






# Advocacy of trafficking campaigns: A controversy story

Incidencia política de las campañas contra la trata: Un relato controvertido

-  Dr. Vanesa Saiz-Echezarreta is Associate Professor in the School of Journalism at the University of Castile-La Mancha (Cuenca, Spain) (vanesa.saiz@uclm.es) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1700-0296>)
-  Dr. María-Cruz Alvarado is Senior Lecturer in the School of Social, Legal and Communication Sciences at the University of Valladolid (Segovia, Spain) (mariacruz.alvarado@uva.es) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1659-7249>)
-  Dr. Paulina Gómez-Lorenzini is Associate Professor in the School of Communication at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile en Santiago (Chile) (mpgomezl@uc.cl) (Chile) (mpgomezl@uc.cl) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6261-7722>)

## ABSTRACT

The construction, visualization and stabilization of public problems require the mobilization of civil society groups concerned about these issues to actively engage in the demand for actions and policies. This paper explores the institutional campaigns against human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Spain between 2008 and 2017 and their role in helping to shape this issue as a matter of public concern. Our aim is to identify the ideological basis of these campaigns through their representations of predominant actors, which have been systematized to identify possible mistakes and to help determine more effective actions with a greater capacity for mobilization. We applied a mixed content analysis combined with a semiotic model to evaluate the presence or absence of the different actors and their relevance in each case. Several lines of discourse have been reiterated across the 50 campaigns analysed: Curbing the demand for prostitution as a priority objective; the centrality of victims in the representations; the role of the consumer of paid sex as an accomplice to the crime; and the correlation between prostitution and human trafficking. We will also examine how these issues relate to the broader dispute on the status of prostitution in Spain. This will require a conceptual shift away from educational and social-oriented communication towards the structural causes, collective responsibility and transformative justice frameworks.

## RESUMEN

La construcción, visibilización y estabilización de un problema público requiere de la movilización de colectivos ciudadanos interesados en el asunto, que actúen como un ente activo en la reclamación de acciones y políticas. Este artículo analiza las campañas contra la trata de personas con fines de explotación sexual en España (2008-2017) desde su contribución a la conformación de esta cuestión como un problema de carácter público. El objetivo es identificar los ejes ideológicos desde los que han operado estas campañas, a través de las representaciones que se han sistematizado de sus protagonistas para identificar posibles errores y orientar acciones de mayor eficiencia y capacidad movilizadora. Se ha aplicado un análisis de contenido mixto complementado con un análisis semiótico, considerando la presencia o ausencia de los distintos actores y su mayor o menor protagonismo en cada caso. En las cincuenta campañas analizadas se constata la reiteración de varias líneas discursivas: la prioridad en desincentivar la demanda de prostitución, la centralidad de las víctimas en la representación, la figura del demandante de sexo de pago como cómplice del delito y la equiparación de prostitución y trata. Son discursos que intervienen en una controversia más amplia sobre el estatuto de la prostitución en el país y que necesitan reorientarse, desde la educomunicación y la comunicación con fines sociales, hacia las causas estructurales, la responsabilidad colectiva y la denuncia transformadora.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Social advertising, institutional campaigns, controversy, prostitution, sexual exploitation, trafficking, public sphere, public affairs. Publicidad social, campañas institucionales, controversia, prostitución, trata, explotación sexual, esfera pública, asuntos públicos.



## 1. Introduction

In the last decade, trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation has become symbolically institutionalised in Spain as a phenomenon that exemplifies the global gender inequalities and requires greater social attention. This issue is recognised today as a public problem (Gusfield, 2003) that reflects shared social unrest that requires institutional intervention: legislative changes, specific public policies and communication actions to raise public awareness, among others (Cefai, 2012; Schillagi, 2011; Dewey, 2004).

In order for sexual exploitation to become a problem of this nature, certain conditions had to be met: the existence of associated collective discontent and suffering, consensus on its importance, the work of specialists in the issue, appeals to the state to address the problem, and the existence of convincing indicators and categories that set the issue as a concern in different public arenas (Kessler, 2015).

The particularity of the issue as an (inter)national problem lies upon its connection to the -still open- controversy on the legal status of prostitution (Gimeno, 2012; Saiz-Echezarreta, 2015; Andrijasevic & Mai, 2016). In the different spaces in which the issue is mentioned and discussed, participants tend to question the stories that point to the consensus and highlight the dichotomous confrontation that characterises this discussion, largely polarised between those that advocate for its abolition and those who defend sex work (Gimeno, 2012; Pajnic, 2013).

Social movements, organisations, and institutions of different governmental levels have increased their discursive efforts to influence current and future policies (Second National Plan against Sexual Exploitation, 2015-2018, and Anti-trafficking Law, respectively) and raise public awareness of this crime. This has led to a scenario where public action initiatives that aim to make trafficking an issue of top priority in the public agenda have incremented exponentially, without solving the disagreement.

