

*Giovanna Gilges*

# Activism for Sex Workers in the Netherlands: Interview with Jan Visser about Foundation and End of De Rode Draad, 1985 to 2012

## ABSTRACT

By order of the Archive and Centre for the Documentation of Sex Work—Madonna (Bochum), I conduct interviews with sex workers and sex work activists as contemporary witnesses. In this context, I met the sociologist Jan Visser in January 2018 for a first conversation about his political work in connection with the de-criminalisation and de-stigmatisation of sex workers and sex work.

For the *Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements*, an abbreviated excerpt of this conversation was written to trace a chronical arch from the development to the dissolution of the prostitutes' rights organisation De Rode Draad. In 1985, a group of female sex workers formed De Rode Draad in Amsterdam, which was subsidised by the Dutch government from the get-go. De Rode Draad was involved in the development of a concept of decriminalisation of prostitution by regulation and integration of the sex work into labour and employment laws. Their history, work and success is closely related to the Mr. A. de Graaf Foundation.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the interview highlights the specific frictions and challenges, which a group is forced to deal with, when stigmatised sex work activists and academic allies who are no sex workers cooperate.

*Keywords: Netherlands, sex work movement, self-help group, institutionalisation, regulations, labour laws, employment laws, legalisation, ally, subsidization*

1 The Mr. A. de Graaf Foundation was the Dutch National Institute for Prostitution Issues. An independent foundation, sponsored by the Dutch government to document and analyse the developments in prostitution in all its aspects, it was the first organisation to develop a discourse and vocabulary on prostitution as work.

## About

Jan Visser (\*1950, Amsterdam, Netherlands) was educated as a sociologist (University of Amsterdam). From 1980 to 2001, he was a senior social researcher and policy advisor at the Mr. A. de Graaf Foundation, which has been dissolved by now. Thanks to his position, Visser was able to stimulate and facilitate the prostitutes' rights movement from its beginning in the 1980s. He undertook initiatives and participated in national and international collaborations, like the start of the Dutch prostitutes' rights organisation De Rode Draad (The Red Thread) and the International Committee for the Prostitutes' Rights in 1985. From the beginning, he was not only professionally but also personally involved as a supporter and advocate of prostitutes' rights. In 1993, he co-founded the first European network on AIDS and Migrant Prostitutes named TAMPEP<sup>2</sup> (*Transnational AIDS/STI Prevention Among Migrant Prostitutes in Europe Project*) and was the supervisor of its activities until 1998. In July 2000, he completed a two-years project, a scientific study to chart the current state of affairs in Dutch prostitution. This was a qualitative and quantitative description of the *status quo*, commissioned by the Ministry of Justice, to act as a starting point of the evaluation of legal reform, which the Dutch government undertook on 1 October 2000. In 2004, he was a member of the team that set up the Correlation Network<sup>3</sup>, where he was responsible for the sex work workgroup. From 2001 until 2006, Visser was director of De Rode Draad, and until 2012, he was a part-time administrator for them. Furthermore, he has been working as an independent consultant on policy issues regarding prostitution and associated aspects since 2005. In this capacity, he has been working on projects for municipalities to reorganise shop-window prostitution in Eindhoven, Arnhem and Amsterdam. Since 2007, he is a member of Sekswerk Expertise<sup>4</sup>, a think tank to support the struggle for prostitutes' rights.

2 For more information see: [www.tampep.eu](http://www.tampep.eu) (accessed on 8 February 2018).

3 The Correlation Network works for and contributes to an increased quality of life for vulnerable and marginalized groups in Europe. For more information see: [www.correlation-net.org](http://www.correlation-net.org) (accessed on 8 February 2018).

