In a web of different expressions of dominance and subordination, the intimacy of girls, boys, women, transpersons and men are violated in a number of ways in sexual trafficking and prostitution. This has nothing to do with sexuality as an expression of a positive human interaction. It is rather the exercise of economical, physical and psychic power. Some of these power relations are recognised by other actors of the society, and others are made more or less invisible. Some relations are illegal and/or tabooed and we shut our eyes to their existence. The relations that fall outside the heterosexual matrix are perhaps more invisible. In this article I focus on one of the power relations: men paying money for the access to intimate body parts of women. There seems to be a two-way traffic where men from wealthy countries go abroad for sexual adventures and women from poorer states migrate to the men’s home states (Demleitner, 2001: 257). The limitation of mine is a matter of choice based on the fact that men going to women in prostitution is recognised as the most common of these types of relations (Månsson, 2001; UNIEF, 2002: 9). My choice should not be interpreted as a disavowal of other types. Women are also going as ‘sex-tourists’ thereby emanating both from a typical pattern of economical dominance and at the same time perhaps a romanticised subordination. Transpersons also offer their bodies to men (and women). Men and women, sadly enough, are violating the intimacy of boys and girls. And of course, these examples do not do not constitute a complete list of violations.

My focus is on context and actors. I’m going to use the words prostitute, sex buyer and sex industry when I refer to the literature on sexual trafficking and prostitution, although I see some disadvantages of using these words. The words could further strengthen stereotypes of people involved with sexual trafficking and prostitution. “The prostitute” seems to denote a woman that by taking part in the act, her identity becomes imbued with prostitution, an activity that is often negatively valued. She is a loose woman, and that is all there is. The sex buyer, on the other hand, most often a man, with his wallet buying something he wants (See also Månsson, 2001: 141). He’s not “the buyer” all around the clock. He buys one moment in secrecy, and the next he goes to work or takes care of his children. My use of descriptive terms of different actors, e.g. actors whose bodies and minds are used for prostitution, on the other hand, hopefully implies less of a value judgement although they are a bit clumsier to use.

There are many elaborate definitions of sexual trafficking. The definition of ‘trafficking’ is also an ambiguous term (Frostell, 2002: 37; Demleitner, 2001: 261). By the term sexual trafficking I here mean the recruitment and transportation, within or between countries, of women by means of some form of indirect or direct coercion for the purpose of the prostitution of sex (cf. Frostell 2002: 37; See also p. 4).

In the article I first discuss male norms and motives in prostitution. Prostitution and trafficking is then seen from two points of view: ‘the prostitution of sex’ and ‘individual consent’. Then follows a section on different actors involved. Problems of methodology are addressed. The three countries of my research are discussed in terms of social cost of transition, economy and labour market, corruption and crime, gender.
relations and sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex. Some new survey data from Moldova is compared to data from the Baltic states on views on sexual trafficking and prostitution.

I have decided not to discuss here some important parts of the context as the laws on trafficking and prostitution and national judicial system or EU law e.g. the Schengen agreement. And I will not discuss the role played by cybercrime and other activities on the Internet. Neither will I do more than to mention some of the actors: all the NGOs, the role of the transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and the importance of shelters and support centres.

Male norms and motives in prostitution

The Swedish laws in this area are “presupposing that a real change in gender relations calls for a radical reconsideration of men’s responsibility in prostitution. /…/ prostitution must be defined as a male issue; that prostitution is about men’s sexuality, not women’s” (Månsson, 2001: 135). How then is male sexuality constructed?

In the prostitution of sex and sexual trafficking the actors involved are of course not acting within a vacuum instead, “the expressions and forms of prostitution are moulded by the prevailing social conditions at different times in history” (Månsson, 2001:138). Men’s interest in patriarchal power are consolidated and defended by most of the cultural machinery surrounding our everyday lives (Connell, 1995: 241). Men’s disposition to pay for sex seems to vary from culture to culture. In a study of sexual habits in a number of West European countries carried out between 1989 and 1992 Spanish men top the ‘sex-buying league’ with almost 39 percent having paid for sex and United Kingdom at the bottom of this list with almost 7 percent (although figures are uncertain due to low base rates and different norms on paying for sex) (Månsson, 2001:37; Leridon, van Zessen & Hubert et al. 1997).

Some women pay for sex, but as Månsson remarks, most women in the same situation do not choose to use men/women in prostitution. “Prostitution use is predominantly a male practice and /…/ it is necessary to take into account [socially constructed] men’s sexuality and gender relations” (2001: 139). The complex web of desires in prostitution is a product of the practices of gender relations on different levels where the construction of masculinity plays an important part. Connell (1995:71) defines masculinity as a place in gender relations, a practice and the effects of these practices. In the structure of gender are, Connell (1995) argues, relations of power, of production and of emotional attachment. “The practices that shape and realise desire are /…/ an aspect of the gender order. Accordingly we ask political questions about the relationships involved: whether they are consensual or coercive, whether pleasure is equally given and received.” (1995:74). So the buying of sex is an action that carries meaning at many levels. “It has both individual and social dimensions and /…/ we must comprehend the complex interplay between these dimensions” (Månsson, 2001: 139)

The reason for men’s for participating in the prostitution of sex is not that obvious. Only a few men explicitly discuss sexual need as the reason why they visit prostitutes. Månsson (2001) suggests that something other than the actual content of the visit to the prostitute is salient. He refers to the meaning that the visit has in the man’s fantasy, for example as a symbolic representation or proof of masculinity. They talk about ‘curiosity’ and excitement. They act from a widespread conception about constantly accessible women who fulfil their needs, and, Månsson reports, the image of the ‘whore’, exclusively defined by her sexuality, is sexually exciting. Many fantasises involve encountering a sexually advanced and experienced women, buying himself the right to be passive and abandoning their socially constructed power position (2001: 141). This can be described as a power game where the man uses his power to construct a situation where the traditional gender roles are reversed. Having many different sexual experiences is also a norm.

Månsson (2001) comments that the man in prostitution is anonymous or invisible. If there is an image of the client, it is a biologically deterministic view of men’s sexual desires as being constantly high and
never changing (2001: 141). One side effect of the so-called sexual revolution, it is argued, is that men have been strengthened in their feelings that they have a right to have unlimited access to sex. Men’s sexual ‘needs’ seem to have become even more taken for granted than they already were, and as the general preoccupation with sexuality in society increases, the appeal of commercial sexuality to many men seems to increase along with it (2001: 143). For some men, who dare not expose themselves, their means of power is violence. “The man wants both love and positive reinforcement from the women, while at the same time demands power and control over her” (Månsson, 2001: 144; cf. Skjørten 1993).

Månsson (2001) summarises some Scandinavian studies of motives for paying for sex. He presents a rough division into two groups of motives. One type of motives surrounds looking for something different than the more or less regular relationships they live in. ‘I buy what I want to have.’ There is a group of younger men, whose views on gender and sexuality are shaped by modern society’s mass-produced illusions about sexuality in pornography, advertisements and TV talk shows (2001: 144). This is a commodified perspective towards sexuality, in which sex can be compared to a consumer product rather than an aspect of intimate relationship, a kind of self-focused sexuality: McSex (Månsson, 2001: 144; cf. Monto, 2000:80). This kind of buyer may avoid actual meetings with women and for fear of losing themselves in a relation. The other group of motives is expressed by men who do not live in relationships with women and/or who consider themselves to have big difficulties in making contact with women. ‘There are no other women.’ They seem to have greater problems than others in maintaining regular relationships. There are more divorces and broken-off cohabitation relationships in this group of men (Månsson, 2001: 138).