As part of a wider research project on the construction of public problems in the mediated sphere, this article analyses how effective institutional advertising is to spread awareness about the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and to enforce a perspective on it through the use of the basic persuasive mechanisms of social advertising: raising of public awareness, symbolic condensation, and emotional intensity. In essence, the article examines how the campaigns carried out by Spanish public administrations between 2008 and 2017 mobilise discourses based on consensus and orient narratively the controversy, proposing a hegemonic narrative (Terzi & Bovet, 2005; Peñamarín, 2014; Arquembourg, 2011).

Social advertising, linked to educommunication and communication for social change, has a positive influence when it is developed in a strategic, systematic and responsible way; when it prioritises the purposes and efficiency beyond the objectives and efficacy; and when it refers to a scrupulous ethical framework (Alvarado, De-Andrés, & Collado, 2017). In the institutional case, a specific regulation prohibits those communications that “aim to eulogise the government’s work” to ensure they serve the citizenry “and not those who promote them” (Statement of Intent, Law 29/2005 on Advertising and Institutional Communication).

The progressive increase in campaigns indicates that sexual exploitation has become a critical issue of advocacy at the global and hyper-local levels. Thus, it seems imperative to impose here what Gozálvarez and Contreras (2014: 130) call “the civic duty” of educommunication, its “ethical, social and democratic undertone related to the need for citizen empowerment in mediated issues”.

These campaigns are the continuation of the strategy initiated for the prevention of gender violence at the state level in 1998, which has persisted despite the budgetary constraints derived from the crisis. The Second Comprehensive Plan Against Trafficking contemplates campaigns as preventive measures to prevent irregular immigration in the countries of origin (Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007) (measure 21), as well as other actions aimed at discouraging demand for sexual services, especially among young people (measures 6 and 7).

Campaigns to raise public awareness of trafficking are currently being carried out from above: non-mobilised citizens are informed by media products and institutional materials. This institutionalised action seems to be a drift of the awareness-raising work and the success of the advocacy of (inter)national lobbies for the abolition of violence against women in the domestic field, a common strategy in European countries (Devillar & Le-Saulnier, 2015).

Interesting perspectives on this phenomenon examine whether these campaigns are promoting a consensual hegemonic view of the problem, or whether there is room for dissent; and whether the provided information and viewpoints allow for better understanding of the problem or, on the contrary, reinforce stereotypes and unquestioned common places, despite their lack of explanatory capacity and relevance, as it was the case with previous campaigns (Fernández-Romero, 2008; Núñez-Puente & Fernández-Romero, 2015).

The representation against sexual exploitation exceeds this problem since its discourses affect the social-sexual

order and the (de)legitimation of certain subjects, practices, desires and models of public and political action (Von-Lurzer, 2014; Sabsay, 2009). The discourses on sexuality, as well as its traditions, dispositions, habits and uses», in the words of Sabsay (2009: 10), “are not limited to reproducing an already given hierarchy of social and sexual identities. On the contrary, this ‘representation’ space elaborates and produces ‘performatively’ its social modeling effects”.

Media representations are spaces where categorisations, power relations, and practices are put into play. The scenarios in which they are disseminated, tend to be intertwined; and each type of genre (informative, advertising, fictional) that promotes them acquires meaning and makes sense in its bonds with the others. This inter-discursive space, as an interpretation framework, is especially relevant for advertising given its extreme symbolic condensation. The slogans, mottos, and images that appear in an ad can be read because the public use common encyclopedias to fill in the spaces and make the necessary connections to understand the texts and insert them into a coherent narrative about certain realities (Peñamarín, 2014; 2015).

After a decade, it seems necessary to review the work that has been done regarding institutional advertising in Spain, to set the agenda, inform, raise awareness and prevent trafficking, establishing a first diagnosis that reveals the successes and errors of a discourse that needs to be further developed. It is a pending review that has been already carried out in the Anglo-Saxon world (Andrijasevic & Anderson, 2009; O'Brien, 2013; 2015).

**The analysis of the institutional campaigns launched in Spain against trafficking for sexual exploitation reveals the awareness-raising but reductionist role they have had in the last decade, which demands the incorporation of the approaches of social communication and educommunication to produce a discursive and representational shift that helps citizens to better understand the structural complexity of the problem and encourages them to get involved in the solution.**

## 2. Materials and methods

The methodological proposal guiding this general research project is a combination of ethnographic techniques and socio-semiotic discourse analysis, which has demonstrated to be effective to “follow conflicts” (Marcus, 2001; Terz & Bovet, 2005) and to analyse controversies about public problems (Venturini, 2010). The “follow the conflict” strategy (Marcus, 2001: 120) consists in tracking the location of the different groups or parties involved in a conflict, “examining the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in a diffuse time-space” (Marcus, 2001: 111) where their discussion takes place, and usually at the same time in areas of daily life, legal institutions, and the media.

