

Summary

Vulnerable Profession

A study into the Amsterdam prostitution branch

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Summary

In section 1 we briefly repeat the research methods. Section 2 presents the general findings, followed by the most important findings per sector (section 3). Sections 4 and 5 respectively present conclusions regarding the topics “wrongs” in the Amsterdam prostitution branch, and the impact of the closure of window brothels. Data about the prostitution branch as presented in this study are rarely based on one single source. Prostitution as a phenomenon is too complex for such a method. It is rather the combination of sources that offers insight in numbers, characteristics and background of prostitutes. On top of that the prostitution branch is quite dynamic. This report is therefore a dated document. This study’s perspective is looking at prostitutes working in the Amsterdam prostitution branch¹.

1. Research questions and research methods

The research question have been formulated as follows:

1. How many prostitutes (female and male) are at work per year and per day in the licensed and not-licensed prostitution² in Amsterdam, divided in its sectors?
2. Which are the characteristics and background of the prostitutes working in the licensed and not-licensed prostitution?
3. To what extent can one speak of the prostitutes’ mobility between the various sectors?
4. To what extent do prostitutes in licensed and not-licensed prostitution need help (physically and psychologically)?
5. To what extent do wrongs i.e. trafficking exist in the Amsterdam prostitution trade?
6. What is the impact of the closure of windows in the Wallen and Singel area?

This study uses quantitative and qualitative information sources. As far as these sources allowed, we looked at both licensed and not-licensed prostitution. Generally, quantitative sources are data files of organizations and government agencies that contain characteristics and background of prostitutes and pimps. Namely the Tax Authority (658 registered window prostitutes and 957 prostitutes who signed the opting-in agreement); P&G292³ (402 prostitutes); police/MIO [Department of Management Information and Research] (123 victims and 126 suspects of human trafficking); police precinct Beursstraat⁴ (670 prostitutes and 208 pimps); Vice department (regarding clubs and ‘private houses’) and Scharlaken Koord⁵ (202 prostitutes). It is worth noticing that each organization registers only data needed for its own mandate or purpose. In addition to the existing literature about the Amsterdam prostitution branch there are the following qualitative sources: in-depth interviews with in total 50 respondents, including 8 prostitutes. There were short telephone interviews (or information exchange per email) with 43 police officials in and outside Amsterdam, as well as with doorkeepers and employees of housing corporations. Observations were conducted in various window prostitution areas as well as in one hotel. Visits were made to 13 clubs and private houses, 4 Thai massage parlors, and during one evening shift we joined the driver of an escort agency. During all these observations we had short conversations with 38 people, including 13 prostitutes. Finally, an extensive internet study resulted in 350 pages of information about the Amsterdam prostitution branch, divided by sector.

2. General findings

One of the questions this study poses is the size of the Amsterdam prostitution branch. In other words: how many prostitutes are working in Amsterdam? There is no unequivocal answer. What matters first of all is the reference period (for instance "during the past year" or "per day"). Also the prostitution branch as such is made up of distinct sectors that are not always sufficiently transparent (see the next section). Numbers are therefore based on estimates with a minimum limit, a maximum limit, and sizeable margins of error. If we add them all up, licensed as well as not-licensed sectors, the total for Amsterdam is a minimum of 5.150 and a maximum of just over 7.660 prostitutes on a yearly basis. Compared to the often quoted estimate of 8.000, our maximum number is a bit lower. This could indicate that the supply of prostitutes has decreased over the years.

Table 1- Total number of prostitutes

Licensed forms:	
Windows:	minimum 1.090 – maximum 3.380
Clubs/private houses:	minimum 820 – maximum 820
Escort:	minimum 600 - maximum 660
Total licensed:	minimum +/- 2.510 – maximum +/- 4.680
Not-licensed:	
Street prostitution:	minimum 40 – maximum 45
Home prostitution [incall]:	minimum 2.000 – maximum 2.000
Escort:	minimum 600 – maximum 750
Other not-licensed forms:	minimum ? – maximum ?
Total not-licensed:	minimum +/- 2.640 – maximum 2.800