The question of consent divides the debate on prostitution and trafficking into roughly two parts. I will reflect only a small part of the arguments put forward in this heated debate. In this part I will summarise the view that prostitution is an issue about gender based domination and the construction of male sexuality. Later, under the heading “Individual consent – ‘voluntary ‘sex work” I will exemplify the view that individual agency and consent to participation in prostitution have take precedence.

Society precedes sexuality, embedding it in a form and content typical for that point in time. (Barry, 1995: 55, Järvinen, 1990; Svanström, 2000). To know sexuality, prostitution of sex, and sexual trafficking is to know the society and the gendered collective conditions of its population. Sexuality is thereby seen as relational and “shaped in an interaction that only can be understood in its historical context, in terms of the cultural meanings assigned to it, and in terms of the internal, subjective meanings” (Franzway, Court & Connell, 1989: 105; cf. Weeks, 1981).

The societal context must be seen within a broader context than that of the nation states. “[Among the national and global structures of power and privilege] are not only gender-based domination in the sending and receiving states but also economic power relationships between north and south and between East and West. Therefore, the concern about human trafficking and forced prostitution may be largely symptomatic of global and domestic economic disparity and gender inequality” (Demleitner, 2001: 280) And within this global context, immigration is gendered. Hochschild and Ehrenreich (2003) point out that women are on the move as never before in history in what they call “the female underside of globalization” (2003: 3). And “[i]mmigrant women may seem desirable sexual partners for /…/ they are thought to embody the traditional feminine qualities of nurturance, docility, and eagerness to please (2003: 9). There is also a gendered first world-third world divide in prostitution. “The First World takes on a role like that of the old-fashioned male in the family /…/. Poor countries take on a role like that of the traditional woman within the family” (2003: 11-12). The societal context in this article consists of two regions of the ‘transition states’ in Eastern Europe, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Estonia, and Sweden in the northern part of Western Europe.
“Violence, sexuality and objectification are practices which confirm and mutually reinforce each other, ones that establish men’s domination and women’s subordination” (Wendt Höjer, 2002: 209). Prostitution and sexual trafficking are often regarded as a problem about women but, although it is a problem for women, prostitution is more a question about male sexuality, often in a heterosexual matrix. “[T]he patriarchal assumption that prostitution is a problem about women ensures that the other participant in the prostitution contract escapes scrutiny. Once the story of the sexual contract has been told, prostitution can be seen as a problem about men” (Pateman, 1988:193-94, emphasis in original; see also Månsson, 2001). Thereby, in analyses of sexual violence (including prostitution and trafficking) gender must be central to conceptualising interactions between sexuality and power (cf. Franzway et al., 1989: 117). So to analyse these phenomena, the construction of male sexuality in a society is vital for our understanding.

What then is prostitution and trafficking all about? While discussing what’s wrong with prostitution Pateman (1988) uses a definition of prostitution that is relational in its focus on the asymmetric exchange:

Prostitution is the use of a woman’s body by a man for his own satisfaction. There is no desire or satisfaction on the part of the prostitute. Prostitution is not mutual pleasurable exchange of the use of bodies, but the unilateral use of a woman’s body by a man in exchange for money (1988: 18)

Prostitution and sexual trafficking can also be seen as stages of sexual exploitation typical for societies in different developmental phases. Trafficking is by Kathleen Barry (1995) taken to be typical for pre-industrial and feudal societies that are primarily agricultural, where women are excluded from the public sphere. In these societies there is no need for public images of the sexual subordination of women or the question of women’s consent, she argues. “Sexual subordination and economic dependency resulting from women’s status as the property of their husbands is marital feudalism.” (1995: 51, emphasis in original). Growing industrialisation and the development of a public economic sector is accompanied by the stage called ‘sex industrialisation’. One driving force is the appeal of fast money in an increasingly commercialised world. And with even higher levels of economic development comes the ‘normalisation of prostitution’. Men are then threatened with loss of control over women. And by a sexual saturation of society women are reduced publicly to sex. The question of the women’s consent becomes paramount in this stage, she argues.

There is a strong link between trafficking and prostitution. Disagreement on how to deal with prostitution in a human rights context has hampered the development of coherent standards (Frostell, 2002: 77). In the past, she argues, trafficking was linked to prostitution, but as reflected in the 2000 UN Palermo Protocol, trafficking for several exploitative purposes where included as a result of active lobbying by NGOs and various agencies (Gallagher, 2001: 986, note 143). In the 2000 Palermo Protocol the concept of “trafficking in persons” (note the gender neutral term) means: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons. This is done by means of: threat, use of force, other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person. The purpose for the act of trafficking here is exploitation, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery (or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. Trafficking is often described as transfer of a women between countries and regions, but may also apply to women moved within a country (Frostell, 2002: 44)

In this article the prostitution of sex and sexual trafficking are not discussed as historical stages the way Barry (1995) develops, but as current and interconnected phenomena. And the construction of gender relations and male sexuality are of vital interest. But first another set of opinions on prostitution.

**Individual consent – voluntary ‘sex work’**

Jo Doezema designates sexual trafficking in women for prostitution as a “modern myth of white slavery”, a “new moral panic” and a discourse used to get publicity and funding (2000: 24, 45-6). This leads,
according to her, to a victimization of women “migrating for work in the sex industry” (2000: 24). Individual consent, not contextual explanations, is essential to Doezema. If poverty influence a woman’s decision to become a sex worker, then why don’t all women choose to become one, she asks (2000:36) The respect for personal agency and self-determination of adult persons who are voluntarily engaged in prostitution is one of her main points of argument (2000:33). A rather liberal view it seems. A distinction between trafficking in persons/forced prostitution and voluntary prostitution is made. Prostitution is designated work in the sex industry and, and this recognition is seen as the first step in protecting the rights of women and men involved in the sex industry. The inclusion of women and work in prostitution and other informal labour sectors in existing labour and human rights mechanisms offer the most in terms of the rights of those involved (2000:45). Although all prostitution is not good (there are cases with violence and slavery-like conditions) not all prostitution is inherently bad, she argues.

The consequences of the anti-trafficking campaigns are proving to be disastrous for women, according to Doezema, since they make countries restrict women’s migration possibilities by introducing repressive immigration measures (2000:38). And “an implicit racism is still evident in western anti-trafficking campaigns. /…/ Pictured as poor, naïve, and “underempowered”, women from the third world or former communist countries are perceived as unable to act as agents in their own lives /…/” (2000:37).

Marriage for visas can be seen as part of a creative strategy for some women of colour. Barbara Ehrenreich describes the situation of Dominican women prostitutes in Sosúa. They are seen to use an advancement strategy with the key aims of marriage and migration off the island. (2003: 155). This ‘sex trade’ does not operate through pimps, nor is it tied to the drug trade; and young women are not trafficked there. As a result they maintain a good deal of control over their working conditions, Ehrenreich describes. Depicting all ‘sex workers’ as slaves confuses social agency and identity with social context. This is overly simplistic and implicitly moralistic, she argues. Marginalized women in a marginalized economy do fashion creative strategies to control their economic lives.

