or hope. If this word is used in first or third person in past tense it is the same word as is used for prostitution or “vændi”. The word “vændi” in the meaning of expectation or hope is very little used today. But in old newspapers the word is used from time to time. There is possibly a connection between these three words to “vændi” but no reference confirms it.

In the first “Icelandic” dictionary published 1913 the definition of prostitution was not clear and the dictionary was in ancient Danish. It claims that prostitution is very hard to define, but entails some kind of a woman who takes alcoholic drinks for sex (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, 1913-16).

It was not until 1963 that a complete Icelandic dictionary was published. The new dictionary defined vændi/prostitution as “Living as a skank, skank, hooker” there was no definition of what prostitution was, just references to other words that supposedly mean the same (Árni Böðvarsson, 1963).

Almost the same definition for prostitute can be found in the dictionary that was published in 1983. The only change was made for the definition of a brothel, which was defined as a house where prostitution existed. Little changes were made in definition of different words that mean prostitution between the 1963 and 1983 editions. The word skækja/skank means “whore, hooker, prostitute”. Whore house “ship skanks”. Whore “Skank, hooker, adultery”. In 1963 dictionary the word hóra/hooker is defined “skank, a woman who sells kindness”. In 1983 the definition for the word was the same except they added “very promiscuous woman” (Árni Böðvarsson, 1983).

The most recent Icelandic dictionary which was published 2002 describes a prostitute as: “A woman who sells her affection, does prostitution, a whore”. Prostitution is described as “Someone allows intercourse in exchange for a fee or an organized business that sells intercourse”. Who is defined “Prostitute, hooker and a slut”.
Whorehouse is described “A house where organized prostitution takes place” (Mörður Árnason, 2002).

1.2 Few sources before 1900

There are very limited sources of the history of prostitution in Iceland prior to the 20th century. Hávamál is an Icelandic book from the 14th century supposedly a collection of sayings by Óðinn in Runic. In one verse it is implied that some kind of fee needs to be paid to get favor of a good will and kindness.

“Fagurtt skal mæla
Og fé bjóða
Sá er vill flýða ást fá,
líki leyfa
ins ljósa mans,
Sá fær er frjár”.

The verse explains that you have to be smooth talker and offer money if you want to have beautiful women (Hermann Pálsson. 1999:56-57).

Similar themes can be found in old Icelandic Sagas. In Egils Saga are stories about arranged marriages and kings and governors offering their daughters to entertain guests. When the main character of Egils Saga came to visit Denmark, a governor offered him to sit in his daughter’s bed where they drank and entertained themselves (Egils saga-Skalla-Grímssonar. 1989:88-89).

In 1607 the German explorer Dithmar Blefken published a travel book from Iceland. He said in his book that Icelandic traders offered their daughters that had reached puberty for one night instead of bread, food or other goods. In his book Blefken had many similar stories about Iceland and for a long time this book was the only existing book for foreign readers about life in Iceland (Dithmar Blefken. 1946:39).

The book was very controversial. Arngrímur Jónsson, an Icelandic scholar claimed that these stories were untrue and that Blefken never even came to Iceland. Even so the book was very influential at the time in northern Europe (Wikipedia, 2011).

1.3 Púta

The Icelandic word for prostitution appeared for the first time in the beginning of the 20th century. At that time the word was not “vændi” but the old Icelandic word púta.
That word was used in old newspapers in the meaning of promiscuous woman or a bad person. It is not clear where the word comes from but in Spanish “puta” means whore.

In the beginning of the 20th century the word that we use for prostitution today “vændi”, did not exist in the Icelandic vocabulary. At that time the word “pútnahús” was used for whorehouse. In the beginning of the 20th century the discussion changed from being a matter that was not spoken of to a matter of very troubled promiscuous women. The women were given out as any other possession to those who wanted to have them. It did not matter if it was just for sex for one night or in marriage for money or possession. No image was created at this point.

2 Promiscuous women

In the beginning of 1900 prostitution became for the first time an issue in Iceland in the form of promiscuous women. In 1913 Einar Hjörleifsson wrote in the newspaper Isafold:

“For few years there have been in most northern countries women that have tripped out of the road of chastity and got into “pútnahús” brothels, sold to a life of abuse if they were poor. At this time we should have “got used to it” In most countries exists that kind of misery and corruption which we have yet avoided.”

(Einar Hjörleifsson (1913).

Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir wrote similar articles at this time. Bríet fought for women’s rights in Iceland and therefore traveled a lot to see what was happening in women’s rights movements in other countries. In her articles she wrote about young women seduced into other countries in a hope for better life but when they arrived they were forced into prostitution. She called it “white trafficking”. Her explanation for this white trafficking was much like what we call today women trafficking. In her articles she wrote that this did not exist in Iceland (Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttí, 1903). Not long after the promiscuous women were also found in Iceland.