Numbers show that the not-licensed part of prostitution is a sizeable share of the prostitution branch. This is due mostly to home prostitution and the (still) not-licensed independent escorts. For this study we tried many ways to map the other forms of not-licensed prostitution. We did not find solid indications that they happen on a large scale. Consequently we have no unequivocal numbers, not even an estimate. Whether hotel prostitution or prostitution in Turkish coffee houses, it does undoubtedly exist, but – as far as we could ascertain from the available sources – only on a very limited scale. The impression is that the hear-say circuit plays an important part in the formation of a picture of the scope of not-licensed or illegal prostitution. For economic reasons it does not seem obvious that the illegal prostitution circuit has a great potential. Customers must be able to find the prostitutes.

Mobility among prostitutes is not as great as sometimes assumed. Of course, prostitutes move within a particular sector; they rent for instance windows from different window owners, or are registered with various escort agencies. Moving between sectors does not occur as a matter of course. The various sectors seem to be rather autonomous. Normally, prostitutes work in the sector that fits their housing and/or private circumstances best. Sometimes someone moves on to another sector, or works simultaneously in various sectors, but this is the exception to the rule. Though there is no reference material available, the impression is that some prostitutes and/or escort agencies take advantage of internet possibilities to offer their sexual services. When that happens, their territory can easily cross municipal borders.

Regarding health care needs, it is striking that sexual services are still being performed without condom, as interviews with respondents and quantitative information sources show. This increases the risks of sexual transmitted diseases (STD's). Some women do this voluntarily, for instance when they know their client well, but financial considerations usually prevail. Clients pay more if the prostitute works without condom⁶. Respondents experience the inability to speak Dutch as an important barrier, particularly in the case of East European prostitutes. Language problems also diminish chances for success on the re-integration trajectory. According to respondents this [successful re-integration problem] also occurs due to the lack of sufficient and affordable housing for prostitutes. Too often they depend on slumlords, or must rent a room above their window out of sheer necessity. Concerns are also related to working conditions that leave much to be desired, such as long working days, work spaces in bad repair, and working during pregnancy. These de facto psychosocial needs can mostly be traced back to human trafficking, a subject that is addressed more extensively in section 11.4.

The study exemplifies that the prostitution branch cannot be considered a homogenous line of business in which 'the' prostitute offers his/her sexual services. The variety of prostitute groups makes sweeping generalizations about age, ethnicity, and service rates impossible. For instance, older Dutch women work predominantly in home prostitution and young immigrant girls in window brothels. Each sector has its own dynamic and protagonists. Therefore the next section describes the most important findings for each sector.

3. Important findings per sector

3.1 Licensed prostitution findings

Successively, the following sectors within licensed prostitution are addressed: window prostitution, clubs/private houses, and escort.

Window prostitution

Literature specific to the Amsterdam window prostitution sector is rare. According to the Report of the Mediatix for Prostitutes 2002-2004, 8.000 prostitutes are working in Amsterdam on a yearly basis. 25% in windows, 25% in sex clubs, 1% in the street, and the other 49% in closed sectors such as escort, bars, private houses, and at home (home prostitution). According to estimates there are about 2.000 women working in the window prostitution sector. Local research by the GGD7 shows a general profile for which a total of 1.800 prostitutes were asked for information (Van der Helm, 2008). The majority comes from East-European and South-American countries. Money is the most important motivation to work in prostitution. Health care risks are predominantly STD (such as Chlamydia). According to Altink & Bokelman (2006) the influx of East-European women stretches the number of available windows. This study uses quantitative data from the police, www.hoekers.nl, the Tax Authority, the Chamber of Commerce, P&G292, and Scharlaken Koord, to get insight in numbers, characteristics, and background of window prostitutes. In 2009 there are three areas with windows in operation (Wallen, Singel, and Ruysdaelkade). During the research period 57 owners operated 407 windows. Data from the Tax Authority show 658 women registered as window prostitutes. Respondents maintain that mostly East-European women have registered or were registered [by third parties]. The Tax Authority's data show therefore the lower limit, because almost no South American women haven been registered.