4 For more information see: [www.sekswerkexpertise.nl](http://www.sekswerkexpertise.nl) (accessed on 22 February 2018).

**GILGES** In 1985, De Rode Draad was founded. What was the situation like in the Netherlands before?

**VISSER** In 1961 the de Graaf Foundation was founded in Amsterdam, which dealt with abolitionist social work and the reintegration of prostitutes in the society. The de Graaf Foundation considered prostitution as amoral or not even work at all, but slavery. Their opinion was that sex workers needed to be rescued. They were convinced that sex workers could easily quit their jobs, with the help of their often religiously inspired members, and start a completely new life; completely ignoring the individual biographies of the women. The de Graaf Foundation ran a house for resocialisation in Amsterdam, too, with a very clinical attitude. In 1972, this house had no more assignments and was closed. From 1972 to 1976, the de Graaf Foundation was inactive, only a registered association. In 1976, the new managing board approached my former colleague—Hans Scholtes, a lawyer—and asked him to plan and implement a new concept. This lawyer was a real pragmatic left-liberal. He raised the question of how prostitutes could be integrated into the legal framework to a public debate; meaning to consider prostitution as work. From that point on, he developed a discourse around this concept. I joined in 1980 as a sociologist. As a lawyer and a sociologist we were a wonderful combination. The lawyer thinks quickly and straight ahead: how do we regulate this via laws? I always pointed out that change needs fertile grounds or a firm base of socio-political conditions, which we need to be working on. That is how I regarded our division of labour.

In Europe, we were an isolated case and had only a few international contacts. For example, in 1981, we quite naïvely attended a conference of the Federation Abolitionist International in Nice (France). As we told the participants that we wanted to see prostitution recognised as legitimate work, we were almost lynched by the international audience there. Their ideology was of course that prostitution is amoral and that all clients of prostitution and pimps were criminals; the classical abolitionist views.

From 1980 to 1985, we were spreading the idea of legalisation in the Netherlands. That is to say: legalising the organisation of prostitution (the brothel owners). Prostitution itself was not illegal. Legal prostitution businesses would create the possibility of integration into mainstream society. The transition to the licensing system was the necessary next step. This would open the way to giving prostitutes the protection of the labour law. But for sure, that did not include that prostitutes would need to apply for a working license and get registered.

In the 1980s, we organised numerous national conferences in Amsterdam (1983, 1985) and Rotterdam (1986), and several workshops with municipal politicians, police, social projects and health authorities to discuss a new way of dealing with prostitution. Our concept fell onto “fertile soil”, as you say in Dutch. The discourse accepted and the willingness to consider prostitution as legitimate work was given. It had been a goal for some time to harmonise the legislation for prostitution with the common liberal policies. Prostitution, pimping and running a brothel were not legal at that time, but tolerated.

A tolerant handling of prostitution was rather common. Formally, it was illegal, but if combatting prostitution caused more harm than tolerating it, then it would be left alone. This is called the principle of opportunity in the Dutch judicial system. There were only interventions when ‘real’ crime or violence were committed.

Actually, our proposal was to take the next step to completely legalise prostitution. Under supervision but not under persecution. There would be a better control of the whole topic and cities and neighbourhoods would have to deal with less issues. For example, street prostitution could be restricted to a defined area. Also, the areas of shop windows in which some of the women work could be regulated if for example they were in buildings or neighbourhoods that need to be renovated. This was the case in Groningen and The Hague. In these cities, the shop window prostitution was located in renovation areas. If a green grocer would have been in these buildings for example, he could have simply been given compensation money and he would have set up his shop somewhere else. You could not do that with these windows, since they did not officially exist. And where should you move them? That is where the pressure from the municipals towards the government to legalise prostitution came from, to resettle such sites officially and legally. In my opinion that was the most pressing issue and strongest leverage, leading to the change of the legislation. As I see it, many official persons who had to do with prostitution (police, health and social workers, civil servants) found the abolitionist, combating ideology ineffective and were looking for another way to look at prostitution, but—and I think that is very important—they did not want to exchange the abolitionist way of thinking for a pro-prostitution approach. Our proposal to define prostitution as work and as a fact of life gave them the option to deal more realistically with prostitution and at the same time remain neutral to the moral issue. Considering prostitution as a profession would improve the position of prostitutes (that was, of course, the word back then, nowadays we use the word ‘sex worker’) with regards to working conditions and labour unions. So, that was practically the whole idea, at least theoretically.

That’s what we discussed with government agencies, municipalities, politicians, etc.

At the same time, the Dutch feminist movement became more engaged in political activism. The directorate Coordination Emancipation Policy was integrated into the then existing Ministry of Health, Well-Being and Culture. They organised a conference about sexuality—homosexuality, violence against women, children and sexuality, prostitution, pornography (Kijkduin conference, 1982). The leading feminists back then also campaigned for legislation and said: When a woman decides, that in her situation prostitution is the best way to survive, then she should not be discriminated for it.

That, of course, was a very important phrasing from the feminist movement, which had a lot of influence back then.