On the other hand she describes a situation full of disappointment, lies and unfulfilled dreams. Only a handful marries European men. They worry that families and friends of their European boyfriend might wonder if they once where in the ‘sex industry’. They often return from Europe disillusioned and divorced. Most women return to their home community in less than a year, just as poor as when they first arrived. They out earn male migrants, but they lack authority or independence in their relationships with foreign men, and they become completely dependent on these men. Their gender roles are both reaffirmed and reconfigured, Ehrenreich comments. (2003: 164).

To analyse, more than criticize, the arguments of those who argue for a decriminalisation or legalizing of prostitution, and make a distinction between sexual trafficking and prostitution, I will present some of the arguments by Janice Raymond that are used against those wanting to decriminalize or legalise prostitution (action.web.ca/home/catw 2003). She discusses the report from the International Labour Office from 1998 authored by Lin L. Lim The sex sector: the economic and social bases of prostitution in Southeast Asia. Based on the expanding reach of the industry and its contribution to the GDP (gross domestic product) in four Southeast Asia, an economic recognition of the sex industry is called for, Lim argues. This includes labour rights and benefits to sex workers and improving working conditions.

According to Raymond (Coalition against trafficking in women – CATW) calling for economic recognition implies legalizing by calling on governments to recognize prostitution (part one, p.1). This is no more than an economic rationalization of male sexual privilege and economic power, she argues. For prostitution is to institutionalise the buying and selling of women as commodities in the market place. It removes women away from the economic mainstream and legitimises men’s ability to put the bodies of women at their disposal (part one, p. 4). Lim mentions the demand side, its increasing capacity and motivation of men to buy sexual services in a much wider and more sophisticated range of settings. Raymond contradicts this by the argument that the body of the prostituted women is the vehicle with which the male buyer acts out his gender based dominance (part one, p. 7). Where the ILO report sees individual consent and the free choice of sex work, Raymond sees confusing compliance with consent. Raymond refers to women in abusive relationships where – even when she is defending his actions – people don’t say she is there voluntarily (part two, p. 2). Difference in these views stem from the fact that the ILO report stresses individual consent as one of the main arguments (see O’Neil, 2001 for
an overview), and that male sexuality and gender based dominance is included in the discussion by Raymond.

**Actors on many levels with various motives**

A simplified view of actors in sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex includes only a few actors: organized crime, a pimp, a victimized women and a male ‘customer. ‘Since what we recognise is dependent on what we call for, this would not give a valid description of the empirical world of our phenomena. “Success in combating this problem [commercial sexual exploitation] will only come from a clear assessment of just what the problem is and who is involved.” (Finckenauer, 2001:184) And assessing which actors who are involved means going far beyond the simplified version with just a few parties. “[T]he picture [of commercial sex as dominated and controlled by organized crime] is actually rather more complex than this” (Williams, 1999:154). Williams, who is using a market perspective on sexual trafficking, comments that “the process is best understood not in terms of a few dominant syndicates, but in terms of a mixed market with a variety of actors who form networks of convenience for trafficking and networks of corruption to protect both the trafficking and the prostitution” (1999:156).

Actors involved in the sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex can be recognised on at least seven levels. Some of them will be mentioned and two will be discussed a bit more. In this presentation I follow the process of sexual trafficking and prostitution using a chronological order.

1. **Actors being in direct contact with the women** (most often), influencing and/or coercing her. ‘Sale by family’ is mentioned as one of the primary modes of operations in prostitution. Shannon (for The International Organization for Migration, IOM) describes it as a depressing acknowledgement of the disintegration of familial authority and a disturbing comment on the nature of the society (Shannon, 1999:122). Family members (mom-and-pop operators, Finckenauer, 2001: 174), boyfriends/husbands, friends/schoolmates are often acting as young criminals (Pettai, 2002; Saar et al., 2003). They are close to the women, and yet emotionally distanced enough to participate in the prostitution of her. Their motives must be understood in terms of the societal context, the cultural understanding of gender relations and the construction of sexuality.

2. **Actors facilitating the sexual trafficking** and often making a profit from it. Examples of these actors are governments indifferent to the situation of migrant women, corrupt embassy officials, middlemen, and also ‘organized crime’. Sexual trafficking is often seen only as a regional and global affair, but should also include actors within the national level where women are taken from their home environment to another location within the country to become involved in the sex trade (Williams, 1999: 149-150). (See also below.)

3. **Actors making a profit from the prostitution of sex**. They might not be involved in the transportation of the women, but are perhaps working with prostitution as pimps, brothel owners, pimps or ‘guards’. Some are working as administrators, employees in certain restaurants, hotels, on ferries or driving a taxi.

4. **Actors paying for the access to the intimate parts of another individual to fulfil their own power related and other desires.** They represent the ‘demand side’ of the prostitution. They are often called customers, or perhaps sex offenders. A special type of sex offender is the soldier in military bases that are being offered ‘release’ in the company of a young woman.

5. **Actors whose bodies and minds are used for the prostitution.** Numbers are difficult to estimate. They participate more or less voluntarily. Some are forced by economic or personal circumstances, some are tricked through promises of legal immigration status and legitimate employment, some are promised marriage and others are coerced or forced into prostitution. Some of them suspect in beforehand that they are to engage in prostitution to pay off their debts and some of them might already have experienced prostitution (Demleitner, 2001: 273; Williams, 1999:155). These women do not form a cohesive group. (See also below.)

6. **Actors supporting the individuals exploited** in the sexual trafficking or prostitution. There are numerous shelters run by e.g. NGOs working both with combating trafficking, raising the awareness of the public and supporting women who return to their home country.
(7) Actors lobbying in related issues and policy makers on different levels. Networks of activists forming transnational advocacy networks (TANs) can become a viable force in international politics and influence the work on the regional level (Piper & Uhlin, 2002: 173.
Organized crime?

Actors facilitating sexual trafficking are both passive and active participants, situated in legitimate, intermediate or in illegitimate fields of society. Governments indifferent to the situation of migrant women, or law enforcement agencies that give priority to other areas of crimes are part of the legal structure of society, and sometimes be passive actors in trafficking. Hospitals refusing to treat HIV-positive trafficked women, and corrupt embassy officials (issuing visas for compensation) are working within the legitimate part of society yet at the same time active in discriminating against these women and facilitating trafficking (cf. Shannon, 1999; Williams, 1999). Other actors are also part of the legitimate sector, but with a hidden agenda. ‘Middlemen’ are e.g. travel agents or job placement agents organising travels to another country or arranging for migrant women looking for a job abroad but turning into trafficking when the opportunity comes, i.e. when a young, attractive and desperate women asks for help (Scanlan, 2002). The migrant trafficker can be seen as the illegal counterpart of a travel agent (Schloenhardt, 1999: 207).

In the illegitimate sphere we find criminal individuals, ‘unsympathetic cone-men’ (Shannon, 1999), criminal groups, local trafficking rings, sex offenders and other parties, but do we find ‘organized crime’? One answer to that question is a clear yes. “One of the most important actors in the world of illicit sex is organized crime” (Shannon, 1999). She seems to be taking the phenomena ‘organised crime’ for granted, and so do others. The International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva has published a report by Taran and Moreno-Fontes Chammartin (2003) called: “Getting at the Roots: Stopping Exploitation of Migrant Workers by Organized Crime”. Here we meet two actors: migrants and ‘organized crime’. Measures to combat ‘organized crime’ are discussed, but the concept is left undefined and is not analysed. Knaus, Kartusch and Reiter (2000) have published a report “Combat of Trafficking in Women for the Purpose of Forced Prostitution. International Standards” for the BIM Institute of Human Rights in Vienna. They advocate a clear and unambiguous definition of the term “trafficking” (2000:7), discuss anti-immigration policies and treaties on combating organized crime – all this without defining ‘organised crime’.