As part of the strategy to follow the dispute over trafficking for sexual exploitation, ninety advertising campaigns launched between 2004 and 2017 (September) were analysed. Of these campaigns, fifty that were mainly produced by a public institution<sup>1</sup> were selected. The analysis of the campaigns focused on their graphic and audiovisual advertising messages, because: 1) they are the most widespread and accessible elements in comparison to other complementary actions (roundtables, theatre plays, etc.); 2) because they directly inform and raise awareness on a mass scale about causes, problems, protagonists, and solutions, extending the concern to the general public.

The sample was subjected to a mixed content analysis, guided by a purpose-created coding table that incorporates quantitative data related to the number of campaigns and the identification and description of structural elements of their production-reception system (year of production and circulation, elements, issuing organisations, target audience, frequency of terms). Also, the semiotic analysis was performed to explore the objectives and strategies of representation and the characterisation of actors, through the study of the slogans and images as well as assumptions and expository models (Peñamarín, 2015).

The purpose is to reveal the centres of attention that prevail in the representations of this reality, as a way of a first diagnosis that allows us to evaluate the ideological and moral orientation of the institutional proposals, and to

identify key aspects to orient future actions. Given that a single piece may contain several actors or characters, the results derived from considering, first, their presence or absence and, later, their greater or lesser prominence in each campaign (relevance and intensity in the encodings).

### 3. Analysis and results

#### 3.1. Issuing organisations

The organisations that most frequently launch these campaigns are the autonomous communities (22) and the local governments (18) of Spain. The next most common type of organisation is, to a much lesser extent, the Government of Spain (Ministry of Health, Social Affairs, and Equality); the National Police and the provincial governments (3); and the Basque Women's Institute (Emakunde) (1) (Table 1).

The most systematic institutions in the use of advertising are the Council of Sevilla (9 campaigns since 2008) and the Xunta of Galicia (7 since 2010). The increase in campaigns has been gradual and irregular (Figure 1), but enough to show that sexual exploitation is a public problem incorporated into the institutional political agenda as a priority awareness area.

Organisations (sample = 24)	Number of campaigns (sample = 50)
Government of Spain	3
National Police	3
Regional and/or provincial bodies	26
Local entities	18

The launching of campaigns often coincides with commemorations such as the "World day against trafficking in persons" (30 July), the "International day against sexual exploitation" (23 September) and the "European anti-trafficking

day" (18 October). This fact increases the media coverage and probably the visibility, but it can also make the matter invisible for the rest of the year (hence Figure 1 does not consider 2017, despite the fact that its relevance is part of the sample of the campaign launched by the National Police/Mediaset Group).

The most disseminated campaigns are those launched by the Government of Spain (Ministry of Health, Social Affairs, and Equality) since its campaign materials are also used by the local and regional institutions. Of these campaigns, the 2010 campaign stands out due to its international character –adherence to the global Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking–, its dissemination by multiple local councils and entities, and because it has had the widest dissemination so far: "Take a stand against trafficking in women", of which more than 3,700 posters were circulated in 21 Spanish cities in 2015.

Another relevant case is the campaign of the National Police, which stands out due to the novelty of the campaigner –with no distinguished presence in other topics– and the argument of authority and credibility that its intervention represents in the public space (lately with greater impact thanks to the support of the Mediaset Group).

Other agents with notoriety are the city councils of Seville and Madrid, whose markedly abolitionist proposals have been pioneering and have been accompanied by controversy in the news media. In Seville, the effect of their campaigns was accentuated by their strategy, close to "shock-advertising", which is recurrent but not always effective in social advertising for prevention in health and social welfare. Although Madrid has only launched three campaigns, their impact and efficiency have multiplied as they have been shared with other municipalities like Valencia.

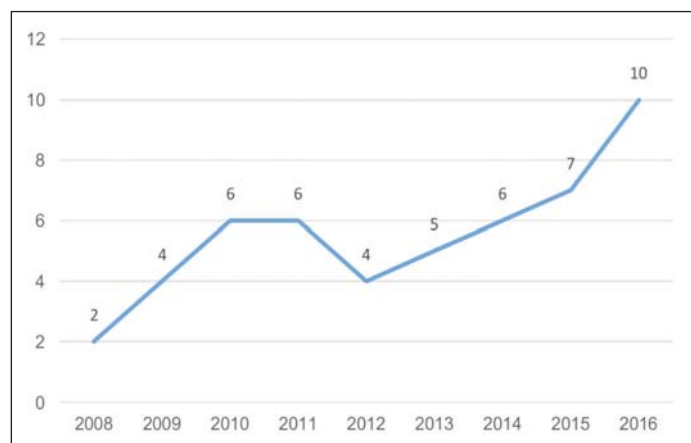


Figure 1. Annual distribution of the sample of campaigns.