In 1921 the women union in Iceland had a discussion in one of their meetings about promiscuous women in Iceland. There were discussions about women that got paid for sex and they worried about the nation’s welfare. A Summary of the meeting was
A doctor gave them information about STD because at that time STD had increased. At the end of the meeting women agreed on a proposal with 5 items to try to prevent this promiscuity. First item was to ask parents and guardians to watch their teenagers and children carefully. Second item was to encourage the police to enforce laws better and Alþingi to create laws that would allow the control over ballrooms and that kind of entertainment. The fourth and fifth item on the proposal was to encourage congressmen to put in place a law that would counter the spreading of STD. In that respect they proposed that women would be banned from visiting ships that arrived in marine in Iceland (Siðferðismálin: fundargerð, 1921, 27. október).

There are no good sources that confirm the connection between women going on board foreign ships and prostitution. This proposal from this meeting does however strongly suggest it.

2.1 “The situation”

The image of the promiscuous women was widely used during the situation in World War II. During 1939-1945 in World War II thirty thousand American soldiers and fifteen thousand British soldiers came to Iceland. The women were immediately attracted and involved with the soldiers. Their relations were called “the situation”. In the book “Öldin okkar” or Our century, you can read the headlines in the newspapers during that time:

“The situation”

“Hundreds of women in Reykjavík are having sex with soldiers”

“Many young girls on the road to destruction”.

In the newspapers articles from this time refer to those women with very foul language, the girls who had intimate relationship with the soldiers were accused of betraying their nation and even risking the Icelandic nations neutrality (Tómas Þór Tómasson. 1984a:79).

The Icelanders who were not involved started calling the girls bad names and accusing some of them of promiscuity and taking money for sexual favors. The nation drew a very dark picture of both the girls and the soldiers (Eggert Þór Bernharðsson. 1996:17 og 18).
On the 11th of July 1941 the medical director wrote a letter to the justice department where he talked about whoring and young girls on the road to destruction. In the letter he said:

“Is it not a crime that there are so many young girls here in the bottom of living as a skank? Therefore the Justice Department hired 3 men to investigate and make suggestions of what could be done to fix “the situation”.”

In a summary of the report they quote a young girl who is 15 years old. She said that she was staying in a guesthouse and had sex with a couple of soldiers but she refused to acknowledge to have ever taken money for it. On the other hand she tells a story about a friend of hers that never gets less than 30 kr for the night. After that the police register names of 500 women in the age of 12-61 that were considered to be involved with the soldiers. The British army protested against this report and therefore the Icelandic police dropped it. (Gils Guðmundsson ritstýrði. 1951:173-174).

This was not the first time that Icelandic women were accused of taking money for sex but it was the first time that so much was published. The word prostitute was not used but the word “skækjulífnaður” or living as a skank.

In the beginning of the 20th century the image promiscuous women was created. Though the image was created the word for prostitution was still shaping. The War affected the image of promiscuous women and increased prejudices. The moral judgment of the society produced even a new Icelandic word in this time “skjækjulífnaður”.

So when prostitution appeared in the discussion for the first time in Iceland the focus of the discussion was the immoral behavior of the women. The buyers were not mentioned, this was a women matter.

### 3 The Happy whore

After the World War II the discussion of prostitution stopped. Only in 1962 it appeared again in the paper but now the focus had change drastically. The article’s name was “Honestly” and in small letters written below “Unusual financial sense for women”. The article said that prostitution existed in Reykjavík and was found out after a long search. Surprisingly this article does not judge women or call them
promiscuous. It points out that finally women are using some business sense and
taking money for sex instead of giving it away for free (Íheinskilni sagt, 1961).
In the 70th similar tone can be found in other articles like the one about the two
Icelandic girls working as prostitutes in Denmark and France. The article’s focus
point was an Icelandic girl in France who liked the job because she was very popular
and her customers always came back. The attitude towards prostitution in this article
is different from the moral emphases on the promiscuous women. She is a hard
working prostitute and good at her job (Íslands kar “pútur” í Hófn og París, 1972).
During 1978 there were a couple of articles published about prostituting. In the
articles the subject was about women enjoying sex and that men should focus more on
satisfying the women instead of focusing on worshipping their virginity.
One article from this time differs because it is like a sequel story of “the situation”
from World War II. That article interviewed a woman who had been involved with
soldiers in Keflavík. Keflavík at that time had a base for the Americans living here.
She as the other women that were interviewed about their involvement with American
soldiers did not want to recognize that she was a prostitute. But she said that there
were single moms living in Breiðholt that came regularly to Keflavík and allowed
soldiers to have sex with them and the soldiers paid them in food and tobacco. (Að
This article shows the changing image since no longer the woman was morally
judged, now they got the right to talk for themselves. In 1980 an article was published
where a professor named Jónatan Þórmundsson was wondering about whether or not
a prostitution existed in Iceland. In his article he explained what prostitution is and the
legal frame in Iceland. He said that in most countries prostitution exists so it would be
unique if it does not exist in Iceland. He said that the main reason might be that
Icelandic people are so promiscuous that they don’t need to pay for „it“, (Jónatan
Þórmundsson. 1980).
“Prostitution does exist in Iceland but just in small doses” was published in 1983.
That was the first article that actually stated without a doubt that prostitution did exist
in Iceland. The article points out few ads where women ask for financial help and in
return they offer to reward them well. In the same paper a man tells a story about
when he went to a prostitute in Iceland and the woman covers it up by saying:
I don’t sell sex I just have a group of male friends that I have sex with and afterwards they leave me presents

