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THE GLOBALIZATION OF SEX ECONOMIES THROUGH EXAMPLES FROM THE ROMA COMMUNITY IN SKOPJE

Abstract: The globalization of sexual service markets in the world contributes to the globalization of the sexual service market in the Roma community in Skopje. This is evident through the examples of five interlocutors from a 9-year research period in Skopje. Today, most sex workers have emigrated to Belgium and France, while those that continue to work in Skopje conduct their work in a European model.

Keywords: globalization, Roma community, stereotypes, violence

Local globalization and global localization

In the period of my 9-year research on the sex scene in Macedonia, an interesting issue came to light, which, in essence, brought together all of my previous commentaries on sexuality and its usage for economic aims while providing them with a new, unifying dimension. That is the issue of space of the local economic system in the Skopje Roma community, within the framework of the European and global industries of sex, and in the context of how globalization and the intensified desire industries are a process of rearticulating relations among personal, local, institutional, and world economy (Agathangelou 2004: x). In that context, sex workers that work *in* communities and those that come *from* the Roma community in Skopje, “working” out in the “open”, on Italian scenes as migrants and tourists in 2013 and in Belgium and France today, are an intriguing example.

In that sense, we note the term “political economy” (Altman 2001: 34), used by Dennis Altman - who devoted his research opus on processes of globalization in his discussion of “sexuality in the context of larger socioeconomic factors which create the conditions within which sexual acts and identities occur” wherein he considers the

economic, cultural, political and, as he suggests, epistemological factors “as particular ways of understanding human beings and the worlds they make are diffused globally”.

“To be settled well (da se bide sreden)”

The group of 5 research collaborators, sex workers from the Skopje Roma community, work in the Roma scene in Skopje and in the scene of sexual services in European countries. At the start of the research in 2013, these collaborators conducted their services in Šuto Orizari in Skopje, whereas at the time of the writing of this paper in 2022, two of them reside in Belgium, one in France and two in Skopje. From the very beginning, a significant aspect of their personal identification as sex workers was the point of “being settled well”, a category of wellbeing that they wanted to achieve outside of the Roma community in Skopje. This category of wellbeing includes a number of aspects, of which primarily include economic stability, ensuring personal (and family) material ownership and sex/gender-based fulfillment as women who can live “freely” [as women] and do sex work in order to fulfill economic needs. They consider European states, and lately Scandinavian countries, to be highly democratic societies and able to fulfill that need. As such, they emigrate to those places, as in the example of my three collaborators who moved to Belgium and France within in 6 years of the research.

Marx stated that globalization began with the alienation of the sources of production, when the worker was separated and distanced from his “productive activity” (Marx 1988: 73, Agathangelou 2004: 6). In the example of our collaborators, this view can aid us in understanding why individual sex workers, seeing their “sisters” (*sestri*) do temporary work abroad, considering the demand in the European markets, migrate or travel as tourists, adapting “local production” for the local needs of the Roma community in the European market. The aim of this is to offer a “European” product *on the strada*, “the highway”, in Italy, Belgium, France and other countries after 2016. This type of emigration leads them to face a new identity, where migrancy is a factor in their self-identification.

According to María L. Agustín, “migrancy is at best a temporary identity, referring to a stage of life when people are in transit. Migrants are often assumed to have moved from their country with the intention of settling down in another, but research shows that some who think they are leaving for good actually return, others never consider their journey to be other than temporary no matter how long it lasts and some who settle abroad still feel permanently uprooted, meaning that physical location and even legal status are not good indicators of affiliation to a migrant identity” (Agustín 2007: 10). This is especially important considering that these migrants do not sell their houses but rather offer them to their families for the period they are “up there”, as in the case of S., or use them in the periods when they return to the Roma community in Skopje, spending

time “on vacation” or “leisure” with their close *sisters* and friends. That is the case with my interlocutors’s three “close” people, who belong to the older generation of *sisters*, “sex workers” - one of whom, N. (or S.) has worked on the Italian market for 15 years. The other example is P., who began working as a tourist on the Italian market less than a month before my conversation with *sister* E..