Criminologist and sociologist Letizia Paoli (2002) begins her article by stating that ‘organized crime’ is an ambiguous and conflated concept. “Only if organization is defined as ‘the structure of a chain of events, of an interaction process, in which different individuals and groups participate in different stages’, then illegal business can be said to have an organization” (Paoli, 2002; cf. Cohen, 1977:98). When ‘organized crime’ is defined references are often made to the old mafia organizations but, Paoli comments, their internal organization is not the result of illegal market dynamics. “Each group aims to represent a clan, that is an organization that had a mixed nature, at once familial and political” (2000:73). Contrary to that, the provision of illegal goods and services tend to be produces and traded by a myriad of small ephemeral enterprises that hardly ever succeed in consolidating into large-scale criminal firms (2000:88), it is rather ‘disorganizes crime’ (2000:63; cf. Reuter, 1985). This is due to constraints, Paoli argues. They are e.g. always maintaining a balance between selfish calculations over group morality and concrete obligations. People work in covert settings. The production of written documents is minimized. There is no systemic trust; they rely on non-economic ties: property rights are poorly protected; they operate against the state laws and cannot solve conflicts and ensure implementation with the help of the state; they lack court protection. With a growing involvement in economic activities a weakening of in-group moral is produced. With the help of technological progress and new means of communication and transportation smuggling in human beings are instead run by more flexible, aggressive entrepreneurs or criminal networks. And “instead of taking for granted an increasing role of large-scale criminal organizations, international bodies would do better to take into considerations the /.../ transformation to justify their recent programs against organized crime (2000:70). In other words, organised crime as a concept draws a sketch of a powerful enemy and gives motives for pecuniary grants, but is inefficient when it comes to combating the criminal activity.

Women in prostitution

The head of IOM in Lithuania, Sipaviciene (2001) presents a material on trafficking on women in the Baltic States – magnitude, mechanism and actors where she discusses factors important for conducting information campaigns to prevent trafficking in women. Who are the women in prostitution, she asks.
Based on poll surveys carried out by the IOM, she gives some demographic characteristics of the risk group: women, age from 13 to 30; with low-qualified jobs and low income or unemployed; with relatively low education level (average is secondary school. She also presents a ‘psycho-graphic’ profile from the surveys under the heading “Escaping depressing reality”. The girls and women are described as: under-resourced (in education, skills and income); with poor upbringing, low self-esteem and frustrated material desires. They seem to be alienated – living surrounded by a successful consumer society – lacking direction and motivation in life. They are living ‘on the edge’ desperate to escape surrounding reality and easily influenced by other actors. And moving abroad can become the means of escaping the frustrating reality. This can be compared to a different description by Demleitner. “Many are assertive, well-educated, independent, self-possessed, and strong women” (2001: 273). Prostitution can be one of the few means of survival for people without substantial market assets. And when facing poverty the individual uses all the means available, even the illegal ones. And these women are perhaps the curious and adventurous ones (Nistor & Soitu, 2000: 95, 106).

Research on sexual trafficking, methodology

Doezema questions the reliability of evidence of “trafficking in women” (2000: 32, quotation marks in original). Evidence is often based on unrevealed or unverifiable sources, she remarks. This is believed to be due to lack of systematic research, lack of precise, consistent and unambiguous definition of the phenomena and the illegality and the criminal nature of prostitution and trafficking. So statistics presented are not to be trusted. At the same time she presents “emerging indications” that sex workers, rather than ‘coerced’ innocents, form “the majority of” the trafficking, and that “the majority of cases” involve women who know that they are going to work in the sex industry, although they are lied to about the conditions, and that abduction is rare (2000: 32). The validity of these estimations is not discussed in her article.

Data collection in this research area is difficult to obtain, and especially data on the practice of actors (Demleitner, 2001: 260, 264). The scale of the activity can only be estimated. “The number /…/ is undetermined and possibly indeterminate” (Bensinger, 2001: 11; se also Demleitner, 2001: 264). Why is that? The answer is found in the nature of this area and its clandestine nature (Demleitner, 2001: 260; Kyle & Koslowski, 2001:3). We can compare it to other research on undocumented migration (Cornelius, 1982; Demleitner, 2001: 260). And the estimates are mostly supplied by enforcement agencies so they only reflect a subset of smugglers – those who have been caught. Is there a systematic difference between failed smuggling operations and successful ones? (Kyle & Koslowski, 2001: 4) This difficulty is similar to records on e.g. domestic violence. In a bill to the Swedish government from 1997 on violence and sexual harassment against women, a remark is made on the official statistics. “Violence against women is to a large extent hidden and the official statistics show only a smaller part of the criminal violence against women” (1997: 30, authors translation). A suggestion is made to improve the statistics: it would be good to get information on the victims of crimes, to be able to observe a case, the suspects and the victims over time, throughout the whole process. Thereby improved supporting documentation could be used for actions against and estimations on the costs for the society. UNESCO is now developing a tool for clarifying statistics on trafficking (unescobkk.org./sulture/trafficking/trafficking.htm 2003-07-07)

The scale of sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex will never be measured by valid and reliable statistical data. The nature of these clandestine and criminal activities prohibits that. There are no universal records to be found. So why do we get all these statistics on the extent? Why are we satisfied with global estimates from aggregated, doubtful and perhaps biased data?

Under the heading “The Magnitude” The U.S. department of state (2002) illustrates some general difficulties in research on sexual trafficking. First they present the reservation: “Given the nature of trafficking and its often hidden face, it is extremely difficult to develop accurate statistics on the extent of the problem.” (US Dept. 2002: 2) Global estimates are said to range from one to four million victims annually. And then we get some estimates on the magnitude. Statistical estimates are used in spite of the difficulties and the reservations. In the 2003 report figures are generated from a database that examined
reports of specific trafficking incidents, counts of repatriated victims, estimates for victims worldwide, and victim demographics derived from analysis of information from press, governments, non-governmental and international organizations, and academic reports from 2000 to the present US Dept, 2003:7). A number of incidents are aggregated into global estimates. Is there an alternative?

Cornelius (1982) presents an overview of methodologies that have been used to study undocumented and unapprehended (illegal) immigrants to the U.S, which may be equally appropriate to studies on sexual trafficking and prostitution. The feasibility of direct, primary research on these immigrants has been questioned, he remarks. The main reason being that it is not possible to define the universe of illegal immigrants, nor to sample with conventional random sampling procedures. But despite the problems involved in sampling a fugitive population, difficulties can be minimized, Cornelius argues. He gives examples of qualitative methods of the empirical research. There are ways of increasing the reliability and validity of interview responses. The most difficult part of the fieldwork is locating and gaining access to the interviews and he discusses ways of making contact, by e.g. using “local notables” (1982: 385). And “the most effective kind of interview schedule contains numerous open-ended questions which give the respondent an opportunity to ‘tell his story’ /…/” (1982: 395) Participant observation in natural social settings is another way. He uses bilingual interviewers who themselves are part of the immigrant kinship-friendship networks. Research involves time-consuming briefing sessions and repeated reassurances of confidentiality. He also recommends extensive preparatory fieldwork in immigrants’ countries of origin.