(Heimsókn til Reykvískrar vændiskonu.1983, 17.nov.)

Eldlínan was a show about news related things in Iceland. The coverage of the show 3rd March 1987:

“Prostitution here is a fact. Adults, teenagers and even children of both sexes sell sex. Who are the buyers? Is the prostitution organized like in other countries? Are there such things as “drug hookers” or “luxury hookers”? Prostitution here in Iceland is a problem, it is a sad truth that very few people in Iceland face. That is wrong. Lets face it and learn about it, get answers to questions that we have not dared to ask yet”

(Vændi á Íslandi, 1987).

After the show was published some reviews came out in the papers. Morgunblaðið published an article that was called “Who is next?”. Abuse was the main topic because the prostitute that was interviewed in the show was abused as a child. The opening of the discussion of the topic was praised. The new, privately owned television station was thanked for opening the discussion (Ólafur M. Jóhannesson, 1987).

One letter from a single mother was published in DV where she claimed to be upset with herself because she had not figured out that the best way to support her and her children was by working as a prostitute. She quoted “Women who are saving men from a sexless marriage”. Nine articles about prostitution were published in 1987 and all of them around the time the show Eldlínan with prostitution as a topic was in television (Vændið: Einstæðar mæður bjarga karlþjóðinni, 1987).

Nothing appeared again in the papers on prostitution until 1991. It was then that the media started to publish something about the first research that was made in Iceland about prostitution that Hansína B. Eggertsdóttir did in 1986. In that article they quote what had come out of her research and interview Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir which was a congressman for Kvennaflókkin at that time. This news reflected the discussion on Alþingi about whether to change the laws so that the sentence for being the third person in prostitution varied from 2 years to 4 years. At this time it was also in the discussion if being a prostitute should be illegal or not. Both Hansína and
Ingibjörg argued that it should not be illegal because most of the people that lived a life of prostitution did it because there were no other choices. Kvennalistinn did oppose to the idea in Alþingi that it should be illegal (HLH, 1991).

### 3.1 The first research which was done in Iceland

Hansína B. Einarsdóttir, a crime specialist, did a research on prostitution in Iceland in 1986-1988. The report was however not published in a newspaper until 1992. In her research she interviewed 12 prostitutes and some customers. She analyzed prostitution in Iceland and her result was that it is possible to define prostitution into 3 categories. First the drug prostitution, which is the cheapest one and is mostly paid with trade, where women sell their body and get drugs in return. Second is hotel/service prostitution which was at that time the biggest one according to Hansína and still growing. Third was luxury prostitution, which is the most expensive one. In luxury prostitution the women are often taken on a date, dinner or something like that. The girls need to be good looking and smart enough to be able to keep up a normal conversation.

Hansína also explained after her research on prostitution in Iceland that there existed phone prostitution, male prostitution and a couple of brothels in Iceland. New kind of prostitution was discovered, the kind that does not have sex but offers old men help taking baths that includes touching and stroking. She also pointed out that prostitution was a women matter in Iceland. They were the ones who were involved and they were the ones who gained and lost something. She criticized that the men that were involved were never mentioned. In the end it were the men who were buying sex that were the base for its existence (Anna H. Hamar, 1992, 30. júlí).