#### 3.2. Campaign objectives

The campaigns meet various purposes: raise public awareness, provide data and contexts, generate empathy with the victims and contain the demand, which is the main purpose.

Of the content, the first thing that stands out is that campaigns offer very little information about trafficking and trafficking in persons; the point of view they use to present the subject is more axiological and affective than informative. Virtually none of the ads mention that sexual slavery is a process that may or may not include the crime of trafficking, which depends on international networks and responds to some structural causes that make it an endemic phenomenon in some countries. Only one ad launched by the National Police (2013) reconstructs sexual slavery as a process, resorting to the frequent merchandise metaphor. The stages that are mentioned are selection and extraction of the best raw material, transport, handling, quality control, distribution, promotion, and sale.

To report on this topic and its context, the ad resorts to the use of figures, but not explanations: “While you are reading this message, 45,000 women and girls are sexually exploited in Spain” (Government of Aragon, 2016); “80% of women working in prostitution are forced to do so”, “95% of sex slaves are women and girls” (National Police, 2016).

The ad does not mention the conditions in which the crime is committed, the system that protects it, nor the criminal actions that compose it. The only indication is presented through the body of women, through the hyper-visibility of the violence that affects them, which shows victims of attacks in the domestic realm. In this case, women’s bodies are the support of the narrative: they are recognised through the pain and marks of humiliation. This explains the metaphorical reiteration of the figure of the slave, the chains, the barcode tattoos and even their representation as corpses.

The majority explicit objective of these initiatives is to reduce demand for prostitution. Other less common objectives are to (in)form about the crime, open up the debate on the statute of the prostitution, encourage denunciation and deter against criminal conducts. More than reporting –what is reasonable in an initial phase– the objective is to shock the receiver through the denunciation of extreme cases, which are always excessive. This strategy of high visibility involves risks, since prioritising a rhetoric of fascination with violence, always exercised against other women who are perceived as different and far from “us” (the non-prostitutes and non-traded), in the mid and long-term, can bring into play the objective of understanding sexual slavery as a systemic phenomenon and its visibility and importance as a form of violence against women.

### 3.3. Characterisation

#### 3.3.1. Female characters: victims

Of the characters represented, victims and clients are the most abundant (Table 2). Procurers and society are minorities. Victims appear in 40 of the 50 campaigns analysed, and in 24 they are given a relevant role, occupying most of the visual and/or verbal space. The forms of this representation are diverse: as a subject victim of violence or, through a metaphorical configuration: as merchandise (an object of food consumption, packaged, and priced), as a slave, through reference to chains and handcuffs, or transformed in dolls, and in some cases, these images are characterised by a high degree of sexualisation.

Practically absent is the image of the empowered, surviving woman, which managed to appear in campaigns against gender violence. This type of woman is only included in one ad (Council of Almeria, 2014), whose slogan reads “I’m not going to be a victim of sexual exploitation because I have other opportunities”. It is significant that in only other three campaigns the victim speaks in the first person: the Xunta of Galicia, 2014: “Non Trate/as conmigo”; the National Police, 2015: “Help me show my face”, and the Government of Cantabria, 2012: “They’re stealing my life”.

The re-victimisation, criminalisation and exoticisation of women is obvious, as in the 2013 ad of the National Police, which represents the potential victims with an image characteristic of the news about raids. It shows the police and women from a club with their back turned, which suggests their relation to the deviation, either criminal or non-criminal.

Their condition of irregular immigrants is connoted negatively, linked more to criminality than to

their condition as subjects in need of support. This occurs despite the insistence on the harmful implications that these kinds of representations generate by configuring the image of the ideal victim, which can have multiple

Women victims of sexual exploitation	40 campaigns (prominently in 24)
Surviving women	1 campaign
Women in the first person	3 campaigns
Consumer of prostitution	34 campaigns (as protagonist in 14)
Pimps	2 campaigns (one is a woman)
Citizens	4 campaigns (2 are physically represented)

consequences among the victims whose case or situation do not fit that pattern, which hinders their access to public services (O'Brien, 2013; Andrijasevic & Mai, 2016; Núñez-Puente, 2015).

### 3.3.2. Male characters: customers and pimps

Customers appear on 34 occasions, represented by an image or allusion to a "you". They are present as unique protagonists in 14 campaigns, while in the remaining they share space with victims or are verbally alluded to. With regards to the men who represent, the most common is a young or middle-aged man, in a jacket or casual attire. The campaigns launched by the Ministry, through coasters (2009), and the Council of Seville (2016), "Your fun has another face", show a group of young people; the others present a consumer in solitude.