Much of the analysis on human smuggling and trafficking has been concerned with narrowly descriptive questions, which, unfortunately often, results in highly speculative numbers in an attempt to procure more funding and lend it an air of scientific objectivity (Kyle and Koslowski, 2001: 21). Grounded regional and policy research combined with global comparative in an integrated approach is needed (Kyle & Koslowsksi, 2001: 5).

Moldova, Estonia and Sweden. Countries and attitudes

Moldova is said to be the most poverty-stricken country in Europe (Johansson, forthcoming; L’Orange Fürst, 2002; SIDA, 2002). It is also a country with a built in ambiguity linguistically and culturally. The Transnitrian part is supported by and close to Russia. The western part is closer linked to Romania.

Estonia on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea is also a former part of the Soviet Union. After years of guerilla wars, Estonia’s independence was recognized in 1991. In 1997 Estonia was hailed as the ‘model pupil’ amongst the current EU applicant states (Smith, 2001: xi), and it will be a member state from May 2004.

Sweden, in the northern part of Europe, was during 1866 to 1914 a poor agricultural country and one million out of Sweden’s five million inhabitants migrated, mainly to North America. Plans for a welfare society were laid in the 1930s and “despite the economic crisis that affected Sweden in the first half of the 1990s, the country still features a high average standard of living and considerable social security.” (www.informatik.umu.se: 5)

The choice of these three countries for my empirical study is based on an assumption that they differ in the societal context, i.e. the everyday situation of its population. Norms and attitudes on sexuality, gender relations and prostitution might also differ. All these factors are used to explain the occurrence of trafficking and prostitution. At the same time they are similar in that prostitution and sexual trafficking occur, although the extent might differ.

Transition states – a social cost

The states of the former Soviet Union share a common ground, but they have not followed the same track in the transition process from the early 1990s. And within a specific country some things from the Soviet
period remain and other things have developed during the transition (Katz, 2001). The global financial institutions, e.g. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), have influenced them in important decisions regarding the problems of their economies (SIDA 2002; Johansson, forthcoming: 18; see also Ronnås & Orlova, 2000). The countries’ emphasis on the economy, sometimes at the cost of social reforms, might be connected to this dependency. In e.g. Moldova the dual transition to democracy and to a market economy has made the situation especially complex. “Most of the positive results are in the area of economic and political freedoms /…/ The social costs of the transition, on the other hand, have been very dramatic: reduction of the country’s resources for education and health services, a sharp rise in the discrepancy between incomes, spread of poverty, growth of corruption and organized crime.” (SIDA, 2002:70)

The transitioning states are said to be easy targets for traffickers. “Sudden political change, economic collapse, civil unrest, internal armed conflict /…/ greatly increase the likelihood that a country will become a source of trafficking /…/ the victims may be one of the few resources of marketable wealth” (U.S. Dept, 2003). The inability of states and global agencies to control its population adds to that (Demleitner, 2001: 269). The citizens migrating from a country compare their own circumstances to those of others better off “[I]t is not what a person does not have that motivates him or her to leave; it is what that person’s neighbor has that compels him or her not to be left behind – that is, relative deprivation (Kyle & Koslowski, 2001: 22, emphasis in original). And perhaps the transitioning states are vulnerable to prostitution as well. Some general root causes of prostitution are often mentioned: underdevelopment, poverty, drug abuses, illiteracy, and lack of training, education and employment opportunities (UNICEF, 2002: 6). There is also a growing consumer culture and traditional assumptions about gender relationships are assumed to lead to breakup of families, which fuels much of the trafficking (Demleitner, 2001: 281).

On a social level, the situation is critical for many in Moldova. Pensions and salaries are not paid. Schools are not functioning. Economic reforms are stalled or are wrongly constructed or implemented. (Johansson, forthcoming: 15). Poverty is one result. The most commonly used way to measure poverty is based on income or consumption level as compared to a poverty line. The World Bank uses four main dimensions of poverty: opportunity, capability, security and empowerment (www.genderstats.worldbank.org 2003-05-30).

Poverty rate in Sweden after social transfers is the lowest of 14 EU Member states 1996. 11 percent of the women are estimated to be on a poverty level and 12 percent of the men (www.scb.se 2003-05-30).

In Estonia 27 percent of the population is estimated to live in direct poverty (Leppik, 2000: 2). (measured through the expenditure side and minimum unavoidable expenditures). The incidence of absolute poverty is very high in Moldova. IMF estimated in 2001 that poverty affected between 55 and 70 percent of the population, especially in the southern part of the country, in small towns of rural areas (SIDA, 2002:7; cf. IMF, 2002). With $ 4 a day as a poverty line, 82 percent is estimated to have been poor in Moldova in 1996-99 (www.undp.org/hdr/2003/ 2003-07-10). 76 percent declared that the income of their family allows them just the essential (IPP, 2003). These statistics cannot be directly compared, but they seem to indicate that the Moldovan population is relatively poorer than the other two countries in this study. And accordingly, life expectancy differ: in Sweden it is estimated to 80,1, Estonia 71,7 and Moldova 68,9 for the years 2000-2005 (www.undp.org/hdr/2003/ 2003-07-10).

Education is another indication of social welfare. For 1998-2000, public expenditure on education is 7,8 percent for Sweden, 7,5 for Estonia and 4,0 for Moldova out of the total GDP. On lower levels of the education system women are more often enrolled, but higher up men are in majority, e.g. in Sweden are 61 percent of young women enrolled into universities but they constitute only 37 percent of the doctoral students (Statistics Sweden, 2002: 32). Health care is another area of social cost that might not be prioritized. In Sweden 6,2 percent of GDP goes to the public health expenditure and 1,8 to the private health sector. In Estonia the figures are 4,5 for public and 1,4 percent for the private health; in Moldova 2,9 percent to public health sector and 0,7 percent to the private sector (www.undp.org/hdr/2003/ 2003-07-10).
One answer to poverty is to try to migrate to Western Europe. IOM has estimated that people have migrated up to 1 million of the Moldovan population (out of a population of 4.5 million), a part of them ends up in prostitution (Scanlan, 2002: 2; cf. IOM, 2001) 77 percent of young people of the population would like to leave Moldova (IPP, 2003). This means, among other things, that money can be sent back to the families, and the Western Union money transfer services reports remittances to Moldova of twice the country’s GDP (Scanlan, 2002: 7).

Economy and labour market

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a crude measure of a country’s economic strength commonly used.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GDP</th>
<th>GDP accounted for purchasing power capacity</th>
<th>GDP per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>209.8</td>
<td>215.1</td>
<td>23,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figures should be interpreted with caution; they do not measure the “black market” activity, or distribution of resources within the country. Moldova’s is heavily dependent on foreign assistance, the flow of aid for 2001 is estimated to 119.2 million U.S. dollars (www.undp.org/hdr/2003/ 2003-07-10), and remittances from Moldovan migrants are high, which makes it difficult to interpret GDP. In the year 2001 the GDP of Moldova grew by 6 per cent (SIDA, 2002). A real difference in GDP in these countries can be still estimated from these figures.

Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Related development index (GDI), constructed by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), measure life expectancy at birth, literacy rate and estimated earned income. Do citizens have a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living – and are there gender differences? According to the countries’ GDI Sweden is ranked as number 3 out of 144 countries, Estonia as number 38 and Moldova as number 87.

Not all citizens get the same share of income and consumption. UNDP measures deviation from perfectly equal distribution (= 0). Sweden is closest with the index value 25.0, Estonia gets 37.6 and Moldova 36.2. The richest 20 percent in Moldova gets a share of 72,1 of income and consumption. Within a certain country there is regional and organizational diversity in a country, which is believed to intersect with the root causes (Demleitner, 2001). There is also an urban-rural divide: Villagers earn less, the system of social assistance is even more unsatisfying in rural areas, poverty is more widespread and unemployment has taken a chronic character. This “represents the increase of differences between the starting position of children from towns and villages at the very beginning of their lives” (2002:78) At risk for poverty are individuals in Moldovan families with many children, with a low level of education, unemployed or working in agriculture (SIDA, 2002).

Position in the labour market is marker of gender equality. More than 50 percent of the Swedish women (20-64 years old) work full time (35 hours ore more), as compared to more than 70 percent for the Swedish men of the same age. The salaries of the women are overall 92 percent of men’s in 2000 (when age, education, working hours, sector and profession are accounted for) (Statistics Sweden, 2002: 44-45). Sweden is a country with relative gender equality in many ways, but the gap between discourses and practice is clear.

With a survey in six East European countries Domanski (2002) examines whether or not a gender gaps in earnings exists. Only when considering the lower educational status of women, living in rural areas, and older age women can more often be said to represent an ‘underclass’, she comments. A European Commission-conference 2002 focuses on labour markets in transition countries such as Moldova and
Estonia (Ruminska-Zimmy, 2002: 2). On the Estonian labour market women face a number of negative factors: lower-paid positions, temporary contracts, higher proportion of unemployment and lower average wages than men. Women are often employed full-time and they work in occupations with low prestige and wages below the average (Vöörmann, 2000: 52). The transitions economy has meant a broadening of the gap in wages during the last decade. Women receive lower wages even when all the other characteristics (education and qualifications) are equal (Vöörmann, 2000: 52; cf. Helemäe, Saar & Vöörmann, 1997). Pascall and Manning quote data that show how the gender pay ratios in Estonia (female monthly wages as a percent of male monthly wages) between 1992 and 1996 fell from 79.8 to 72.6 (2000: 249). Women in Estonia are becoming increasingly better educated than men, and thereby equipped with human capital. The gap in wages therefore seems to come from unequal treatment. Women’s disadvantageous on the labour market in comparison to men consists of many factors: difficulties in combining work and family responsibilities, traditional gender roles, and also a structure of informal social networks that are unfavorable to women (especially non-Estonians) since their networks often are family-oriented and they do not have as good access to strategic information as men. (Hansson, 2000: 37)

In the first phase of the transition process in Moldova the focus has mainly been on macroeconomic policies and building of market institutions. Labour market policies reflected the traditional male breadwinner model at macro and micro levels. The situation today reflects the past system where women often played the role of second-earners employed in less strategic sectors. Female participation in the labour force was then high, but at the same time women remained responsible for childcare and family. Women were often highly educated, but had a more general educational profile, as opposed to a more narrow vocational training for many men. The labour market was characterised by privatizations and job opportunities in the most dynamic parts of the service sector. On the other hand there were many factors facilitating men’s adjustment to the changes in that labour market. They had, for example, higher wages, a strong position in labour market institutions and access to formal and informal networks in all sectors of the economy (Ruminska-Zimmy, 2002: 2). Women’s share of the labor force in Moldova has not diminished, but the situation of women on the labor market is worsening, pushing women out from the job market requiring higher education, skills, and intellectual jobs.” (SIDA, 2002:67)

**Corruption and crime**

The transformations undertaken in Moldova has meant adapting to a multitude of social norms, and “[p]eople began acting to personal motivation and interests, according to their individual capacities, and to their individual goals” (Carasciuc, 2002:79) During this period, a restructuring and expansion of a parallel economy also evolved. “Grey economy”, where the activity was legal, though not registered, and “black economy”, embodying criminal activities, grew. The latter is explained with reference to institutional weakness, including lack of enforcement, which allowed for high profits from illegal operations (Ruminska-Zimmy, 2002:5). Future victims of traffic do not question their prospective foreign employers because they come from a culture where it was useless to criticize the bosses (Althink, 1995: 160).

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2002 ranks 102 (out of more than 200 sovereign countries in the world) countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. Corruption is defined as the abuse of public office for private gain. Comparison should be based on a country’s score, not its rank. Score 10 means highly clean and 0 highly corrupt (www.transparency.org/cpi 2002: 6-7)

**Table 2. Corruption Perception Index 1999 and 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>1999 score/country rank of 99 countries</th>
<th>2002 score/country rank of 102 countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>2.6/76</td>
<td>2.1/93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>5.7/27</td>
<td>5.6/29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>9.4/4</td>
<td>9.3/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** www.transparency.org/cpi
As we can see, Sweden is considered close to highly free from corruption, Estonia is in the middle, and Moldova is considered rather corrupt. In the analysis of conditions for sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex, this means that, for a country with high scores, even if laws and regulations are inaugurated to stop exploitation of women, the officials involved might still act out of the interest of those who benefit from trafficking and prostitution.

There is widespread corruption in Moldova. The shadow economy allegedly amounts to 50% of the economic activity (Johansson, forthcoming; cf. Nations in Transit, 2002). In a survey carried out in 2000 by Transparency International Moldova (SIDA, 2002: 6; cf. Carasciuc, 2002) to slightly more than 1000 persons in business and household, some sectors were indicated as the most corrupt: health services, customs, police, state and education. Demand for direct payment for services that should be free was said to be a problem. The independence of the judiciary is weak. SIDA (2002) reports extreme violation of human rights in Moldova, especially in Transnitria. When discussing crime in Moldova, it is important not to use the concept ‘organised crime’ indiscriminately. Galeotti (2003) explains some differences between the crime in the Transnitrian part and in the rest of Moldova. Transnitria is “widely regarded as criminalized” (2003: 50) and the groups there form flexible, network patterns. The ‘Moldovan’ crime is more coherent, hierarchical and clanish since they are based around extended families or home, district and villages. Perhaps Moldova is spared some organized crime groups due to the fact that no profits have been possible there (Galeotti, 2003).

Domestic violence and the unequal domestic division of labour are crimes and indicators of unequal relationships between women and men. One of the goals of ‘the Moldovan action plan on the improvement of woman’s situation and its role in society’ from 1998 is to prevent and liquidate violence against women. But despite efforts, “the level of family violence is alarming. It is widespread, being worsened by the social-economic problems encountered by citizens together with any additional personal reasons like stress, alcohol consumption, mental disease, frustration, low level of education and culture”. The struggle against this violence is usually initiated by one of the 40 women’s NGOs, but the collaboration with the government is said to be affected by an old stereotype and nostalgia for the paternal coordination of their activity (UNDP, 2002:67-68).