In the three window areas the numbers, characteristics, and background of prostitutes differ greatly. Therefore we first give the results for each area.

In de *Wallen* area there are still 290 windows operational. According to calculated estimates, between 710 and 3.000 prostitutes work here on a yearly basis. On a daily basis the number for prostitutes working here is just over 400. Of these workers about 5% is male; they work as transgender/transsexual in Bloedstraat. More than half of the prostitutes are under 26. Between 45% and 68% originates from Eastern Europe (namely Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania). They are the youngest group of women. In comparison, South American women, 13% of the total, are on average 38 years old. Dutch women, about 17% of the total, are on average 27. About 70% lives in Amsterdam, the rest elsewhere. One out of five prostitutes lives in the Netherlands for less than one year. The number of years that they work in prostitution coincides with the number of years they live in the Netherlands. The large majority works 32 hours per week, usually in the evening and at night. It should be noticed that only a small majority worked in prostitution before beginning work in the *Wallen* area. For most of them the motivation is revenues. In this context financial problems are mentioned as the immediate cause. About 13% charges less than 50 Euros, the rest more than that. Little is known about the revenues. One respondent estimates 400-500 Euros per day on average. The window rental is 130-150 Euros for an evening and around 100 Euros during the day. In most cases these prostitutes use condoms.

A total of 240 prostitutes (women) works in the *Singel* area, according to the internet, respondents and data from the Tax Authority, 100 on a daily basis. The prostitutes in this area form a rather stable group. Two-thirds is above 30. Another difference between the *Singel* and *Wallen* areas is that in proportion many prostitutes in the *Singel* area are Dutch and South American. They form the core groups. East European prostitutes (about 21%) move or are moved frequently. Other than in the *Wallen* area, the prostitutes here work often during the day until early evening. They seem to have regular clients. According to one respondent the window rental rate is just above 100 Euros. One quarter offers sexual services for less than 50 Euros which, according to respondents, may have something to do with their (advanced) age. They also work more often without condom.

In the *Ruysdaelkade* area there are on a yearly basis about 140 women working (no men); on a daily basis their number is about 60. In this area the women's age ranges between that in the two other areas. About half is 29 or younger. About half comes from an East European country, often a poor region. In addition many women who work here are from the Dominican Republic. The women work three days per week on average. Unique for this area is the fact that the prostitutes offer specialties, such as SM. Their fees range from 50-70 Euros. A window rents between 80 Euros (during the day) and 140 Euros for the evening. Sexual services without condom are frequent.

The mobility of window prostitutes is less great than assumed. As said above, it is rare for them to move into other sectors. Respondents report mobility within the window sector between the three areas in Amsterdam, but also to other cities. This may happen voluntarily: women move to another city – often temporarily – for money reasons (for instance during an event). There are also women who are forced to work in a window in other cities. They move from city to city.

For many prostitutes financial problems are, according to many respondents, one of the most serious concerns. Often dire financial straits are the immediate cause to work in prostitution. Physical health care needs are related to unsafe sex and STDs. A distressing group is Hungarian girls who suffer cognitive deficiencies and encounter in their work also extreme (sexual) demands from clients.

Finally for this area, respondents mention the often bad condition of the women's work space.

Clubs and private houses.

Closed prostitution businesses – clubs and private houses – offer sexual services for clients who can choose from the prostitutes on duty. The most important difference between a club and a private house is that the former serves alcohol, and the latter doesn't as a matter of principle. Research by, among others, Biesma et al. (2006) finds the number of clubs and private houses in sharp decline. In 2000 there were still 40 businesses registered, 30 in 2006, and, as this study finds, in 2009 the number is 18 (7 clubs and 11 private houses). Possible explanations for this decline are regulation, taxes, growth of other forms of prostitution (including home prostitution), and the women's decreased eagerness to work in clubs. According to Biesma et al. (2006), owners would hire more East European women. This research has found no indications for illegal prostitution businesses, which does not mean that they don't exist. The organizations and agencies used for this study in any case have no information about it.⁸

The well-known clubs and private houses advertise primarily on the internet, often in more than one language. Therefore this study used this internet information in addition to other quantitative (data from the Tax Authority related to the opting-in regulation⁹) and qualitative (interviews and observations) sources. The Tax Authority has data for 15 (out of 18) clubs and private houses. Extrapolating these data to all clubs and private houses indicates that there are about 820 prostitutes working in this sector. A number of 34 men aside, all are women. We note that a number of prostitutes can be registered simultaneously in a club and a private house. Their average age is about 30. A bit more than half is Dutch, one out of every five from Eastern Europe, the rest from other countries. In this respect, clubs and private houses don't differ much.