This media image of the happy whore had a direct impact on the legislation and society, for example in the increase of strip clubs opening all over the country. During 1992 there was some rise on the subject. Kvennalistinn, which was a candidate for congress, which only included women, was at this time on Alþingi. They argued that prostituting existed here. Which lead to some law change. Strip places became very popular in Iceland around 1995. It was easy to start a strip place because the laws for strip, porn or even prostitute were so limited. In these places sex was for sale. The newspaper Dagur published news about women that had been stripping and working as prostitutes. The women in this article said that the law frame
was unclear making it easy to work around it. This discussion leads to a demand from the public that the government would start to review the law (Friðrik Þór Guðmundsson, 1999)

### 3.2 Good marketing or a victim

In 1992 there was a lot of discussion in Alþingi because the laws regarding prostitute changed at this point. The discussion in parliament and in the media had reflected the changing society since the promiscuous Icelandic girl was morally judged and now the victim of sexual violence challenges the image of the happy whore. Newspaper called Pressan has an interview with a girl that started working as a prostitute 12 years old, and sold herself mostly to sailors working in Iceland. In this article congressmen were criticized for saying in the discussion that prostitution did not exist (Anna H. Hamar, 1992, 23. júlí).

Six years after Hansína´s research was made public Pressan published two pages of discussion about her research. In this article the conclusions from the research were explained; what kind of prostitution did exist and what the conclusion to this problem was. In this article Hansína proposed that it should not be illegal to be a prostitute but it should be illegal to buy one. This was the first time that this was discussed in Icelandic media and she was very criticized for this (Anna H. Hamar, 1992, 30. júlí). This is around the same time that the laws were changed for the first time. The same paper had two little columns the same day about prostitution.

“Violence survives in the safety of illegal prostitution” was the subject of one. The other one was written by the bishop where he claimed that where there was a prostitution there was a very sick community (Anna Ólafsdóttir Björnsson, 1995) (Þorbjörn Hlynur Árnason, 1995).

Still, very little was published in the newspaper from 1990 to 1999 after Hansína´s research was made public in the newspaper. In 95’ there was an article “It was told” where a man wrote:

“How do the women who never get married provide themselves? Is organized prostitution in Iceland? Many people have denied it for the reason that so much interest in it has killed the profession”. 
This small piece of text reflects how the discussion was at this time. Single mothers providing themselves (Egill Egilson, 1995).

In 1999 there were two articles published on the matter. In one of them was stated that prostitution was about free will and good marketing “The flesh is weak but worth a lot” was the headline.

“The laws of supply and demand. Do women and men not have full control of their body? Are we not free to destroy this body with any kind of unhealthy living? And are we not allowed to earn money with our body if we please, like in modeling or professional sport? Why is it not allowed to take the step to the end and earn money with it in sex business? If the demand is enough?

(Jóhannes Sigurjónsson, 1999)

4 The Victim

In the year 2000 the focuses in media coverage of prostitution change. The image of the happy whore is challenged and slowly replaced by the image of the victim. This change has an impact on the stories reported as well as the political debate in the country, like the statement by Þuríður Backman shows:

“Buying sex and sex-service is a rough force of sexual abuse says Þuríður Backman, where the power lies with the person who is buying”.

(Ásthildur Bragadótti, 2000)

The opposite opinion expressed by Hannes seemed to be slowly disappearing from the public discussion.

Hannes says that it can be good for young men to buy themselves a teaching experience for sex as well as it can have good influence on middle age marriage for the husband to seek for variation plus some instructions.

(Prófessor í villu og svíma, 2000)
These quotes above show the debate between those two political opinions. In 2001 there was a lot in the newspapers regarding the subject of prostitution. The main reason is that this year a new research was made.

4.1 New research was published

This new image of prostitute as a victim was supported by a recent reported research. Another research was published 2001 on the request from Minister of Justice. At this point there seems to have been awakening within the government and an acknowledgement that something needed to be done. The research that was made by Rannsóknir og greining or Research and analysis explored prostitution amongst young people or teenagers and tried to find out what kind of form it existed in. They also defined how social influence was an important factor in why people started doing prostitution. The research was done with deep interviews both with people in the police and prostitutes. The research took 3 years, much longer than anticipated when it was launched. The outcome was similar as the one Hansína conducted earlier, prostitution did exist and did exist amongst young people as well. Young people that are addicted to drugs do it for survival and places with strippers also sell sex with both genders. The research showed that prostitution can also be tracked to social problems like sexual abuse, drug abuse and broken homes. The line between prostitution and rape was not always clear (Bryndís Björk Ásgeirsdóttir, Hólmfríður Lýdia Ellertsdóttir og Inga Dóra Sigfúsdóttir, 2001).

After this research was made public, the newspapers published a lot of articles about prostitution and the subject became hot. At this time there was a discussion in Alþingi to change the criminal law for prostitution.

