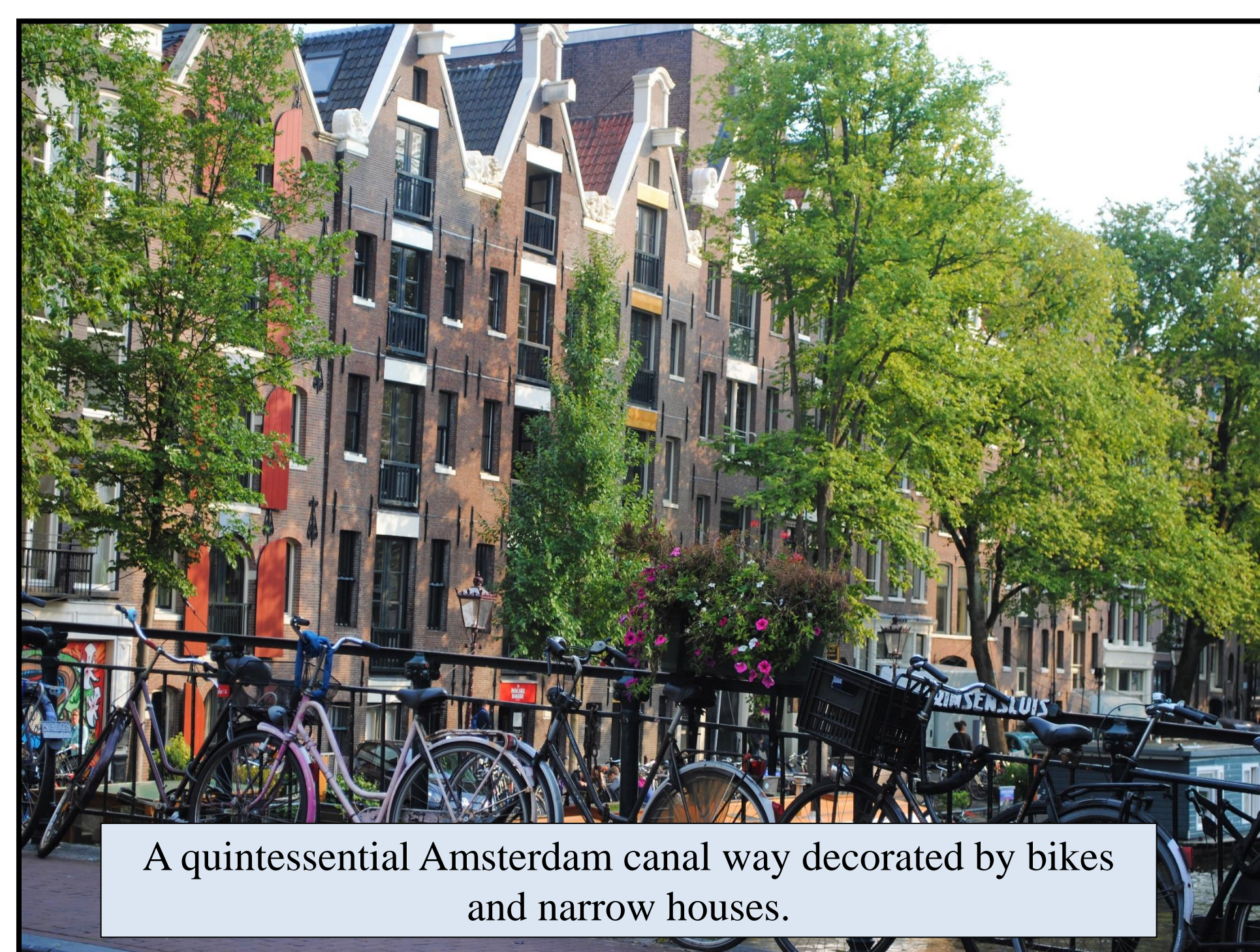


Engaging with International Community-Based Organizations Serving Sex Workers and Victims of Sex Trafficking

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Country

Amsterdam, Netherlands



A quintessential Amsterdam canal way decorated by bikes and narrow houses.



A mural located in the lobby of ACM, a residential organization that provides legal, health, and educational services to victims of sex trafficking.

Community Partners

- Amsterdam Coordination Center for Human Trafficking (ACM)
- Veilig Thuis
- Prostitution Information Center (PIC)
- P&G 292

Project Information

Amsterdam legalized prostitution in the year 2000 and became one of the first countries in the world to do so. The legalization of prostitution allowed sex workers to obtain work permits and rent windows, much like you would office space, to make money. Sex workers in Amsterdam are considered entrepreneurs and pay taxes on their earnings just like everyone else. The legalization of prostitution also granted sex workers certain protections. For example, each window is outfitted with a panic button that alerts the local police. Additionally, to protect the identities of the sex workers, visitors are forbidden from taking pictures of the women in the windows. In the last 10 years, the number of windows in Amsterdam's infamous Red Light District has drastically reduced due to a government initiative called Project 1012 aimed at gentrifying the neighborhood. I traveled to Amsterdam to understand the implications of Project 1012 in relation to illegal prostitution and sex trafficking. I also wanted to observe and engage with community-based organizations that were serving sex workers and sex trafficking victims.

Outcomes and Competencies Developed

Through this experience, I gained knowledge, skills, and abilities related to three specific social work competencies: **Social and Economic Justice, Intervention, and Professional Identity.** Stepping outside of my comfort zone allowed me to think more critically about social justice issues and the forms of discrimination and oppression that contribute to systems of injustice. I analyzed policy impacts on an extremely vulnerable population: sex workers. Due to my understanding of communities and social systems, I was able to identify practices that illustrated the distinct ways in which human service organizations can advocate for vulnerable populations. The organizations I worked with provided a unique array of services and employed a variety of intervention methods to serve trafficking victims and advocate for the rights of sex workers. During my time in Amsterdam, I wrote a series of blog posts and through a synergistic combination of reflection and applied learning, I enhanced my understanding of community, self, and the field of social work.

Career Connections

My passion for empowering women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence fueled my decision to obtain my Master of Social Work degree. Through this project, I gained valuable insight into the issue of sex trafficking and learned about sustainable intervention methods. I hope to continue working in community development upon graduation and I believe this global experience will supplement the work I've already done in this field.



Amsterdam's infamous Red Light District is located in the residential neighborhood of De Wallen.



Titled "Belle," the plaque on this statue reads "Respect sex workers all over the world." This statue was conceived by Mariska Majoor, a former sex worker and founder of PIC.



The NDSM neighborhood in Amsterdam Noord is known for its artsy vibe, evidenced by murals like the one above, titled "Let me be myself."



The Condomerie, located in the Red Light District, was opened in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s.

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