In contrast to the victims, the male figures are not usually sharp; their representation involves drawings, cartons, blurred photographs, images of men turned around or hiding their face. Only the campaign launched by the Council of Madrid in 2015 uses photographs with close-ups, although it applies filters to modify colour. Conversely, the hegemonic representation pattern of women favours their presence using clear and close-up photographs offering testimony. The 2016 campaign of the National Police is exceptional: in it, the consumer of sexual services looks directly at the camera, placing the spectator in the victim's place.

One of the limitations perceived in this approach is the direct identification made between the consumer of prostitution and the offender, through the category of an accomplice (O'Brien, 2015: 28; López-Riopedre, 2011). The legitimacy and effectiveness of this resource of criminalisation can be questioned, as it may not be an effective persuasive strategy to criminalise the consumer whose conduct wants to be inhibited, much less if we consider that, in a situation of consent, the demand for sexual services in exchange for money is not penalised by law.

Paid consumption is judged here in different degrees: from being an undesirable act that morally degrades the perpetrator, to becoming a directly violent (and, therefore, illicit) action. Thus, the demand for sex appears as a socially marginalised and condemned behavior; however, its relevance in terms of consumption.

Likewise, this ad does not elaborate on the complex relationship existing between the consumer of a service and the conditions of exploitation. This absence could be at the service of an abolitionist argument that wants to operate on the hierarchy of certain moral values, a certain common sense and certain political proposals, which avoid setting out clearly the context or the systemic repercussions of this approach. It would appear as frankly disruptive if these same arguments that allude to complicity were used by public institutions to alert on the purchase of goods and services produced under conditions of exploitation in the impoverished areas of the planet, where labour rights are violated, and people often work under conditions of exploitation (O'Brien, 2015).

Finally, the representation of the pimp emerges in a minority of cases. The pimp is represented marginally (in 2 campaigns) and always in a condemnatory way. In one ad, the pimp appears as part of the trafficking process, turned into a character, a children's nightmare monster (National Police, 2013); and, in the other, the pimp reveals the means and effects of his activity, through the slogan "Pimps, their business is violence" (Council of Seville, 2009). All this is presented over a big X filled up with insults such as "chulo", "gavión", "alcahuete", etc.

It is interesting to note that the group of campaigns does not illustrate criminals (traffickers, pimps, abusers...) nor shows the way they act. These figures are always presupposed, abstract and dependent on the victims' testimony. Still, we imagine them either as subjects that are unknown to women, within the mafia or the network; or as subjects that easily deceive women ("lover boy" model). The only human representation of the criminals who mediate in the process is, curiously, that of a woman who retains the passport of an alleged victim in the 2013 campaign of the National Police.

### 3.3.3. Collective characters: citizens

The citizenry or society, in general, is more mentioned verbally (in four campaigns) than represented at the physical level (in only two campaigns), as the subject recipient of the campaigns and indirectly responsible for the situation due to its presumed indifference and inaction. Here the proposals try to mobilise citizens by questioning them as witness, as people who see what happens, read the papers or the internet ads, and must wake up and act, taking charge of the situation in some way.

## 3.4. Arguments

Concerning the arguments put into play, the campaign slogans were analysed, understood as bearers of their essential concept in terms of their communicational objective. The most repeated argument is that of the complicity

of prostitution users (20 campaigns), which emerges as a violent action in the proposals aimed to inform users of their complicity, redirect their attitude and prevent their conduct. This argument is put forward in slogans that read “Prostitution exists because you pay. Your money hurts a lot”, and “Do not consume prostitution. Without customers... there is no prostitution”.

The second most recognisable argument aims to avoid the conversion of women into commodities. This relies on the denial of the isotopy formed by such concepts as price, purchase, merchandise, which are present in eleven campaigns: “People are not for sale, make a pact with your heart”, “She it is not another object of consumption”. The limitation of this strategy is in the reiteration in the visual representation of the conceptual idea that it aims to avoid, which reinforces instead of widening the imaginary associated with the problem.

On the other hand, eight campaigns highlight the need to acknowledge the problem. The proposal refers to a generic opposition to trafficking, for specific reasons: “Take a stand against trafficking in women” and, the easiest, “Say no to sexual exploitation”. In this case, the campaigns encourage people to be critical in an unspecific way, assuming certain shared ideas, such as the need to not normalise prostitution and consider that the contexts of prostitution include trafficking.

Finally, it is striking that the representation of the clients of prostitutes and their complicit role is not accompanied by direct appeals to denunciation, which are made only three times with such phrases as “Against trafficking, there is no deal. Report it”. It is observed that the mostly abolitionist ideological line here is more focused on blaming the client to avoid consumption than on actively involving clients in the solution.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis reveals the institutional perspectives that have been shown to or hidden from the public in relation to trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, which allows the identification of the possible areas of improvement in future campaigns.