4.2 Child prostitution

Two examples were given at this time to support the image of the victim. One was child prostitution and the other was foreign strippers. What is dominating in the discussion at this point is those who sell sex to survive or like it is called survival sex that exists amongst teenagers, prostitution in strip places and the laws. Shouldn’t they be changed? Morgunblaðið published most of the news.
Young people from 13 years old finance their drug abuse with selling access to their bodies. This counts for both girls and boys. Most of these teenagers don’t look at it as prostitution just a quiet deal between two people and in most of the cases no actual money is involved

(Dæmi um að 13 ára börn selji sig, 2001).

The headline that day: “There are examples that 13 year old children do prostitution”. This is an example of how the main discussion was at this time. This year the left party Vinstri hreyfing grænt framboð used this report to try to influence the public opinion that something needed to be done to change the prostitution laws. Morgunblaðið published an article “Time to do something about this” there the MPs criticized that Iceland was the only country that had punishment for doing prostitution. Still no change was made of the laws until 2006 (Tækifæri til að gera eitthvað í málunum, 2001).

This report affected the discussion, before 2001 it had never been so intense. That year 21 articles were published on the matter, which is very high, compared to the years before.

4.3 Foreign strippers

From 1995-2000, 7 strip places were opened in Iceland all over the country. Soon there was a lot of speculation about the strippers. Did they come here of their own free will or did they come here thinking they were getting a good job doing something else but were forced into prostitution as they arrived. In 2002 this speculation increased in the media. A conference for North and East European countries concerning business owners was held. In that conference Icelandic government was criticized for taking part in prostitution in strip places by granting the foreign girls permits to work here. This information appeared in an article published that year and in the same article a congressman for the left party said that Alþingi had denied the opportunity to change the laws for prostitution (Kolbrún Halldórsdóttir, 2002).

The subject of Women slavery started this year and the discussion was dominant by that. This was in all newspapers and there were little or none examples just a lot of speculations. To answer these critics an interview with Ásgeir Davíðsson on
Goldfinger, an owner of a strip place, was published. Geiri denied those accusations of women slavery at his place and his arguments for having foreign women were as follows:

“The male say it is exciting to see a lot of foreign women, like black women or whatever the hell they have not seen before. I think that is what is most exciting. And if I remember right the Icelandic women were running like crazy after the soldiers in the war because their pants were so tight. Now it is just change of turns”.

(SM, 2002)

Same sort of discussion kept going on in 2003. Prostitution was traced to the strip place development and therefore some towns decided to ban private dance that took place there. “Forbidden dance is a message” was the headline for one article that year, which claimed that around 1000 foreign women came to Iceland since the strip places started. Most interesting in that discussion was that Geiri on Goldfinger found a way to work around these rules by playing with words. The rules said that it was forbidden to have private dance behind closed doors so he put up a tent where the service was provided (Gar, 2003).

5 A political debate

During 2003 the discussion was about the law changes and what should be done to prevent women slavery. 14 women from the parliamentary majority at that time tried to change the laws so that buying the services of a prostitute would become illegal. It was a bit like war between the women and the men within the government. The men were against it and 2 women that worked for the right party. (Efast um að bann skili tilætluðum árangri, 2003).

During 2004 the news on prostitution decreased significantly since only 2 articles were published on the matter. Those articles were about prostitution and women slavery, pointing out that it was the same thing (Kolbúrn Halldórsdóttir, 2004). Then prime minister, Halldór Ásgrímsson, published an article in the newspaper Fréttablaðið stating that these women trafficking crime rings tried to use Iceland as a land where they stop awhile before they transfer the women to other countries. The headline was “Women trafficking could get a stable ground in Iceland”. He was sure
that it did not exist here and therefore he did not see the need to changing the laws (T.H. Kjartansson, 2004)

Same story goes for 2005 as very little was published about prostitution. The only thing published were the shocking news of five sisters that had been abused by their father and his friends. He sold his daughters to finance his drinking. A book was published in 2005, where their story was told, the name of the book was “Myndin af pabba” or “The picture of my dad” (Skömmin er ekki mín, 2005).

“The demand for prostitution in Iceland is mostly from married men 40-50 years old. They justify it by saying that a man needs a lot of sex otherwise everything goes crazy”.

(Halla Gunnarsdóttir, 2006).

The above quote is from an article published in 2006. That year there was some speculation about who were the buyers of prostitution and how much it cost. The political debate was still dominant in the newspapers. Should it be legal or illegal and should the purchase become illegal. The fact that Iceland was the only Northern European country where it was legal to buy and illegal to sell. At this time Alþingi was starting to discuss changing the laws to legalize prostitution. Most of the news regarding prostitution in Iceland had been for some time mainly about law frame. In 2006 an article had an interview with a woman who had been a prostitute while she was addicted to drugs.