L: There’s... three more. They are also in Italy, coming here in the summer for vacation. They are from here, from Macedonia, but they live in Italy. And do sex work in Italy... I: Do they work here? L: No, they come here to rest only. They come here, for example, rest for ten, fifteen days and then they go back there (VN850124, 2013).

Examples from these two sex workers who have moved away and the ways in which they came to work where they work confirm the notion that “combining travel and work is perhaps a hybrid form of tourism, indicating that the supposed contradiction between leisure and work is not true” (Agustin 2007: 15, 17). This is supported by her conclusion that “migration is described as caused by the desire to make better money... flee from violence... and the ‘feminisation of poverty’”.

In our conversation in 2013, L. referred to all of his close collaborators working in Italy in the plural, confirming that they “have in common a process... (Agustin 2007: 10): they have all left their countries and they have to earn money to live”. Even though these individuals were not our interlocutors, and it was not a specific aim of the research, there was an attempt to understand, through their own narratives, how our five interlocutors - close *sisters* in Macedonia - perceive their older *sisters’* sex work: one as a migrant, the other as a tourist in Italy, and how that directly affects them through the system of *close sisters* from the inside, transforming the local market-based sex work of the *sisters* within and outside the Roma community in Skopje. Namely, this poses the question of how the *sisters* who managed to “settle well” became an example of the transformation of sex work among the *sisters* in the Roma community in Skopje and Macedonia. If, from today’s perspective, we look at the direction in which their sex work has transformed, and whether and how their aim of “settling well” has been achieved, we can see that what they predicted in 2013/2014 has already been achieved, in the sense that they moved “up there” and took the first step. According to the information from my collaborators, their life “up there” takes place in a single rented room in which they live off of funds received from the state social services and their sex work.

In terms of how experience and knowledge of the European sex markets are shared, thereby exerting influence on the Roma scenes in the sense of globalization of certain parameters, we see in the examples of interlocutors in 2013 that they speak of their *sister* S., who works in the sex market in Italy, comes back to their house in Šuto Orizari for their summer “vacation”, where they share their “communion” with other *sisters* from Šutka, and learn about sex work in European countries. They open an *office*,

a space for providing sexual services, spending the rest of their time in conversation and “leisure”. Collaborating in this *office*, the younger *sisters* use the opportunity to share knowledge and skills, and to “learn” from the *older ones*’ experiences and employ certain practices in Skopje and small local scenes in Macedonia. In this way, these experienced *sisters* influence the younger ones’ constructions of the “ideal” conception as heard in the interlocutors’ narratives in 2013, planning to follow the example of the *older* or *old sisters by* migrating to work on the sex markets in Italy. This is supported by the fact that with the influence of the “sex workers”, initially thinking as a *homo economicus*, afterwards becoming a migrant that “follows market forces for a better allocation of resources around a given economic space” (Agathangelou 2004: 9), in essence, globalization processes take place in the Roma community in Skopje. These individual “sex workers” become part of the “global European” market - defined on the Italian scenes as migrants - or become part of the globalized Macedonian market-based sex work defined as the “open” or “closed” scene in the Skopje Roma community in the spirit of the European scenes. This example of sex workers aiming to *settle well* in the future, according to the example of their *sisters* abroad, proliferates in all of the interlocutors’ examples, with the exception of L. L. had experienced sex work in Zurich, Switzerland independently, without the support of his *sisters* and friends, returning after a short period and continuing his sex work in Macedonia, together with his *close sisters*. He justifies his reason for returning to Skopje as the need of parents, family and friends - signaling that the reasons for his migration and going abroad as a tourist “cannot be reduced to economics only” (Agustin 2007: 25), although they are the deciding factors for labor migration.