It has been observed that the campaigns have prioritised points of view such as blaming consumption or the narrative centred on the vulnerability of the victims, over other aspects of the crime and the system of trafficking that remain invisible or marginal. This rhetoric is based on the agreed meaning of solidarity, which is defined by Agustín (2009) as the “rescue industry”. This builds a univocal narrative, in which the conflict between good and bad actors is simplified (to the detriment of greater nuances and structural factors), which favours the widespread rejection towards solicitors of prostitution and an empathic attitude towards the victims.

In the absence of the permanent accusation of the responsible agents, the argument moves towards the receiver, who is challenged by the representation of the suffering of the victims and is encouraged to feel compassion and unspecific indignation towards them, portrayed as innocent and mostly “disempowered” (the idealised profile). These victims, characterised in this way, are distanced from the irregular immigrants, since the latter is associated with action and decision, and the former is portrayed as incapable of making decisions and consent to what they do (O’Brien, 2015; Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, & Fernández-Romero, 2017; Kempadoo, 2005).

Public institutions, by democratic delegation, are presented as compassionate, efficient and capable of preventing crime. Moreover, they assume an identity as agents capable of liberating and saving women, thanks to the transfer of resources to other entities (city councils) or the state security forces and bodies. This representation absolves citizens of responsibility over the conditions of vulnerability, inequality, and violence that are at the origin of the trafficking system, in a logic that is similar to that used for several decades in the campaigns of NGOs for development (Saiz-Echezarreta, Alvarado, & Fernández-Romero, 2017; Haynes, 2014). It will be necessary to investigate the implications of presenting citizens only as part of the solution and not the potential causes that favour the expansion of the crime (O’Brien, 2015).

Excluded from representation are the public policies of the institutional actors, who use these resources to legitimise their proposals at the local level with ordinances that can produce situations of greater exclusion and vulnerability in victims, and at the (inter)national level to normalise restrictive migratory policies, which are questioned from the perspective of the human rights of migrants (Kempadoo, 2005; Andrijasevic & Mai, 2016; Kapur, 2002; Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007).

Institutions operate through advertising from an abolitionist position, which facilitates in the public sphere the narrative orientation of the controversy in favour of this position, at a time when institutional scenarios get intertwined with other territories and remit to the reproduction of certain hegemonic socio-sexual and colonialist orders (Kapur, 2002; Kempadoo, 2016). Therefore, it would be important for these campaigns not to avoid the

context of controversy, in particular when they maintain a perspective focused on moral judgment and emotional intensity, which is useful to the moral panic strategy (Weitzer, 2007; Irvine, 2007) which in turn affects the construction of trafficking as a public problem.

With regards to the demand, while the campaigns do not deny its impact on trafficking, there are limitations in its overrepresentation. The one-way relation that the campaigns suggest that exist between demand for sexual services and trafficking may not be so obvious. If so, there would be no doubt of the need to prohibit prostitution, and the truth is that its legal status is the subject of academic, political and social debate. The question is, for example, whether it is reasonable for public institutions to communicate that paying for sex is something negative and even illegal when the situation in Spain is of lack of legislative definition.

By eluding the causes and structural conditions of trafficking and sexual exploitation and mostly pointing out a wrong and immoral desire to get access to sex for pay, these campaigns open a space to apply the narratives and common places inserted in news stories: raids, disarticulation of networks and pimps condemned in trials, among others. This has an impact on the extreme model of the good, institutional, actors and the bad actors, who are not defined under little convincing metaphors like that of the mafias (López-Riopedre, 2011).

Representations (even more in advertising) imply a process of simplification, of translation of the unknown into familiar terms. According to their ways to operate in the public space, they can be useful to widen the social and open spaces of participation and responsibility. From this perspective, the design of future campaigns should start with the discussion and acute review of the strategies and discourses that have been used, and the assessment of their impact, which would require the necessary planning of its integral measurement.

In pursuit of the effectiveness of these interventions, it would be desirable to increase professionalisation in the area of research and to set specific routines oriented to the search for synergies, taking advantage of strategies and campaigns that have been already carried out, and to ending operations in a seasonal basis. This would allow us to unite and streamline efforts, and to keep this issue in the public sphere more continuously.

Following the search for this efficacy, it would also be convenient to review their rules, intervention guidelines and theoretical conceptualisation, since the dissemination of shared knowledge requires addressing the questions made about the definition of the problem of trafficking, which has been recommended in "Cadernos Pagu", 47, especially Piscitelli's contribution (2016).