**GILGES** What you told us so far took place before 1985, so before the founding of De Rode Draad. Up to now, the implementation of legalisation and decriminalisation of prostitution has been suggested and received positively by decision-makers. What I

have noticed so far is that the discussion and the concept development have only taken place on an institutional and specialist level. A lawyer and a sociologist are developing a new holistic approach—primarily regarding the administration of prostitution—and attending conferences, where they meet people, who are most probably not sex workers.

Councils aspire to having better control, which means they focus on their own needs instead of focusing on the interests of the sex workers and reinforcing their legislation. Such aspiration seems secondary, if not even non-existent. So, where are the sex workers in all of this ...

**VISSER** What you are addressing is an undercurrent of the whole story at the moment. It is right, what you are saying ... This question was always a problem for De Rode Draad, also later on. Questions like: Where are the members? How does De Rode Draad justify being the representative of the sex workers' interests? I think that many sex workers have to survive on a daily basis and don't have the time and energy to support or organise something, that is not directly related to their actual daily concerns. Particularly when it is about achievements for the future. Achievements that De Rode Draad is working on step by step so that maybe there will be an improvement in about ten years. To work on mid or long-term achievements is, of course, easier for politicians and scientists.

But this does not disqualify the legitimacy of the work of sex workers' organisations. Because they get much positive feedback from (anonymous) sex workers, who often do not have the possibilities to go public.

**GILGES** How were you able to find out about the work and life conditions of sex workers as the de Graaf Foundation?

**VISSER** The de Graaf Foundation had its office in Amsterdam. The three of us—the lawyer, the secretary and me—invested a lot of time in public relations and our ideas and proposals were covered in newspapers. This led to individual sex workers coming to us or calling from time to time for information or to get help. Many had negative experiences with patronising doctors or social workers, for instance. I was there to talk to them; that to me was an important learning experience since I hadn't previously had anything to do with the topic of sex work. I did not feel the need to tell them what to do. I was ready to listen to these women, without suggesting straight away, that it was better for them to stop working in prostitution. And when they came to me and I just listened, it turned out that they had heaps of problems. Problems with the children, with the husband, with their income, with the job, with all sorts of things. I started reflecting on how to approach it. There are different stories on how De Rode Draad started, but I still claim (starts laughing), that it was me who said, that these individual sex workers have to get together. At some point, there were about six or seven, and I thought that they should get together, get to know each other and exchange views. I received a small subsidy for travel and telephone expense from the above mentioned directory of the ministry. Travel

expenses, as the women came from all over the Netherlands. About every fortnight we had a session here at the de Graaf Foundation and when the women returned to their homes, they were still wrapped up in the stories of the other women, so that they started calling each other. These telephone expenses were covered by the subsidy. That is not only an interesting anecdote but also a relevant aspect; they could break their silence and they found common ground.

At one point, it turned out that for some the meetings were too much of a mental strain. While they shared their personal stories with all their problems and stigmatisms, they also took the stories and problems of the others home with them. So, instead of leaving the meeting more empowered, the meetings required a great effort and were exhausting. That's why I decided to bring in an expert, who could structure and support the conversations. That expert was psychologist Martine Groen; she was an active feminist and she had experience in bringing women in difficult living and working stages together in groups. She was introduced to me by Gail Pheterson, an American psychologist who lectured on the solidarity of different groups of women—her topics were lesbians and prostitutes. She later wrote *The Prostitution Prism* about stigma and prostitution.<sup>5</sup>

That's how it all came together. This group of sex workers was developing and grew stronger. These women shared their experiences during their discussions and realised how skilled and strong they were in their work, which gave them a sense of pride as sex workers. They demanded the recognition of their work, their skills but particularly the recognition of their humanity. They started to realise that they were not second-class women and they wanted to claim recognition and respect from society.

During 1984, the idea was raised that this group could turn into a formal group to strive for these goals. Subsequently, De Rode Draad was born.

Gail thought that in order to highlight and underline the foundation of De Rode Draad we should organise a world congress with the support of feminist women; based on the model of the conferences of COYOTE<sup>6</sup> (*Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics*), the prostitutes organisation of San Francisco. And that's what happened, emerging out of nowhere.