“I was sometimes sold to men that only had the intention to roughly beat up a women”.

This article was about the street prostitution in its worst image. The article pointed out how important it is to have shelter for women who are forced into prostitution (Gjaldmiðill á götunni, 2006).

“It is an improvement that it is no longer possible to punish people for selling their body like it was before”.
The laws were changed in 2006, therefore the newspapers focus point was on those laws. Article written that year by the assistant chief of the police claimed that after this change it was easier to investigate the third person prostitution (KDK, 2007). After these claims 3 articles were published saying that pimps were moving girls to Iceland to do prostitution and the police was investigating their coming here. But the girls did not want to say a thing so these investigations led to nothing (JSS, 2007). These changes of law led to a lot of criticism and one letter was sent to the paper written by Þorvaldur Viðisson. In that letter Þorvaldur Viðisson considered the consequences of making prostitution legal. He said that with these laws the nation was telling the youth that it is ok to sell your body and to buy other person´s body for sex (Þorvaldur Viðisson, 2007).

In 2008 the news said that with making prostitution “legal” it would increase here in Iceland. More women would come here to work as prostitutes and the criminal circles would abuse the laws by using Iceland for women trafficking.

“Happy hooker is a myth! The biggest lie that has ever been told says the head of a sexual division in the police in Reykjavík. He says that it is very serious how prostitution is justified in the society”.

In this article Björgvin Björgvinsson the head of the sexual division made it very clear that the situation in Iceland was not improving. After the change in the law, prostitution increased and the criminal circles came to Iceland with a bunch of women to sell. Björgvin also said that the Icelandic women that did prostitution were mostly in drugs and did it to finance their drug abuse. The foreign women came here for one purpose, to work for money as prostitutes. In the same article Heiðrún Lind Marteinsdóttir claimed that feminists were prejudiced and that there is such thing as a happy hooker and people should think twice before putting everyone in the same category (Erla Hlynsdóttir, 2008).

5.1 Latest research

The latest research of the matter was published 2008. The field of the research indicates how much the image of prostitution had changed, since woman slavery became a research question. Women slavery became a new subject in the research as
the attention shifted to women trafficking. The discussion of the research pointed out how little social sources there are for the women who are involved in prostitution. This was a new perspective of the question what leads women to work as prostitutes. The research criticizes the police for not properly using the laws on the matter to a full extent. The research indicates that the “Swedish way” might be the proper course of action in Iceland. In Sweden it is illegal to buy sex but not to sell it. In fact, Sweden was the first country in the world to pass that kind of legislation. The argument behind this legislation is that prostitution is a kind of sexual abuse which has been legally protected rather than a criminal conduct by the prostitute (Gísli Hrafn Atlason og Katrín Anna Guðmundsdóttir, 2008). The debate finally led to change of law similar to the “Swedish way” in 2009 and an article celebrates it with the following words:

“I want to congratulate everyone with all my heart. Icelandic Alþingi and the Icelanders for this big achievement today. Not just for the rights of women but in human rights as well. We have reached historical moment with excepting these law changes”.

(Valdís Óskarsdóttir, 2009)

Those laws were passed with 27 votes against 3 (Lög afgreidd á loksprettinum, 2009).

5.2 Summary of political debate

After 2000 and until the laws were changed to the buyer being illegal, the subject of how the legal frame for prostitution should be was very political. It was a battle between the left and the right parties and between female and male within the parliament. The left wanted the buyer to be illegal while the right said that this was sexual activity with consent of both parties and should not concern the law. Most of the women were all of the same opinion as the left parties. At one point all the women except for only one in the right wing or Sjálftæðiflokkur did stand together. After the “Swedish way” was legalized in Iceland the debate decreased in the newspapers. The prostitution issue became more about the people doing prostitution than a political matter.
6 Victims of women trafficking

After passing this legislation the media adopted strongly the stories of prostitutes as the extensive coverage of the case of the Lithuania woman shows. A Lithuanian woman who went crazy in the Iceland Express’s airplane on her way to Iceland was the biggest news in oktober 2009. The police told the newspapers that she knew that she was supposed to work as a prostitute against her will. She had been forced before in her home country but now she was being transferred. She was a victim of women trafficking. After some investigation of her case and others, 5 Lithuanian men were charged for women trafficking in Iceland (Telma Tómasson, 2009). The 5 men were found guilty in 2010 and sent to jail for 5 years. They were also sentenced to pay the women 1.700.000 kr in compensation. (JSS, 2009).