Concerning the strategy of moral, sexual and affective panic followed by the campaigns, it seems necessary to review and implement efforts to connect sexual exploitation with other issues, like other types of exploitation and trafficking, migration policies and violence against women. The lessons learned must be collected, and the campaigns must incorporate an approach focused on the attackers, the structural causes, and women and their families as survivors and not only as victims.

If, as O'Brien points out, it is the focus on the singular demand for sex for pay what makes it difficult to address the collective and individual responsibility in relation to a chain of structural injustices and inequalities, it is advisable that the campaigns are broader and more focused on making the phenomenon known, in order to enable citizens to identify the crime and favour actions in this respect (containment of demand, promotion of denunciation, reduction of stigmatisation of victims). Finally, considering the participation of these campaigns in the controversy, it would be necessary to contemplate the distinction between sexual work and sexual exploitation, and to incorporate other voices and approaches, such as those of sexual workers (Kempadoo, 2005: 149-158).

Cultural and social efficiency must be addressed, and maybe bet, as in other cases, because the construction of a transformative image in the context of controversy can defuse scepticism and the arguments that maintain the status quo and encourage denunciation and the search for a collective solution (De-Andrés, Nos-Aldás & García, 2016: 35).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Catalogue available at: <https://figshare.com/s/8fcf63f843a43e64a68e>.

## Funding agency

R&D Project "The construction of public affairs in the mediated public sphere" (CSO2013-45726-R) and R+D+I Project "Citizens' skills in emerging digital media in the professional field of communication" (EDU2015-64015-C3-3-R MINECO/FEDER).

## References

Agustín, L. (2009). *Sexo y marginalidad. Emigración, mercado de trabajo e industria de rescate*. Madrid: Popular.

Alvarado, M., De-Andrés, S., & Collado, R. (2017). La exclusión social en el marco de la comunicación para el desarrollo y el cambio social.