In regards to how their “ideal” life looks in their own narratives, we can look to the manifested idea of the *close sisters* S. and P., who migrated in order to work as “women” on the “scenes” in Italy before and during 2013. As common as it is for my interlocutors to work as “women”, so is the conception of what constitutes the socio-economic fulfillment of an individual: “to be well settled”.

I: You use the term ‘to settle well’. What does that mean?... S: So, that is what I wanted to say. We have our own houses here. But as for freedom, we are not free because of, for example, family, brothers- like, he has a brother, nephews, sister-in-law, you understand. In my case it is children, this and that, so having our own personal thing in another country, you know, in another city, personally ours, no one else’s, personally ours. So, that is what I want to say, to be settled well... Having something personally yours, not someone else’s, you understand, that is our wish. And not just his, mine, but for the others as well. N: Others as well... S: Others as well. I: Why does it need to be abroad? Somewhere else? S: Well abroad it is... because of the surroundings, the gossip... they are different, I mean the people, they accept us, it is for that... for freedom. I: Freedom of what? What kind of freedom do you have if you...? S: Peace, going out... dressing like a girl, we have that hob(by)... mine, we feel like women and want to dress like women. So if you go out like a woman, there are no comments from other people, this - that commenting, you know, they

even say “hello”... you know? We want a peaceful life, a good life. N: It does not have to be rich, modest... I: Right, but okay, your children will be there, for example, yours (to S.). Could you go out like that in front of them? S: If I plan to settle... as I said, live abroad, to live my life, my children would be here. They would stay in Macedonia, you understand, I will not take them with me to see how I spend my life there, how I live my life... I: Who would you leave the children with here? S: I am not planning to do that now... I: Ah, you are not planning to... S: They are still small, I plan to do that further on when they marry, my son, my daughters, when they have their own home... and all of that, and only then do I plan to, really plan to live my life the way I want. That is my dream. N: That is a dream of the future, a dream for you, because you want to live with your partner, or, “boyfriend”, sleep with him, get up with him... (VN850122, 2013).

The notion of being “well settled” includes several interesting aspects of selfhood that are related to the gender/sex identity of the interlocutors, who are found in the context of having to achieve economic power through this framework of personal ownership abroad and the experience of personal freedom, which the interlocutors above perceive as the opposite to the way that they have lived up to that moment. Some of them would use their socio-economic status to transfer to their future life from the city of Skopje. A particularly interesting example in this respect is N., who does not hide his “gay” identity from his family of “blood” relatives, brothers and sisters etc, yet builds a local topography in which he sees himself as outside of the Roma community where he can live in “freedom”.

*N: ... the important thing is that when you **are settled abroad**, so you have money, **you buy a house in the city**, for example in Aerodrom, Vlae or regardless where, you buy an apartment, you live, live your life, happily, freely, you get up with a person, go to bed with them, have a friend, you wait for, not just someone gay... extra friends. That is a free life for example... (VN850121, 2013).*

As opposed to N., who does not hide his gay identity, the idea of “settling well” for S. is possible only outside the borders of the country, where he could create a home that is his personal property, which both interlocutors see as a way to ensure safety for “old age” and a guarantee of a “free” life.

S: For example, that’s the thing, to have our own home, ours. Alone. So... N: Set for old age. S: So friends can come over... friends, like he is gay, I have a lot of them, I love my friends, but here at my place they can’t, you know, can’t come home as guests. Me at his place, him at my place, to be free, for him to come over with his partner, me to his place with my partner... That freedom is good, it is what we want. Like the way a girl feels with her boyfriend, at her friend’s

place and her friend at her place... we cannot do that here. We can't. That is why we are disappointed, I don't know, I don't know how to describe that feeling to you. N: There are no extras like you, the others don't understand, they don't understand the work. It gives me hope, the people here are vulgar, undisciplined as I said, they have no own ground. We are already part of that... softer sex, softer sex (VN850122, 2013).

That context of personal freedom, as seen above, includes the possibility of *sisters to be themselves freely*. What that means for E. is seen through his identification with his sister P.