Visits last on average one hour and cost an average of 121 Euros. Under certain circumstances services are provided without condom. According to information from clients, the majority visit private houses during the day (in the afternoon). A number of prostitutes are mobile within the sector. They are registered with more than one club and/or private house. It also happens that women registered with the Tax authority as an escort, work also in a club or private house. This is probably related to the fact that some clubs offer also escort services. According to respondents there is hardly any overlapping with window prostitution. For other sectors this is vague, or unknown to the respondents. Notable health care concerns are related to alcohol; women in clubs are mandated to drink with their clients. During our research no other problems surfaced, but in the case of some prostitutes additional concerns could be drug use and not using condoms. In comparison to other sectors, clubs and private houses offer women the best safety.

Escort

Eysink Smeets et al. (2007) have published an extensive research report about the escort sector. It addresses in detail the sector and the prostitutes working in it. We've taken this study as a point of departure, and updated it through interviews, observations, an internet study, and an analysis of the numbers at the Tax Authority. As a result, the independent escort group has been added to the total picture of the escort sector. Independent escorts belong, strictly speaking, to the category 'not-licensed'. When we address these not-licensed forms the independent escorts will come up briefly. Both internet study and data from the Tax Authority point to 39 owners in the Amsterdam area. These owners own 111 labels (often websites), including some clubs that also offer escort service. These numbers are substantially lower than what the 2007 study finds. This is possibly related to – and seems to be confirmed by some respondents – the licensing regulation that was introduced. A number of escort agencies (minimally 6) had their license application declined; nevertheless one of them still advertises openly on the internet. Almost all licensed owners collaborated with the opting-in regulation.

The study from 2007 found that there are several escort segments. This study still validates the pyramidal structure of the VvM [WfM = Woman for Man] segment. An estimated 536-580 prosti-

tutes work with an escort agency. This number is just above the maximum limit that Eysink Smeets et al (2007) found in their study. Based on internet research, the number estimate for independent escorts is between 200 and 350. Escorts in the WfM segment total between 730 and 930. Caution is necessary here because making reliable estimates based on internet information is very tricky (compare home prostitution).

Three-quarter of the WfM agency escorts is between 18 and 25 year. The majority originates from Eastern Europe (Bulgaria and Rumania). The upper level segment charges average prices of 300 Euros/hour, the lower level segments between 140 and 160 Euro. Independent escorts are often older than agency escorts and often charge between 100 and 125 Euros. Some owners are specializing in the MfM [Man for Man] segment. The number of exclusively male escorts is, based on agency websites, 78, which is in line with the number of agency escorts in the [2007] study. Respondents estimate the number of male independent escorts working in Amsterdam about 400, which brings the total of active MfM escorts to almost 500 (478).

The majority of agency escorts is younger than 25. Half of the male escort agencies are Dutch; the rest has a very diverse background. Independent escorts show a larger age range and, compared to agency escorts, they offer their services for a lower rate (about 100-150 Euros/hour).

Although a movement between escort and window prostitution can be ascertained, this seems to be an exception to the rule. Prostitutes however are registered quite frequently with more than one escort agency, or they offer their services through a number of internet panels. Overlapping of home prostitution and escort seems to occur also.

Regarding health care concerns: unsafe sex is a point of attention, namely at the lower level of the escort sector. This certainly also concerns male escorts. Furthermore drug use is mentioned; some use drugs to be able to continue working. This raises the questions whether they work voluntarily and are able to cope psychologically.

In contrast to agency escorts, independent escorts run a higher risk for unsafe situations: they must screen a client personally, cannot use black lists, and don't always have a driver as back-up in problem situations.