Donna Hughes and Tatyana Denisova (2001) recognize a “transnational political criminal nexus of individual criminals, organized crime groups, corrupt police and governmental officials, foreign governments, and NGOs” in Ukraine. There is a criminalization of the state and economy, she argues (2001: 2). Governments of destination countries, e.g. the Netherlands where some 60 to 70 percent of the women in prostitution are from outside the EU, are funding NGOs in sending countries that promote the destination country’s point of view. An example would be the NGO la Strada-Ukraine that blocked a conference resolution that criticizes the sex industries or state that prostitution is harmful to women (2001: 21).

Gender relations

In the UNDP study of 2003 an index Gender Empowerment measure (GED) is constructed to measure female vs. male political participation and decision-making, economic participation and power over economic resources. Sweden is ranked as number 3 of 70 countries, Estonia as number 33 and Moldova as number 51.

The share of domestic, unpaid work for women and men is a clear indication of gender equality/inequality. The traditional gender roles still remain in Sweden in 2003. About 75 percent of the women have the main responsibility for laundry and ironing (with an exception for women 18 to 30 with a higher education). About 60 percent of women also have the main responsibility for cleaning and cooking. And when a child gets sick, women, more often than men, stay at home to take care of her/him. 80 percent of the men take care of the car and do household repairs (TCO, 2003). During one week, in couples in Sweden with small children, women work more than 40 hours at home and men less than 30 (Statistics Sweden, 2002: 35).
The underlying norms that define women as subordinated and their bodies and sexuality as subordinated men’s control cannot be combined with equality and full citizenship (Wendt Höjer, 2002: 37), and could form part of the foundation for prostitution in Sweden. Women in Sweden are sometimes afraid of violence. In Sweden 66 percent of all women in a survey in 1999 often feel uneasy about the risk of being exposed to physical and sexual violence. 22 percent of the women in the study had been touched in a sexual way against their will (Lundgren, Westerstrand, & Kalliokoski, 2001).

During the Soviet period, absolute equality between women and men was officially declared, but this did not reflect the real situation. All women’s organizations were dismissed. In reality, the Soviet system could even have strengthened the grip of patriarchy. During the early years of economic transformation in Russia, a dramatic increase in inequality and in abject poverty was obvious. The concern for this was often expressed as concern for “weak” or “disadvantaged” groups. Poverty was too easily interpreted as an increase in gender inequality, a “patriarchal renaissance” (Katz, 2001). But in reality old and new mechanisms of gender inequality interact. Some things remain as legal equality in marriage and equal rights at work, a widening gap between rights and practice (Pascal & Manning, 2000). Statistics illuminating the situation of women in Moldova are not often presented. SIDA reports that “[t]he economic depression has affected seriously the entire population /.../ and in particular, women, children and old people.” (2002: 66). “The share of women in politics shrinks. The trust of Moldovan women in the society is not strong. In an investigation in 1999 a clear majority, 72 to 84 percent, of women had no confidence in the next day, thought that the rights of women were not observed in Moldova, claimed that they did not occupy a well-deserved position in society, did not think that the female sex were respected, and that the protection of the state was insufficient. (UNDP, 2000; cf. Socio-Moldova, 1999).

For centuries traditional patterns of a patriarchal society have been developed in Estonia. Men’s roles were treated as universal and natural. Men are in possession of the role of a leader, women of the caretaker. Home and family are seen as a consolidating unit preserving historical traditions and developing their own culture. In the 1990s there was a reactive attempt to revive the traditional gender roles towards a clear patriarchal pattern in Estonia (Estonia CEDAW report, 2002; Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia & UNDP, 2000). The unequal opportunities, rights and obligations are not considered to be social problems. Public opinion is still overwhelmingly in support of traditional gender roles and there is no constructive dialog in the community so the problems end up on the level of the individual (family) (2000: 41) And carrying out household tasks is still considered to be primarily the wife’s responsibility even when both spouses work outside the home (2000: 40). So there is a gender gap in the amount of leisure time available, women have markedly less time than men, throughout life (2000: 29).

**Sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex**

The U.S: State Department issues an annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* to its Congress on the efforts of governments all over the world to combat severe forms of trafficking. The latest report that was published in June 2003 includes 95 governments placed in three different tiers where countries in Tier 1 fully comply with the minimum standards (prohibiting and punishing trafficking, prescribe punishment that commensurate with those for grave crimes and make serious and sustained efforts to eliminate trafficking). Sweden is placed in Tier 1. In Tier 2 are governments that are believed to have made a significant effort, the position of Estonia and Moldova, and in Tier 3 governments that do not “fully comply” (US. Dept, 2003: 14).

In the country narratives Moldova is described as mainly a source country, Estonia as a source country, and Sweden as a destination and transit country.
Table 3. Paths of trafficking to and from Moldova, Estonia and Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Trafficking from and transit to:</th>
<th>Trafficking to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moldova (mainly source country)</td>
<td>Ukraine ➔ Romania</td>
<td>Boznia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia-Montenegro, Kosovo, Italy, France, Portugal, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Afganistan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia (source country)</td>
<td>➔ regions within Estonia.</td>
<td>Finland, Sweden, the other Nordic countries, Germany, Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (destination and transit country)</td>
<td>The Baltic countries, Central and eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean (small numbers) ➔ Spain, Germany, Denmark, Norway.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Sleptova (2003) from the Institute for Public Policy in Moldova (2003) reports that among women trafficked from Moldova 80 percent come from rural areas. A major part of them is probably recruited for a legitimate work, she comments (2003: 25).

Survey data on sexual trafficking and prostitution in the Baltic states and Moldova

In this part I compare survey data from the Baltic states in 2001 with a few questions in the Baltic Barometer of 2003 added by me. The questions are unfortunately not constructed in an exact similar way, but with that reservation the statistics can still be compared.

The problem of trafficking in women had not before been researched in the context of public opinion in the Baltic States. The IOM survey “Public Perception and Awareness of Trafficking in the Baltic States”, is therefore a pioneering study attempted to assess and present in a systematic manner public attitudes, and the level of awareness concerning trafficking in the Baltic States. Representative population polls were carried out in Estonia (990 respondents), Latvia (1000) and Lithuania (1025) in September – October 2001 (IOM, 2001: 4).

The Baltic Barometer is a survey that up till now has been conducted three times, 1999 in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 2001 in the Baltic states and in Poland and 2003 in Moldova (where a few questions similar to those in the IOM study was added). Another survey is planned for 2004. Numbers of respondents are approximately 1100 per country, with random sampling used. The results are to be published by (eds.) Loftson & Yonghyok (forthcoming). The 2003 study of the Baltic Barometer is called “Democracy and Social Transition in Republic of Moldova – Survey on values, attitudes, participation and social conditions”.

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kristina.ahola@sh.se July 2003
Working paper, please do not quote!
Not corrected for language-based mistakes.
Table 4. Views on young women’s reason for moving abroad for the purpose of employment. Percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Moldova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No possibility t find a job in their home country</td>
<td>42,8</td>
<td>75,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of quick money</td>
<td>63,0</td>
<td>11,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No prospects here, even if you have a job</td>
<td>25,9</td>
<td>9,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of nice and easy life</td>
<td>32,4</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to see the World, to travel</td>
<td>47,9</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is only a cover, in reality they want to get married to foreigners</td>
<td>11,6</td>
<td>0,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to become independent of their families</td>
<td>15,0</td>
<td>0,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low moral standards</td>
<td>5,5</td>
<td>0,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No patriotic feelings</td>
<td>2,7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the Moldovan case people seem to see unemployment for young women as the most important centripetal force, driving them abroad for a job. Estonian answers give a more varied explanation. The expectation of quick money is most often stressed, together with desire to see the world and expectation of a nice and easy life abroad is added to unemployment as supposed reasons for migration.