- Un análisis del tratamiento de la inclusión social en campañas de servicio público sin ánimo de lucro. *Disertaciones*, 10(1), 108-124. (<https://goo.gl/3cRFf6>).
- Andrijasevic, R., & Mai, N. (2016). Trafficking (in) representations: Understanding the recurring appeal of victimhood and slavery in neoliberal times. *Anti-trafficking Review* 7, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121771>
- Andrijasevic, R., & Anderson, B. (2009). Anti-trafficking campaigns: decent? Honest? Truthful? *Feminist Review*, 92(1), 151-155. (<https://goo.gl/tez7bE>).
- Arquembourg, J. (2011). Enjeux politiques des récits d'information: D'un objet introuvable à l'institution d'un monde commun. *Quaderni*, 74, 37-45. (<https://goo.gl/oxGjxU>).
- Cefai, D. (2012). ¿Qué es una arena pública? Algunas pautas para un acercamiento pragmático. In D. Cefai, & I. Joseph (Coords.), *L'heritage du pragmatisme. Conflits d'urbanité et épreuves de civisme* (pp. 51-81). La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube. (<https://goo.gl/8wSFUP>).
- De Andrés, S., Nos-Aldás, E., & García, A. (2016). The transformative image. The power of a photograph for social change: The death of Aylan. [La imagen transformadora. El poder de cambio social de una fotografía: la muerte de Aylan]. *Comunicar*, 47, 29-37. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C47-2016-03>
- Devillar, V., & Le Saulnier, G. (2015). Le problème publique de la prostitution aux marges des arènes publiques numériques. *Journal des Antropologues*, 142-143, 203-226. (<https://goo.gl/n66yzS>).
- Dewey, J. (2004). *La opinión pública y sus problemas*. Madrid: Morata.
- Fernández-Romero, D. (2008). Gramáticas de la publicidad sobre violencia: la ausencia del empoderamiento tras el ojo morado y la sonrisa serena. *Feminismo/s*, 11, 15-39. (<https://goo.gl/C6PbX5>).
- Gimeno, B. (2012). *Aportaciones para un debate abierto*. Barcelona: Bellaterra.
- González, V., & Contreras, P. (2014). Empowering media citizenship through education. [Empoderar a la ciudadanía mediática desde la educación]. *Comunicar*, 42, 129-136. <https://doi.org/10.3916/C42-2014-12>
- Gusfield, J. (2003). Action collective et problèmes publics. Entretien avec Daniel Cefai et Danny Trom. In Haynes, D. (2014), *The celebrityization of human trafficking*. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 635(1), 25-45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716213515837>
- Irvine, J.M. (2007). Transient feelings: Sex panics and the politics of emotions. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 14(1), 1-40. (<https://goo.gl/SBqrFs>).
- Kapur, R. (2002). The tragedy of victimization rhetoric: resurrecting the 'native' subject in international/ postcolonial feminist legal politics. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 15(1), 1-38. (<https://goo.gl/wJfqux>).
- Kempadoo, K. (2005). Sex workers' rights organizations and anti-trafficking campaigns. In K. Kempadoo (Eds.), *Trafficking and prostitution reconsidered: News perspectives on migration, sex work and human rights* (pp. 149-158). London: Paradigm Publishers.
- Kempadoo, K. (2016). Sexual economies and human trafficking. Revitalizing imperialism. Contemporary campaigns against sex trafficking and modern slavery. *Cadernos Pagu*, 47. <https://doi.org/10.1590/18094449201600470008>
- Kessler, G. (2015). *Controversias sobre la desigualdad: Argentina, 2003-2013*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- López-Riopadre, J. (2011). La criminalización de la industria del sexo, una puesta políticamente correcta. *Gaceta de Antropología*, 27(2). (<https://goo.gl/2DnVxK>).
- Marcus, G. (2001). Etnografía en/del sistema mundo. El surgimiento de la etnografía multilocal. *Alteridades*, 11(22), 111-127. (<https://goo.gl/mcMkbj>).
- Nieuwenhuys, C., & Pécod, A. (2007). Human trafficking, information campaigns, and strategies of migration control. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(12), 1674-1695. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207302474>
- Núñez-Puente, S., & Romero, D. (2015). Construcción identitaria del sujeto víctima de violencia de género: fetichismo, estetización e identidad pública. *Teknokultura*, 12(2), 267-284. (<https://goo.gl/FkKntp>).
- O'Brien, E. (2015). Human trafficking heroes and villains: Representing the problem in anti-trafficking awareness campaigns. *Social and Legal Studies*, 25(2), 205-224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096466391559341>
- O'Brien, E. (2013). Ideal victims in trafficking awareness campaigns. In K. Carrington, M. Ball, E. O'Brien, & J.M. Tauri (Eds.), *Crime, justice and social democracy. Critical criminological perspectives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137008695\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137008695_21)
- Pajnic, M. (2013). Reconciling paradigms of prostitution through narration. *Drustvena Istrazivanja*, 22(2). <https://doi.org/10.5559/di.22.2.03>
- Peñarín, C. (2014). Esfera pública y construcción del mundo común. El relato dislocado. *Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, 19, 103-124. (<https://goo.gl/e97oa6>).
- Peñarín, C. (2015). Creatività e trasformazione culturale. Il dinamismo dei sistemi di significazione. *Versus*, 121, 53-69. (<https://goo.gl/fV9VWxq>).
- Piscitelli, A. (2016). Economias sexuais, amor e tráfico de pessoas – novas questões conceituais. *Cadernos Pagu*, 47. <https://doi.org/10.1590/18094449201600470005>
- Sabsay, L. (2009). *El sujeto de la performatividad: narrativas, cuerpos y políticas en los límites del género*. Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, Servei de Publicacions. (<https://goo.gl/7Vhj1q>).
- Saiz-Echezarreta, V. (2015). Emociones y controversia pública en torno al 'issue' prostitución y trata de personas con fines de explotación sexual. *De Signis*, 24, 109-131. (<https://goo.gl/vFcA8W>).
- Saiz-Echezarreta, V., & Alvarado, M.C. (2017). Prostituciones en Red: Análisis de los espacios publicitarios digitales. *Labrys*, 30. (<https://goo.gl/Z7XZ7K>).
- Saiz-Echezarreta, V., Alvarado, M.C., & Fernández-Romero, D. (2017). La víctima de trata con fines de explotación sexual como sitio de persuasión: Estrategias de representación postcolonial en las campañas institucionales. In L. Nuño-Gómez, & A. De-Miguel, (Dirs.), *Elementos para una teoría crítica del sistema prostitucional* (pp. 123-133). Madrid: Comares.

- Schillagi, C. (2011). Problemas públicos, casos resonantes y escándalos. Algunos elementos para una discusión teórica. *Polis*, 30, 1-19. (<https://goo.gl/a93sth>).
- Terzi, C., & Bovet, A. (2005). La composante narrative des controverses politiques et médiatiques. Pour une analyse praxéologique des actions et des mobilisations collectives. *Réseaux*, 132(4), 111-132. <https://doi.org/10.3917/res.132.0111>
- Venturini, T. (2010). Driving in magma: how to explore controversies with actor-network theory. *Public Understanding of Science*, 19(3), 258-273. (<https://goo.gl/NrW3Re>).
- Von-Lurzer, C. (2014). *Sexualidades en foco. Representaciones televisivas de la prostitución en Argentina*. Sexualidades. Serie monográfica sobre sexualidades latinoamericanas y caribeñas, 11, 1-57. (<https://goo.gl/bPLHcx>).
- Weitzer, R. (2007). The social construction of sex trafficking: Ideology and institutionalization of a moral crusade. *Politics & Society*, 35(3), 447-475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329207304319>