E: She is very... good-looking. B: She is free. She has her freedom. I: Why does she have freedom? E: If you saw her, here open it (her facebook profile) what can you see, you can't tell if it is a man or a woman. I: He is abroad now, you said? E: She'll come back now. We'll see each other on the twentieth. By the way, we are very close friends. From all of them... I: Very close? E: Yes, very. I don't know what... B: It's like they are from the same mother. E: Yes, very much so. That's why I am - that's why we can't... she has helped me so much with, like, clothes... Whatever she buys for herself, she buys for me. We wear the same things. I: Mhm. She brings stuff from abroad. E: Yes. I: How long has she been abroad? E: She left now. A month ago, maybe not even a month. Now when she comes, we will travel a lot To Bitola, and Prilep... There's no place we don't go with her (VN850127, 2014).

In E.'s example, we can see that through the narrative of their “closeness”, he identifies with his *friend*, who began to manifest the idea of “settling” in Italy by visiting the “scenes” as a tourist and offering sexual services. The idea of migrating in order to begin working abroad, but also copying the trends in sex work, can be seen in all interlocutors. Through E.'s example, who in terms of sex work relates to the example of the *older sisters*, especially the closest one, P., we gain insight into his sex-gender identity as a single Roma in Italy, doing sex work “as a woman” - an *avtostoperka* (*female hitchhiker*).

I: Have you... have you ever thought about changing your sex? E: Yes, I really wanted to have boobs. B: Breasts. To be like (incomprehensible). E: Yes. Seriously, so what? I really wanted to have boobs. I still want to. Just boobs because... it is nice to have boobs. I: Just boobs? E: Boobs, real long hair. To be an avtostoperka, to fuck for money. I would be better looking then. It would be more logical to be that, because more clients would be satisfied with that. That is what I would like (VN850127, 2014).

For the needs of the Italian market, the *sisters* of the Roma community in Skopje see the need for sex reassignment to the point of gaining breasts “boobs” and “long hair”)

as ideal bodily markers, which in their view, would allow the *avtostoperka* to provide more sexual pleasure to the *clients*, and would maintain her personal “femaleness” within sex work in Italy, regardless of whether they have “male” parts or not.

There is one, she lives in Italy, but comes here. She is a real transvestite, a real transvestite. She has breasts, but no surgery down there, only breasts. She is in Italy, living in Italy. She works there, comes here during the summer and works 'on the strada'. On the street. I: On the strada? L: Strada, in Italian, strada is what they call a street. She works there, on the street. On the highway. She works... in Italy, where she offers sexual services (VN850124, 2013).

This, for them, especially for E., represents a possibility to feel and work “like a woman” without having to go under surgical interventions, giving him the possibility to live without the danger of ever regretting what he did. That possibility is provided by the sex market in Italy. I: *Uh... what do you do with the male part? E: That doesn't matter in Italy, if you have a male part (VN850127, 2014).*

In the context of the interlocutors' ideas, “the scene” in Italy is confirmed as important to the individuals of the Roma community in Skopje. However, authors in the 90s were already writing that “the scene” in Italy belongs to some of the most important European and global “scenes” of sex work. That Italy is one of the most important locations in the European and global sex work markets of “crossdressers, transvestites”, and is discussed by Don Kulick in his monumental piece from 1998 “*Travesti...*”, on the late 80's period. That was a period when “France had become closed to *travestis*” (Kulick 1998: 166), after which the center of *travesti* prostitution moved to Italy. “Italy is today what France was in the early 1980s. Each day, scores of *travestis* leave Brazil with round-trip tickets to Brussels or Frankfurt or Vienna, but their final destination is Rome or Milan or Genoa... a large number of *travestis* leave the country to spend time working in Italy. Italy is to *travestis* what El Dorado was to the Spanish conquistadors of the New World. It is the land of fabled riches to which one travels in order to make one's fortune and return with enough money to realize one's dreams. Brazilian citizens do not need a visa to enter Italy as tourists, but *travestis* believe, presumably with good reason, that they will be deported if they attempt to enter the country openly. Therefore, they always travel to some other European city where they are fairly certain they can enter without difficulty. Crossing an international border with a passport bearing a male name, however, is always stressful for a *travesti* with breasts, plucked eyebrows, long hair... Most *travestis* making this journey attempt to pass as men, wearing long pants, no makeup, a man's shirt, and a baseball cap, into which they stuff their hair.” (Kulick 1998: 166 - 168). This means that work on these “scenes” requires an exchange of information about sex work and its commercialization on a global level, while from the interlocutors' narratives, we can see that the road to these “scenes” is very long, without mutual support and almost impossible.

