

“Superare la Merlin”: prostituzione, discorso pubblico e azione legislativa

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“Going beyond the Merlin Law”: Prostitution, Public Discourse and Legislative Action

Abstract: Since 1958, prostitution in Italy is regulated by the “Merlin Law”, which sanctioned the abolition of state brothels. Sixty years after, all political forces are working on proposals to reform this regulatory framework. Much has changed, over the decades, in the composition and organisation of the sex market, especially as a result of international migration, and so have changed representations of prostitution as a “problem” to be solved. In this contribution, comparing the main political issues that emerged in the fifties from the parliamentary debate on Law 75/1958, and those recurrent in the draft laws on prostitution introduced into parliament during the 17th term, I focus on the identification of a number of “discourses” – securitarian, social, economic, feminist – shaping different policy approaches. An examination of these approaches shows that apparently opposing legislative proposals are often motivated by the same logic of social control of marginal subjects.

Keywords: Prostitution, Prostitution law, Lina Merlin, Public discourse, Public policy.

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