The congress took place in a famous hotel (Krasnapolsky) in the centre of Amsterdam. Everything was absolutely low budget. A little bit chaotic, but with a great group of enthusiastic volunteers. One had good contacts with the media, the other organised the catering, another one would operate the shuttle to the airport, to pick up the attendees and so on. Five women from France stayed at my place. They spent the nights in my living room like canned sardines (laughs). It was all so spontaneous. And that at a time when everyone showed solidarity, everyone contributed. The best period during my work at the Mr. A. de Graaf Foundation. Three days of congress, one of them with the representatives

5 Gail Pheterson: *The Prostitution Prism*, Amsterdam 1996.

6 For more information see: [www.nswp.org/timeline/event/coyote-founded-california](http://www.nswp.org/timeline/event/coyote-founded-california) (accessed on 22 February 2018).

of government agencies, the police, politics, who joined in and talked to the sex workers under the direction of the de Graaf Foundation. Under our leadership, because the sex workers had no experience in running seminars or congresses. Well, during that time there was always a support person from the de Graaf Foundation, which was a kind of paternalism.

**GILGES** Where did the motivation come from to be organised as the De Rode Draad?

**VISSER** It came from the women themselves. I always communicated that this was their fight and that I wouldn't get involved as a leader, but that I could support them and that I would.

It's very important to point this out. The sex workers themselves decided to transport their strength to the outside and to become political. The de Graaf Foundation supported them in terms of how they could get self-organised. The director proved to be pragmatic once again and suggested to turn De Rode Draad officially into a foundation. Then we took care of subsidies via the de Graaf Foundation and provided the contacts. De Rode Draad received subsidies for three years. They were able to create three positions with this money; two sex workers and one female student who had started out as my intern and who was very much on it. She became the first manager of De Rode Draad. An office could be funded as well. At first, the de Graaf Foundation made a room available which De Rode Draad moved into. Later there was an office close to the red light district in Amsterdam.

**GILGES** Why have a person who isn't a sex worker as managing director?

**VISSER** Because she excelled at organising and contact care. And because she could convince us how good she was at networking with authorities. She did not force herself onto us, but she was predestined to manage the complete coordination of such a formal foundation. The sex workers did not have the experience, which you absolutely need in the end to handle subsidies and take responsibility for them. For such a position, the experience as sex worker and the strong will to stand up for your own rights simply is not sufficient. Organising such a foundation is something completely different. But her position was not free of troubles either. She was no sex worker, she had a special position in the group and additionally she was being paid for her work. With this position all the administrative strings were in her hand, which was perceived as some kind of power. So she was not a real part of the collective of prostitutes, but neither did she belong to the authorities. In my opinion that is the most demanding position in such an organisation. She sat between two chairs. She did not belong to any side. Where does she get solidarity and support from? It is a very lonely position. If you are not taken seriously by your own base or you are exposed to envy, simple envy .... After two years she was replaced. Between 1987 and 2000, De Rode Draad was exclusively managed by sex workers. When a new

managing director was needed in 2000 and I quit my position at the de Graaf Foundation at the same time, I became the new managing director. De Rode Draad was already in dire financial troubles and I thought to myself, I could help with my professional background; Sietske Altink<sup>7</sup> already joined in the 1990s as a policy officer, and besides she is the historian. After all De Rode Draad managed to secure financial stability for another twelve years. De Rode Draad was always subsidised for the next two to three years. This means that there was a permanent worry about how to fund the next phase. A lot of energy had to be invested into lobbying and acquiring funding. I think it is important to note that many other sex worker organisations get funding for other activities (like HIV prevention) and combine this with activism. De Rode Draad was subsidised to represent the sex workers in the production of new policies. That gave us a strong base to work from, but we were also very vulnerable: When politicians came to power who were not so sympathetic, the funding expired.

A big amount of sympathy on all levels arose in the general public for De Rode Draad in this early phase. Also on a trans-regional level. Over the years, our name gained an incredible popularity. The external view was that De Rode Draad was a huge organisation.

De Rode Draad never actually was a huge institution, still people expected that the three employees had all kinds of knowledge about labour legislation, corporate laws, the health care system and its legislation and about national and municipal politics. They were expected to have answers to questions on how to regulate health and work in companies and such things. All of these aspects were discussed in task forces on a national and state level in the 1990s in preparation for the legalisation. A lot of things were happening back then. The employees of De Rode Draad permanently had to gather information and stay up to date. They could not participate in all sessions though, they became overloaded. There were just too many meetings in the cities and communities of the Netherlands. Because of that De Rode Draad was often supported by the de Graaf Foundation in its work. We had better access and more time for that, since consulting authorities was our main task. Since there were no big differences in the views of the de Graaf Foundation and De Rode Draad, that was not a big deal.