Stereotypes and Violence

An important aspect in the globalization processes of the Šutka “scene” - which in its reach is also influential and plays a role in sex workers’ migration to ‘settle’ in European countries - is “the role of the state” (Altman 2001: 34) and its attitude to this category of workers through a vertical, top-down lack of care for their status in society while systematically ignoring them.

In the interlocutors’ narratives, where they talk about the “open scenes” in 2013/2014, we can see that the scene in Šuto Orizari has a special place as it unites several Roma, Macedonian and Albanian neighborhoods, and even cities in Macedonia. Several times in their accounts, interlocutors of both older and younger generations pointed to the period before 1999-2000 as well as the periods before and after, as times when the *localization* of scenes took place and the breaking down of the big scenes into smaller ones based on neighborhoods and ethnic belonging. In that way, the Roma sex workers scaled their work to the boundaries of the Roma neighborhood. As such, in the period around 1986, when beginning sex work, N. was active on the open scene “a...” in the center of the city of Skopje, however, later fearing violence from certain groups, pulled back his work to the open scene in Šuto Orizari.

N: Sometime when I was 16. I mostly socialized in the center of the city, moved in that direction, with Macedonian friends. I have a Roma friend. We usually moved around the old train station, around the Goce Delčev bridge, most of the places we went to, the old bus station... I: Were those places you frequented? N: Yes, yes. We frequented those places because we found clients there, we used to have clients there before, where the church is now, the new one... Bogorodica, where those public toilets were, not in the toilets but in the area... S: In that place. N: The space we frequented, it was public, it was different. S: They found some clients. N: We had friends too.. we would meet our friends there and then go our way, everyone had their own client, it was- I don't know what to call it, maybe even a serious relationship, everything was possible then. I: Would you go with the other Roma, or...? N: Yes, yes. He is in Germany now... (VN850121, 2013).

N. describes an interesting example that reflects the situation of the sex scenes in Skopje in the period before the breakup of SFR Yugoslavia in the 1980s up to the year 2000, where he points out the main reason to move their sex work from the center of Skopje to their neighborhood Šuto Orizari. According to him, he sought out his clients among the “company” established on the scene, mostly with the same group of 4-5 individual Macedonians and Roma, up until certain groups of individuals began to “beat them up” after receiving services or beat them up and take their personal belongings, like the money they had earned or material objects that had received as compensation

for a service. Because these situations had become more frequent among users of those services, the interlocutors began to fear working on that scene.

N: "... it was '86, fourth day of St. George's Day (Gjurgjovden), everyone at home is at the slava (family feast), I was beat up by an Albanian in the city, he even broke my tooth, I was in a coma, unconscious... He distanced himself from me in that moment, first he greeted me, finished his job, I had sex with him and then he beat me up, I don't know what he was hitting with but he had friends, he called them (...) ... I came up to him, got close to him, and I don't know who he is, many of them have fake identifications, like police identifications, and get their services, sex services. I got close to him that day. Free? Free. He enjoyed it too, you know? He agreed. And now, I made you happy, I agreed, move away, like some others that even say thank you and bye, we'll see each other, some even exchange numbers, one or the other thing, but he was... I don't know, as if a devil entered him that day, what he did to me. I: Where did the other ones come from, the ones who helped him? N: Through the phone, the phone, they roam around there to steal money or something, to scare us off, you know, so you give them money to be rid of them, you know? Maybe someone taught them that" (VN850121, 2013).