That was the first time in Icelandic history that someone involved in women trafficking was convicted or judged at all and only one year after the new law was adopted. The case brought a lot of publicity and the girl from Lithuania got a lot of sympathy. The people in Iceland saw a lot of similarity to the movie Lily4ever which was at the same time set up as play in theater in Akureyri and all the discussion about the play made the subject real. (Steinunn Stefánsdóttir, 2010)

Another illustration change from the “happy whore” to the victim is the case of Catalina and recently the media discovered a new victim of women trafficking “the married victim.”

17 men were investigated for buying sex from Catalina or other women that worked for her. The new laws consumed a lot of the media at this point in time, especially since there were charges both in women trafficking and for buying sex. As a result from the investigation of the case of Catalina, 11 men were charged for buying sex. Some of them were acquitted but two cases were dismissed because of lack of evidence. This investigation was very big news because it was the first case like this in Icelandic history (Vísir, 2010).

A lot of speculation was going on about what the sentence would be, compensation or jail time. Possibly the worst sentence would be if their names appeared in public (Trausti Hafsteinsson, 2010).

Their names were not made public and the reason given for that was that they were protecting the families. This was criticized a lot especially because most of the shame from the law’s point of view was supposed to be that everybody would find out that
you bought a whore. The public opinion was that the men who bought sex were in high positions in the society and that was the real reason their names were kept safe.

“Hungry men that steal food do not get the same protection as the ones in high position that pay thousands to satisfy their lust”
(Hið óljósa man, 2010).

6.1 Catalina

In the beginning of 2009 the media started publishing news about Catalina. In the beginning the media was saying that she was involved in smuggling drugs into Iceland. But soon the attention turned to her participation in women trafficking and being the third party to prostitution. From the beginning her name and her picture was public and almost in all the published news. Reporters had found information about her price list, where the operations had taken place and how many women she had been profiting from. In Fréttablaðið 8th October 2009 a reporter told a story of 3 women who had requested that Catalina paid them 800.000 kr in compensation for her gaining profit from their prostitution. In the same article a man named Finnur Bergmannsson was accused of being involved with Catalina in this business (Ákært fyrir vænd og mansal, 2009).

Catalina became a public person in 2010 and a book about her life was published the same year. It was called “Hið dökka man” or “The dark maid”. That book took prostitution to a new level because in her book she is portrayed as a happy whore. In her book she shows the life of a whore as a good glamorous life with lots of money. This was a new perspective in this aspect because after 2000 the whore became a victim of sexual abuse.

In her book Catalina talks about the unhappy life she had when she was married and living a normal housewife life. She says that she found her freedom in prostitution, where she was living the life she wanted and not the one that someone chose for her. She protested the statement that prostitution is a sexual abuse and all women who do it do it out of need. She chose the job and likes it. She likes the attention from men and she says that the demand is plenty. When she was earning most she gained 200.000 kr. per day or 6.000.000 per month. She doesn’t love the sex with all those men but she says that she likes what she can give them, confidence and good sex.
Feminists are her worst enemies. After some time in the business the demand was too much for her alone so she searched for women to work with her. This book gives a controversial image of what the news have been saying for the last 10 years. For Catalina prostitution was a choice, not something she did in need rather she liked her job (Jakob Bjarnar Grétarsson og Þórarinn Þórarinsson, 2010).

6.2 Married Victims

A new form of prostitution came into the headlight in 2010. Wikileaks published data from the American embassy that showed that some Icelandic men imported women and married them and made them their slaves. This applied mostly to old men with young foreign women. They made them work a lot and took all their wages away from them. Some even sold sexual favors to other men. The authorities in Iceland didn't believe this in the beginning but in the end took part in a plan to try to destroy slavery in Iceland (Vísir, 2010).

This sudden change of heart could be traced to this leaking to the press that made it hard for them to ignore the problem when the public was involved.

The main subject in prostitute matters in the year 2010 was Catalina. She was all over the news and the prostitution became about Catalina and her victims that worked for her and the clients that bought from her.

7 Legal aspect

This changes of how the prostitutes were looked at did not only affect the public opinion but also the legislation. Two big law changes were made after 2000 but in a completely different direction. First, prostitution was made “legal” in line with the discussion at that time when the prostitute was perceived as a victim and should not be the illegal party. That way the abuse of the prostitute is hidden under the legal frame. The argument against this was that two adults were taking a joint decision on having sex for money. In 2009 this was changed and the buyer was made the illegal party. The argument this time was that the prostitute was the weaker partner and did not have a choice. This difference in direction can also be traced to different kind of government.
7.1 Historical view in Icelandic laws

Following the debate of "the situation" the first criminal laws were passed in Iceland 1940. Before that time the criminal laws in Iceland were the same as the Danish. The first laws that covered prostitution were passed in 1940 under criminal laws 206 gr. In these laws the word prostitution does not exist, but the word promiscuity is used. At this time the laws only referred to the women. The laws do not forbid prostitution nor does it forbid a woman to sell her own body. It was however illegal under 207 gr. to have sex or sell sex to a person of the same gender. Under 206 gr. it says that it is illegal to encourage adult person or a person under age 18 to have sexual activity to another person. The third person is made illegal at this time, it is not legal to gain profit from others promiscuity. The punishment could be up to 4 years in jail (Almenn hegningarlög nr. 19/1940).