Table 5. View on in what way many women/girls are trafficked abroad for the purpose of prostitution. Answers: very many and many. Percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Moldova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migrated voluntarily, knowing they will be engaged in prostitution</td>
<td>40,2</td>
<td>53,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficked by deception, suggesting other jobs (e.g. au-pair, waitress)</td>
<td>38,4</td>
<td>72,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafficked by force</td>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>42,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Estonia trafficked by force is not believed to be an important reason factor. The Moldovan figures are high for all three explanations, but highest probability holds trafficked by deception as explanations.

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1 Respondents where given the possibility of three answers as explanations, the table indicates the first answer given.
Table 6. View on what kind of offer is most frequently used for the trafficking in women by deception. Percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offer</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Moldova</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To study abroad, attend some training courses</td>
<td>8,2</td>
<td>10,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist trip</td>
<td>3,4</td>
<td>14,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage to foreigners</td>
<td>12,1</td>
<td>21,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment in agriculture</td>
<td>3,9</td>
<td>13,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work as au-pair, domestic worker, nurses etc.</td>
<td>47,4</td>
<td>22,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at model agencies</td>
<td>47,5</td>
<td>5,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at hotel, motels</td>
<td>32,5</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at restaurants, bars, dance clubs</td>
<td>51,0</td>
<td>0,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering unqualified jobs abroad</td>
<td>12,3</td>
<td>0,2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Moldovan girls are thought to be offered to marry a foreigner or to get a domestic job more often. Estonian girls are often thought to be offered jobs with an ‘occupational affinity’ to prostitution (Nistor & Soitu, 2000: 95). These are jobs as models, in restaurants, bars and dance clubs, and also as domestic worker.

Table 7. View on why there is prostitution in Moldova. Percent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moldova</th>
<th>Fully agree + That could be true</th>
<th>No, I don’t think so</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It offers women a way of becoming independent</td>
<td>24,3</td>
<td>59,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is always going to be there because men seem to need it</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>34,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is going to stop when my country gets richer</td>
<td>39,7</td>
<td>44,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is needed for the families to survive</td>
<td>35,7</td>
<td>46,4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This question appears only in the 2003 Moldovan survey. Here we see that the view that prostitution is always going to be there is very strong. And that prostitution probably is not needed for the families to survive. This could illustrate a view away from a poverty explanation to a question on the construction of male sexuality.

Discussion

The Republic of Moldova is a recognised as a poor country; it’s GDP is only 1,6 percent of Sweden’s. There have been positive results in the areas of economic and political freedom. Some are the winners of this; there has been sharp rice in the discrepancy between incomes. Corruption is high and this can be seen as an indication that the state is weak in confronting corruption and crime. There have been very dramatic social costs of the transition. There is a lack of resources for education ant health services;

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2 Respondents where given the possibility of three answers as explanations, the table indicates the first answer given.

The Prostitution of Sex and Sexual Trafficking. Context, actors and attitudes in Moldova, Estonia and Sweden.
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pensions and salaries are not paid. Up to 70 percent of the population was considered poor in 2001, and in rural areas poverty is more widespread and unemployment has taken a chronic character. Labour market policies reflected the traditional male breadwinner model. Women are pushed from jobs requiring higher education and intellectual skills. Public opinion is overwhelmingly in support of traditional gender roles. Women in Moldova do not feel respected or protected by the state. The level of domestic violence is reported to be alarming. The U.S. Department study of 2003 reports cases of trafficking from Moldova to 23 countries. Although figures are uncertain, it is safe to say that a considerable amount of young women are trafficked from Moldova for prostitution. To understand how this is possible it is not enough to consider the socio-economics. The emphasis in Moldova on building market institutions, the corruption, poverty and traditional gender roles are important causes, and they form the norms and attitudes on sexual trafficking and the prostitution of sex. From new survey data we learn that people believe that young women are moving abroad because of unemployment in Moldova. If they are trafficked it is done by the means of deception. It is the public opinion they are often offered work as domestic workers, or marriage to foreigners. And the view on reasons for the existence of prostitution is interesting. Prostitution is always going to be there because men seem to need it, they answer, and prostitution does not offer women a way of becoming independent and it is not needed for the families to survive.

To summarise: Moldova is at present a country set for survival at any cost. Many factors seem to push the citizens out of the country. The emphasis of the government is mainly on the economy of the country, not on the social costs of the transition. The state is still not strong enough to implement laws or protect its citizens from corruption and crime. Individuals wanting to get rich sell what are marketable assets: the young women of the country. And, as an indication of a collective consciousness, trafficking is by the public opinion related to unemployment or marriage to a foreigner as a way out of poverty. Prostitution, on the other hand, is not seen as a remedy for the women or her family, but as a result of male sexuality.

The Republic of Estonia was hailed as the ‘model pupil’ amongst the EU applicants and will become one of its members in 2004. The country is directed towards the Western Europe. Its GDP is 14,1 percent of Sweden’s. The corruption index is 5,6, which is between ‘clean’ and ‘corrupt’. 27 percent of the population is considered poor.

The gender roles are traditional. Although women are better educated they are unequally treated in the labour market. Their situation is typical for transition states where the situation reflects the past system, and where women plays the role of the second-earners employed in less strategic sectors.

Is Estonia an example of a country with a growing consumer culture and traditional assumptions about gender relationships are assumed to break up families, which fuels trafficking? The attitude data on the population’s attitudes on trafficking and prostitution could reflect that. People believe that young women are moving abroad: because of expectation of quick money, to travel and see the world, because of unemployment and because they expect a nice and easy life. The images of the West seem to pull the citizens out of the country. If they are trafficked for the purpose of prostitution it is done voluntarily, knowing they will be engaged in prostitution ore they are deceived by suggestions of jobs as au pair and waitress. Most often they are offered work at restaurants, bars, dance clubs, and model agencies, or as au pair, domestic workers and nurses.

To summarise: Estonia is directed towards the Western Europe and its consuming culture. Trafficking is here explained by expectations of quick money, travel to the West and a nice and easy life there.

Sweden’s GDP is 63 times higher than that of Moldova and 7 percent of that of Estonia. Corruption index is 9,3. Poverty rate is 11 percent for women and 12 percent for men. Sweden is a fairly rich country. The country is imbued with a full-grown consumer culture. On the one hand the state has issued two laws against buying sex and participating in sexual trafficking. On the other women in Sweden, in spite of discourses on gender equality, are afraid of being exposed to sexual and physical violence. Poverty, unemployment or corruption of the state cannot explain the fact that Sweden is a destination and a transit country for sexual trafficking and that prostitution exists. We don’t have survey data to compare the results from the survey in Moldova, but perhaps we would also get the answers in both Estonia and Sweden. “Prostitution is always going to be there because men seem to need it.” And perhaps we have an indication here that Barry is right in assuming that trafficking is typical for pre-industrial countries, whereas with higher levels of economic development comes the ‘normalisation of sex’?
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