The increased frequency of such situations on the scene, especially in the period of the 2001 conflict, resulted in certain members of Albanian groups being seen as the "most problematic" on the open scene.

... The Albanians were most problematic. I don't know, I don't understand that problem myself. Do they themselves hide, not wanting to uncover what they really are. You know? And they come and attack. That's the biggest problem. So far I have not had a problem like 'a Roma beat me up'. A Roma can only mistreat you, Roma drug-users. Those that don't have any money, see you alone at night, they are in crisis so they bug you, take a phone, take your money... just to get over the urge. I don't know why the Albanians are so homophobic. Why there is so much homophobia, resistance towards homosexuals. I have no idea why they do that. They are strong in a group. When one is alone he won't do anything to you, but if they are five-six people or ten then you will be attacked. (...) Teenagers. All of them were teenagers. I: How... how do they know that...? There used to be vans there, now there are buses, for the villages K..., for those Albanians villages, S... and so on. And they gather here, this is their stop, they go on a van and leave. But the drivers of the vans know what's happening here. On the stop itself. He sees you, passing today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, constantly moving in a circle, and of course you become suspicious and you realize what is happening here. Them too. I come from work today, I wait at five and see you passing. Tomorrow I see you again here and of course, it is suspicious. When they attacked me, I was attacked by kids that were fifteen to eighteen. One of them came first, one started coming

toward me, and I saw the group behind, and as he was walking, the group was walking behind him, but I turned around, my sneakers pulsing in my head, I run as fast as I can. If it were one or two, it wouldn't have been a problem, but twenty! They would have done my make-up, permanent make-up, no need to do make-up after that. That's what the Albanians are like (VN850124, 2013).

In the case of the Albanians, the biggest problem identified by the interlocutors was when they needed to pass through a neighborhood with a majority-Albanian population in order to go to work. They usually passed in fear of being noticed and tried to pass “calmly”:

L: The most common problem... it to pass by and them noticing that you're gay, they immediately start shouting. 'Faggot! Look faggots! Look gays! Meaning 'Here is a faggot', 'here is a gay!' and immediately it begins with a rock or something... For example, where we gather in the Center in, two gay people, two gay people from Šuto Orizari were attacked with stones just because they were recognized as homosexuals. Because they are gay. I: By who? L: By the people that live there. The local population in, also teenagers. You don't have any problems with the older population, but the kids! Maybe it's how they were raised... to attack us, I don't know. They are teenagers of fifteen, sixteen years... They throw rocks or physically attack, come slap you and punch you. I: Does that happen often? L: Not very often. They do that when they notice what you really are, you know? That's why, for example, we try to tell them, those that obviously look gay, to use a car and come with a car up to the door, for their safety. Because you can't guarantee their safety on the street. Come with a car up to the door and come in freely. (VN85012, 2013).

N: So, I talk to the younger ones that are like me, gay, I give them advice to look out for themselves. It's very scary and painful. At that time, others respected us, me personally and the others, but now the Albanians are very dangerous... I: In what sense, why? N: Because they hate us, and they have that freedom. Before we didn't have such issues with the Albanians. In the center at O....., we would enter among Albanians, and on Friday I was with him, a small kid and he threw a rock at my home. The older ones threw too... for the masquerade I was on my heels and he began to provoke me. The place itself is very bad, very bad. We are a target of the Albanians, us gays - strictly Roma or whatever - we can't deal with them. S. can say so too. The same thing happens to the girls too. They throw rocks, provoke them. S: What he is trying to describe is the surroundings here. In the Center. I: How do they know? S: Because the area knows who lives there, how they live. N: They found out... from the women that are... I: They know about the women, how do they know about the gays? N: Well it's known that we have been going there for a year... S: The Center is for sex workers and people from the area know that and come here (...) I

noticed that afterwards... they became very aggressive like the devil is in them..., among the Albanians too, not the Romas, but the Albanians became very... bad. Bad. Like last Friday, a stone hit me here (pointing to his head), I ran after him, the kid ran away... The older ones come... they don't understand, they don't think about police, or anything. It could be worse. That's that. As soon as we enter the Center, you hurry here and there, be alert, take shortcuts this and that way, but you still need to go into the Center. They did that for the women so... so their work is closer (VN850121, 2013).

