

# SEX, CRIME AND POLITICS

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How organized crime influences and adapts to political institutions,  
with a particular focus on sex trafficking

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Göteborg Studies in Politics 159

2019

Avhandlingen baseras på följande delstudier:

Jonsson S. (2018) The Complex Relationship between Police Corruption and Sex Trafficking in Origin Countries. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 1-21

Jonsson S, Jakobsson N. (2017) Is buying sex morally wrong? Comparing attitudes toward prostitution using individual-level data across eight Western European countries. *Women's Studies International Forum* 61: 58-69

Jonsson S. (2017) Trapped in Transition. Election Quality, Democratization and Organized Crime, in *Electoral Integrity and Political Regimes: Actors, Strategies and Consequences*, ed. HA Garnett, M Zavadskaya: Routledge

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorexamen i statsvetenskap som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Göteborgs universitet framlägges till offentlig granskning fredagen den 25e januari 2019, kl. 13.15 i Torgny Segerstedtsalen, Universitetets huvudbyggnad, Vasaparken 1, Göteborg.



**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Jonsson, Sofia. 2019. *Sex, crime and politics. How organized crime influences and adapts to political institutions, with a particular focus on sex trafficking*. Göteborg Studies in Politics 159, edited by Jörgen Westerståhl, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, Box 711, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. ISBN 978-91-7833-227-4 (print), ISBN: 978-91-7833-228-1 (PDF), ISSN 0346-5942.

### **Abstract**

The trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation worldwide has startled policy makers. Despite efforts to tackle this crime, the magnitude of victims remains. Simultaneously, the dimension of sex trafficking varies, both within origin as well as destination countries. In this dissertation Sofia Jonsson asks why this is the case by examining how, and to what extent the state may shape the incentive structure of this illegal trade. The main findings of the dissertation suggest that the state in its role as law enforcer, and law maker, might enable crime groups, intentionally and unintentionally, to increase their profit, by constituting the environment that shapes incentives for both supply and demand in the transnational market of sex trafficking. In more detail, the results indicate, first, that states that suffer from police corruption are also more frequently sources of human trafficking. Second, that the regulation of prostitution is associated with attitudes toward the buying of sex.

With the expansion of illegal markets, such as transnational sex trafficking, follows increasing profit for organized crime groups operating this trade. States thus not only face challenges that arise from trafficking activity, additionally the quality of states' political institutions might become increasingly threatened by potential organized crime infiltration. As such, lastly the dissertation explores what happens with democracy in states that experience the establishment of organized crime. The results in the last paper suggest that a higher presence of organized crime seems to increase political corruption and that such corruption in turn is associated with lower levels of electoral integrity.

In this dissertation, Jonsson contributes to several lines of literature by bringing organized crime back in. In contrast to previous research, which has focused primarily on the trafficked victims in origin countries, Jonsson explores actors' rationale to traffic and to exploit victims of trafficking, and as such, places the traffickers and their clients firmly at the center of the analysis. Using a unique set of survey data on attitudes toward prostitution the dissertation further expands our understanding of the normative impact of legal frameworks, which may unintentionally influence the demand for trafficked victims. Findings from the dissertation are as such policy relevant, especially for the heated and ongoing discussion on whether or not to criminalize the purchase of sex.

**Keywords:** Transnational human trafficking for sexual exploitation, Prostitution law, Organized crime, Social norms, Corruption, Democracy.