



Excerpt from an interview with a woman who has been stalked in the past

Transcript & English translation: Johanna Stadlbauer. The interview was edited in order to preserve anonymity of persons and localities.

Information des Online-Portals zu sexualisierter Diskriminierung und Gewalt an der Hochschule,
Stand: März 2020

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Back then I didn't even notice or didn't even think that it was stalking. I felt that it was crazy and that it was uncomfortable, and I was burdened. I noticed this at work and I didn't actively approach anyone at first. It was my boss who spoke to me at some point and said that someone is out there, someone is running around the building or this and that man applied for a job here. And at the time I was working with two different people and independently of each other they noticed that something was bothering me a lot. Until my boss said that it would take on such an extent that he recommends I contact the equality office. And that was the first time that someone confronted me with the term stalking. Stalking was something I knew from television, or I don't actually have a television, so that's not true. I knew stalking from the media, but I didn't relate it to my life or to this situation. I found it strange that this person always showed up when I was somewhere, but I still believed at that moment, but that must be love. Although I didn't reciprocate it that much. In any case, I didn't relate to it at first. So it was strange for me to hear at the moment that what is happening has a name, that what is happening is a crime.

It went so far that they accessed my apartment without my permission. And I, yes, felt helpless in the situation. And it was helpful when I first heard that it's not okay what was happening to me. At the same time, however, it also helped that my own role in there was so clearly reflected and that made me aware of this phenomenon at the moment, and it encouraged me to oppose it, and not allow it. That even the police could become involved. And I actually went to the police once and described it, and I received encouragement that I should keep in touch and that a warning could also be given if necessary. Then everything went relatively quickly, so I would say over the course of a few months, it calmed down. Then I think there were still a few aftermaths, but to draw this clear boundary and to remain consistent, that was actually the strength for me that I pulled out of there.

On the part of the university, no, I don't think I would have wished for anymore. I know that I could have come back for conversations, maybe for an accompaniment. That's how I perceived it that I could come if I wanted to. What I personally lacked was confidence. That I have the self-confidence not to allow someone else to do these things and to say it very clearly: Not like this. That was what I

lacked at the moment, the feeling of justification not to allow someone else to influence my life so strongly. From my perspective, I set this boundary clearly, and it was still crossed. It wasn't like I said I don't want to see you, and then I want to see you. There was a process that led me to always say, no, I don't want to anymore, I don't want to anymore, and then it still went on.

I probably should have looked for more psychological support outside of university to understand why this happened to me. And to be able to take even better care of my own needs, to recognize why I don't trust myself, maybe I didn't trust myself, to stand up for myself and my safety. And that's something that I also have in - so how do I say that now. Sure, I was at the police station and I spoke there, but if it had gotten to the point of a threatening situation, it would have been too late. So, it was not enough to simply say that these are my observations. I lacked that feeling of certainty. Confidence and also the uncertainty that I can be surprised on the street at any time and that I am again confronted with the situation.

So, after all the years in between, I couldn't have said that at the moment, but to recognize where the boundaries really are, to really create this delimitation, and to internally differentiate myself from this phenomenon. It wasn't a direct threat. It felt threatening, but it was never like there was a meeting where I would have suffered physical damage or something. It was just the feeling that someone else has such a power over me because they can just be where I feel safe at all times. Including my house. So I woke up once in the morning and the door opened and he suddenly stood in front of me.

It was also weird for me at the time, because I might have preferred to separate these things in part, but the reality was that this very private matter penetrated very much into my professional area, and that was the reason why I help in the first place, I say. I thought it was great that my superiors were so attentive and also that they let themselves be guided by their intuition, to notice, okay, someone feels uncomfortable and at the same time this happens here, and someone roams the room and around the house, and that's kind of weird, I feel uncomfortable with it, I don't think that's okay, I'll just talk to you about it. And I thought it was good that they did it in a way that I realized that it has no effect on my...they don't think now that my work quality is affected. Many of us believe that they are tolerant and make an effort to make an effort, and to be held up to the mirror at that time, and this not to be criticized, but to create a space and framework for self-reflection, that I found helpful. I feel very grateful for the existence of this equality office facility, but I think it goes beyond the existence of this office – here actually the space is given to reflect on and to deal with these, yes, I will say, challenges better.

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