**GILGES** Let me ask this in a more provocative way: Just because ten sex workers join forces and want to be politically active, that does not mean that De Rode Draad is automatically met with interest by other sex workers, does it?

7 Sietske Altink is a historian and social researcher on prostitution issues. From the mid 90s until the end, she worked for De Rode Draad as policymaker. She wrote a number of books on prostitution and runs a large website on (the history of) prostitution in The Netherlands, which contains the bulk of the legacy of De Rode Draad: [www.sekswerkerfgoed.nl](http://www.sekswerkerfgoed.nl); for English pages: [www.sekswerkerfgoed.nl/english/](http://www.sekswerkerfgoed.nl/english/) (accessed on 9 February 2018).



**VISSER** Well, De Rode Draad was perceived as a public voice for the interests of sex workers. They saw De Rode Draad as an office, which supports the women. But there was no understanding that they themselves were part of De Rode Draad. At least that is what it felt like to me. It was much more used as a service point. When the women were sacked by a brothel owner or had problems with the taxes, they came to De Rode Draad. But there were the new employees who didn't have much knowledge about these issues either. The de Graaf Foundation was instrumental in mediating between De Rode Draad and representatives from the ministries and other governmental bodies to look for solutions and how to implement the legalisation of prostitution businesses. Over time, we met the key persons in the ministries and agencies. That did work quite well for some time. But counselling was never actually planned to be part of De Rode Draad. When sex workers came and asked questions which the staff could answer they started praising them: "You do a good job for us". On the other hand they came with the accusation "You get nothing done for us". The accusation was that De Rode Draad kept talking about de-stigmatisation in the newspapers, but in the real world nothing ever happened. I consider this as quite unfair, because: what power have three persons in a tiny organisation to change the world?

**GILGES** Do you have any idea why 'organising together' is considered weaker than just using provided services? I might as well just add the question about how activism can develop among sex workers? In my opinion *resources* are a key word in that context.

**VISSER** Exactly. Yes, I think the value of organisations like De Rode Draad is not their quantity, but their ability to speak out and that they represent those they stand for.

**GILGES** Can you go into more detail about that, please?

**VISSER** Sceptics and uncooperative agencies often ask how big De Rode Draad actually is, who its members are and if they can meet with them. Sceptics say: but who exactly are you representing? Where are your members? I think this question is unfair, because many do not want to or cannot expose themselves, don't have the time to get actively involved and/or don't have the attitude to present their identity as prostitute. This might just be a short phase in life, in which she is an active sex worker on the side. That does not automatically mean that you identify yourself as a sex worker. This non-identification can also be based on self-stigma.

Occasionally women called in, who did not want to tell us their name, but rather stayed anonymously. These women would never publicly present themselves as sex workers and participate in De Rode Draad. I think this is completely understandable. Another example: A woman bought a brothel and suddenly she got into trouble with the city. She approached us due to our consultation service and our network, to solve her business problem. For this, she also partially stepped into the public light and approached politicians. But as soon as her problem was solved, she returned to her work and the

cooperation with De Rode Draad was over. By this she more or less used De Rode Draad for her business enterprise. Which I think is great, that was what it was there for. But this example shows, that it is not the same situation as in environmental activism or in students' movements for example. In those cases, you work for a common abstract goal in the long term, without the expectation to achieve it tomorrow. The stigma of the whore and the necessity to earn money are simply too big. It is almost a miracle that there are at all sex workers who engage. I think they have an incredible inner power to do so.

I think an important element for 'organising oneself' is that people feel at home at De Rode Draad. It is a warm nest, where you can simply be among your own, where you can find friends. That is not related to the sex work or with expressing your demands to society, but simply with the fact of joining a group in which you can feel comfortable. Of course, you can also get that from a theatre group or a sports club. But the special thing about De Rode Draad was that it was the only place in the Netherlands where you met other sex workers with similar experiences and therefore felt understood. If that does not exist or starts to disappear and opposing fractions start to form, then you have a serious crisis problem in a sex workers' organisation.