From the experience of the period which the interlocutors describe as the most violent, what they provide as advice to gay individuals doing sex work and coming to the Center is to control their body movements and move “stably” (*stabilno*) through the neighborhood. *L: Those that go on foot, should walk more stably, stabilize themselves when passing. I: What does that mean, ‘stabilize themselves’? L: To walk normally, don't bend, don't show- don't have those kinds of gestures, waving your hands, doing something, I don't know. Be a little more put together, while you're passing in front of them (VN850124, 2013).* Due to this creation of fear, despite the need to earn and openness in terms of ethnic belonging of the customers, the interlocutors decide to be more selective when choosing their *boy-friends* and *clients*.

But, that is not the case with L., whose *clients* and gay friends are “from the other side of Vardar”, and his last two-year relationship was with an Albanian *boyfriend*. As can be seen in the examples, what is specific about L. is that he avoids looking for *clients* in the Roma community in Skopje, where looks for his *boyfriends*, in contrast to N. and S., who conduct their sex work within the Roma community.

L: For me, nationality is not important, nor is religion, that is not important to me at all, I can be friends with anyone. It does not bother me if a person is Macedonian or Albanian or Bosnian, Turkish or Arabic or wherever. If he is a person to me, he is a person to everyone. L: I have no prejudice against anything, absolutely anyone. Not against the sex workers, nor the drug users, the gays, the people who go, who work, who steal to survive. I have no prejudices. If you are good to me, if you act the way you should, you can be the president or whatever and I will still see you as a person. I won't look at what you do for a living or what kind of status you have (VN850124, 2013).

?: Do you ever choose your partners, Macedonian, Roma, Shiptar...? Is that important to you? ?: Well yes, I chose them. Honestly I tend to go more with Roma, and less with Shiptars. ?: Why? ?: I'm afraid of being with the Shiptars. ?: Why are you afraid? ?: I don't know what they can do to me, there's disgusting Shiptars, and with the Roma I am much freer because I am a Roma too (Archive of IEA, DEM_569_2006-2007).

With time, under the strong influence of the globalization processes on the Roma community scene in Skopje, one can see that the stereotypical views of the Roma in terms of sex work are changing, especially in terms of finding *the right men*.

L: ... there are also Roma, Macedonians that come, pay the Roma to have sex with them. The men, the Macedonians pay the Roma men for sex, for example like me, with passive people. ... For example I am here, I come to Šutka with a car, I like you, come with me, [for] how much money do you want to fuck me, you say 500 denars, here are 500 denars and come with me. I: Does that happen often? L: Oh... go to Šutka sweety (maci), every Godly day they are there (VN850124, 2013)... N: ... we meet Macedonian gays, they can't find normal men, right men, they come to us, we hang out, we talk (VN850123, 2013).

Another important aspect is the resistance of state institutions on the issue of “protection” of sex workers as “women” in certain situations.