The first change in the legislation with regards to prostitution was made in 1992. The first thing that changed was that the laws were made to apply to both women and men. Word prostitute was used for the first time in Icelandic laws. The word chastity offends was changed to sexual offends. At this time a section was added where it was made illegal to support yourself from prostitution but it is not illegal if it is not your full time job. It is at this point legal to do it for a few times. 207 gr. was changed this year (Almenn hegningarlög nr. 19/1940, with changes 40/1992)

In 2002 a section on child prostitution was added to the laws. At this point it was illegal to pay for sexual activities to a person under 18 years old as well as being a third person encouraging a child under 18 to work as a prostitute (Almenn hegningarlög nr. 19/1940, gr. 202).

In 2007 prostitution was made legal. The argument for the change was twofold. On one hand most of the people who start doing prostitution do it because they are forced to because of drug abuse or social status. When prostitution is illegal violence is more likely to take place and the prostitutes are more likely afraid to report the violence since they can themselves be charged with prostitution. On the other hand some representatives on Alþingi argued that two adults should be able to choose if they wanted to buy or sell sex. At the same time a section was added to the laws which stated that it was illegal to advertise prostitution since they did not want to encourage people to go into prostitution. Some people argue that with these changes prostitution in Iceland became legal, recognized and approved. Others argue that there is a
difference between making it legal and having it unpunished (Almenn hegningarlög nr. 19/1940, gr. 206 with changes 61/2007).

When these changes and discussion took place many people wanted to follow the examples of the Swedish way. In Mars 2007, a study done by Capacent Gallup showed that 70% of the Icelandic nation supported the Swedish way. The Swedish way also got an extensive support from 14 organizations, for example Stígamót and Young feminists (Pínskjal 583. (2008-2009)).

It was not until 2009 that the laws were changed again and at this time they were changed in line with the Swedish way. The arguments for these laws are that the responsibility is not with the seller, it is with the buyer because their situations are miles apart. The buyer has the power and is in much stronger position than the seller. Most of the women do not choose to do prostitution but merely do it out of necessity, but the buyer has a choice. In Sweden, this way was put to use in 2005, in Norway 2008 and finally in Iceland 2009 (Hegningarlög 19/1940, 206. gr, with changes 54/2009).

The change in the legislation reflects the changing in the media coverage of prostitution.

There have been some changes in the laws since they first were set. Those changes can be traced to changes in the society. They show how the image of prostitution is reflected for each period for each time and how the laws change for each time the discussion changes.
Closure

The attitude and development for prostitute can be categorized into 3 different types; the promiscuous women, happy whore and the victim. These three perspectives represent the atmosphere at each time and where Iceland is placed in becoming a modern society.

When reading through how the media has handled the discussion of prostitution it is possible to see different patterns for different times. In stories of other countries there can be found stories about prostitution happening long before the word was even created in Iceland. It took the Icelandic nation a long time to acknowledge it existed and to find a suitable law that fitted the public opinion and the discussion each time.

There are miles between how the law and discussion were in the beginning to what they are today. There was a time when the laws were trivial or almost none existent but that can be explained with the fact that at this time prostitution was a silent problem. The matter was a shame on the society so it was not discussed and its existence ignored. Today this is an open public problem. Iceland is aware that the problem exists here and it is looked on as a social problem. Icelandic researches show that there is a connection between people going to prostitution and people being abused as children or coming from broken homes. With the new Icelandic laws it is acknowledged that this is sexual abuse and the happy whore is a myth.

The Icelandic society has gone through enormous transformations since the 19th century. These changes both in legislation and how the media reflects them is also different. Prostitution matter is no exception. There is a connection between how the discussion is at each time and how the laws change. The fourth estate, media, is a big influence when it comes to changes in prostitution laws. Today the Icelandic prostitute is presented as a victim of a sexual abuse and those who start working as one never do it out of first choice. This is how the picture of prostitution is presented to us in the media in Iceland, at the same time this is exactly what the laws are telling us by making the buyer illegal.
Preference


Siðferðismálin: fundargerð (1921, 27. október). Morgunblaðið, Bls. 2.