**GILGES** How did De Rode Draad evolve after sex work was legalised in 2000?

**VISSER** De Rode Draad was very unique in the world, I think. I say so, because it was funded for its main goals to inform sex workers of the implementations of the new legal system (mainly through outreach work) and of accepting prostitution as legitimate work and general acceptance of prostitution. We were specifically funded to represent prostitution in the political discussion to improve the situation of sex workers. This means De Rode Draad was explicitly not subsidised for helping women leave prostitution or STI/HIV-counselling like many other counselling agencies. That is rather special and puts us in a unique position. De Rode Draad was funded to represent sex workers in the legalisation process, the clients remained invisible as they were not part of this process and the brothel owners had to organise themselves. Sex workers had to be represented because they were in the middle of it all, and not giving them a voice was impossible for the politicians.

Later on—as the legalisation bill was passed and more conservative ministers came to power—the ministry unfortunately reached the conclusion that 'the employees' should fund their 'union' by themselves. It was not considered a duty of the government to fund unions. But we never were a classical union and could never become one and they ignored the specific aspect of the stigma of sex workers.

That is exactly what happened after the legalisation in 2000. The discussion about how the sex workers stigma could be dissolved abruptly ended with the legalisation. This was solely supposed to be the topic of De Rode Draad, after all they were getting money for that. Politics saw that their work was done after the legalisation. But I say it just started with the legalisation; that was just the first step into real integration in society. Now

the acceptance has to be implemented in to everyday life. This has to be achieved with campaigns, like the AIDS-campaign to gain respect and de-stigmatisation. But after that nothing in that direction happened anymore.

Additionally, from 1995 on, another negative development happened. Human trafficking and prostitution were mixed in the debate. The prostitution discussion was, as I say, tainted by that aspect. The picture of the sex worker was transformed to the picture of a slave. This shift in the discourse led to a political rollback in the early 2000s. Sex workers needed to be rescued again. Subsidies were put into exit programs and to saving the 'poor women' and not into the work towards emancipation of sex workers anymore. That rescue operation was supported with millions, vast offices and personnel. De Rode Draad on the other hand got subsidies of 200,000 euros for two years. That resembles a minimal funding, really. That was not enough to run an organisation with huge tasks.

De Rode Draad got no more subsidies and lost support from the politicians and ministries. The minister for Social Issues and Labour told his subordinates that he did not want to hear the word prostitution anymore. In this situation it was no longer possible to act or counsel the women who came to the office. Soon, it was impossible to conduct the work of De Rode Draad in a meaningful manner. When our own financial resources were used up, we reached our limit and had to declare bankruptcy.

But I thought, maybe this isn't the worst thing. The disappearing of De Rode Draad could make room for new initiatives.

Now there is a new movement: PROUD.<sup>8</sup> It only exists since a couple of years ago. The new generation is coming, I hoped. De Rode Draad had a huge aura, despite being very small. As an established institution, it turned out to be something of an obstacle for new initiatives. De Rode Draad was already there and occupied the space. I thought if it stopped, thousands of new flowers could blossom.

PROUD is a unique group of active women, who are all sex workers; that is their advantage. Additionally, PROUD has a number of members who are not activists on a daily basis. Once in a while, they pull off spectacular public actions, which keeps adding to their fame. PROUD was founded by a woman who was a former sex worker, and founded the Prostitution Information Centre, PIC, in Amsterdam in the 1990s. A great entrepreneur, who does other things as well on the side. But her main task was always PIC. Everybody could get counselling there. She was well known, she was present, she knew the ropes, had her contacts in the scene, knew the issues of the women and took them to the mayor; she was a voice for the red light district in Amsterdam. When De Rode Draad ceased to exist, she thought something new had to follow. And she took care of that by organising a kick-off event for the new organisation in her shop. She is not actively involved anymore. Her shop was taken over by PROUD. By now PROUD also receives subsidies for specific information campaigns for sex workers.

8 For more information see: [www.wijzijnproud.nl](http://www.wijzijnproud.nl) (accessed on 22 February 2018).

**Jan Visser** invites readers to send him comments on the interview and is open to questions and discussions: [jhvisser@dds.nl](mailto:jhvisser@dds.nl)

**Giovanna Gilges** studied cultural pedagogy (Mönchengladbach) and gender studies (Bochum/Graz). In her master's thesis she addressed the family issue of the sex work of mothers. Predisposition was that the mothers had revealed to their children that they are active sex workers. Currently she holds a lectureship for qualitative research methodology and sex work at Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Since 2014, she has been working on the development of the Archive and Centre for the Documentation of Sex Work—*Madonna* in Bochum.