L: ... there was a situation where I was raped by other people, two underage and one adult person. I: How did that happen? L: It was in Šutka, in Šuto Orizari. It was at night, 1 o'clock. S. was waiting for me at home, I was about to go home and I see a drunk man, I know him actually, he used to bug me that I should be with him, I should be with him, and I would decline all the time - no, no, no, no, no, no... And that night he was drunk, found me on the street alone, in the winter, at 1 o'clock at night, not a living soul on the street. Drunkenly, he forcefully pulled me up to a place in Šuto Orizari, a restaurant, and called two more kids, and the two kids came. They tortured me to unconsciousness. I mean, not physically, but sexually. After that, I went to report the case to the police. I consulted a lawyer, but the lawyer stopped me, said the two people were underage and in my case, they can defend themselves saying that I wanted to- that I wanted to do it and that is why they came. I: Who said that to you? L: The lawyer. Because I sat down with the lawyer, explained to him very clearly that in this case there were two people - one was 14, the other 15. At first, we wanted just the older one who is of age, just him- only sue him, but in court, he could say sorry but I was not alone, these two kids were with me, you know, and it can become much bigger, they're underage and the lawyer said they can sentence you, based on the fact that you are a homosexual, they won't believe that they raped me, they can say that you made them come, do it with you, and the Roma, us Roma are like that, give him 200, 300 denars and he's happy... (VN850124, 2013).

These situations in which many of the individuals are found are reasons for the interlocutors to begin fearing coming into “direct” contact with people they do not know, a potential danger for them. We see in these few examples that the interlocutors tried reporting to police services, with no end result. Especially telling is the indolence of the

institutions in N.'s example when his belongings were forcefully taken and there were elements that constitute an attempt of murder. The state police not only refused to resolve the case but did not even try to lessen the "fear" of the individuals - that in other situations these issues would be prevented or resolved and the individuals protected. In some cases, some of the policemen were those that provoked the "fear", as the only option that can control the space where the movements of the individual and officials crossed.

?: *Have you had an unpleasant experience with the police because of your gay orientation? ?*: I have. Not with police, but with 'Alphas', two times. The second time was nothing special, but the first time, I was up there, a whole group of us all gays. ??: *What were you doing there? ?*: We were just sitting and waiting for our clients. ??: *That is where you gathered? ?*: Yes. We saw a car in the distance with 'Alphas', they lit us up with their headlights and came out of the car. They asked for identity cards, and I was only sixteen then, so I said I was underage and they asked me "What are you, a žensko petle?" And I replied: I am gay. They said: Ahhh you're gay?! ??: *What happened after? ?*: Well nothing, they moved away and left. But the second time they humiliated us and I felt insulted. ??: *Did they mistreat you? ?*: In the second case, I was the only gay one in a group and after we said bye to a gay friend, it was only me and two hetero friends. We were leaving when an 'Alpha' car passed, stopped and looked toward me. What are you, a faggot? - they said, and I said: You don't see what I am? Well you look like a girl. So I said: I'm a faggot. Ahh you're a faggot, you want to crawl now? I just looked at him and asked: Why should I crawl? And they began to laugh. I shut my mouth and kept quiet. They asked for my identity card and I said I would turn eighteen on the twenty-second of October and I would get one then, even though I still don't have an identity card now. They started making fun of me, kept me for I don't know how long and my friends - neighbors began making fun of me as well in front of the 'Alphas' and one of the 'Alphas' asked: Why are you making fun of your friend, the poor guy? Surely one of you is dating him? And they were giving excuses that none of them are dating me - I don't know, they said such stupid things and then said I was free and I left (Archive of IEA, DEM_598, 2006-07).

That kind of attitude from institutions results in individuals who use the "open" scenes to seek different solutions for their job. "Fear" in individuals and the opposite emotional experience of pleasure are experienced as two emotional dimensions that keep sex work, and sexuality, in the sphere of collective 'intimacy' of the Roma community, which is not talked about in public.

1 Special police unit.

2 'Female rooster', a demeaning term used for effeminate males.

Conclusion

One of the possibilities offered by the economized concept of the “scenes” is the manifestation of individuals’ conception of ‘being well settled’, confirmed through different aspects of selfhood in relation to the interlocutors’ sex/gender identity, their economic power as seen through personal ownership abroad and in Macedonia and the experience of personal freedom, seen as something opposite to the way they had lived up to that moment. As such, through the example of the older *sisters*, and under the influence of the disorganized state system portrayed above, these individuals, pressed from within and without the community, think about moving away and continuing their battles outside Macedonia. Their ideas were shared in 2013, and in 2022 they have largely been achieved.

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