3.2 Unlicensed prostitution findings

For the not-licensed prostitution this study looks into street prostitution, home prostitution and other not-licensed forms such as hotel prostitution and massage parlors.

Street prostitution

The streetwalkers' area Theemsweg was closed in 2003. It was the territory of predominantly drug-addicted prostitutes from Europe and Latin America and transgenders. Korf et al. (2005) write that non-addicts turned up in other prostitution sectors. Some looked for another work space outside Amsterdam; about others this is not known. Over the years the number of streetwalkers has fallen sharply from several hundred in 2000 to about 45 in 2007. In Amsterdam Zuidoost ["South East", a huge and hugely 'concrete' suburb], one of the formerly well-known areas, almost no street prostitution was ascertained in 2008. Various previous studies show many concerns for this group, including psychiatric problems, addiction, financial problems, safety, and STDs.

According to respondents the number of street prostitutes is still stable at 40-45 prostitutes. The majority of them are addicted. They are mostly Dutch, Surinam, and Antillean women. Sometimes East European women are spotted; they are not addicted and between 25 and 50.

A few street prostitutes ended up in window prostitution, according to police data. Prostitutes who still work the streets can be found among others around the Klimmuur¹⁰, in the old Bijlmer suburb¹¹, and downtown.

Home prostitution

For home prostitution as one of the not-licensed prostitution forms there is almost no empirical research available related to Amsterdam. Home prostitution is addressed aside in a number of existing studies, namely as one sector to which prostitutes from other sectors move (the mobility effect). Almost none of the respondents we interviewed have insight in home prostitution. It is inherent to this sector to make work as invisible as possible to outsiders because complaints of neighbors might draw the attention of government agencies. For home prostitutes the internet is the token medium to make themselves known to potential customers. Based on this internet information a picture of home prostitutes can be sketched. They advertise mostly on websites found by search terms such as 'thuisprostitutie' [home prostitution], or on advertising sites in the category 'privéontvangst' [private encounters] and 'vrouw zoekt man' [woman seeking man]. How many there are is hard to say, but by estimation the number climbs to maximally 1.800 (based on our method for internet searching). About 250 men offer themselves as home prostitute. The total number for home prostitutes in Amsterdam (women and men) is about 2.000. However, one prostitute may have many ads. Visitors of (female) home prostitutes write that 40% of them are older than 40. Half has Dutch origin; about 12% comes from East European countries. Most clients stay for one hour to 90 minutes and pay 130 Euros/hour on average. Working days are mostly during the week; their working hours are during the day. Several times clients report sexual services without condom. Though this form of prostitution is essentially homebound, it doesn't keep the prostitutes from being mobile. Clients often report about prostitutes they already know from different municipalities and/or locations. There seems to be overlapping in particular with escort service, or women who receive clients at home as well as elsewhere. The share of mobile prostitutes vs. stay-at-home workers is not clear. Aside from sexual services without a condom, no specific concerns have surfaced for this group of prostitutes.

Other not-licensed forms of prostitution

This study pays further attention to Chinese and Thai massage parlors, hotel prostitution, bars/cafés, escort, meeting spots, and hairdressing salons.

Based on a nationwide inventory from 2008 by De Rode Draad¹², the estimate for (Thai) women working in massage parlors is 400. It is not clear how many of them give additionally sexual services. With information from the internet this study ascertained that there are in Amsterdam presumably 18 (Thai and Chinese) massage parlors that offer additional sexual services. In Thai parlors this is usually a so-called body-to-body massage, with or without happy ending. Especially in Chinese massage parlors intimate services are possible. In each salon work 2-3 women; in Thai parlors their age is between 30 and 40, whereas the age in Chinese parlors varies from 18 to 25. The extra revenues for sexual activities is, on top of the basic rate, between 15 and 20 Euros, and this is usually largely for the masseuses. No mobility or overlapping with other prostitution sectors has been found. The masseuses often do not use a condom.

The phenomenon *hotel prostitution* has been often in the news. For prostitutes it is a cheap (105 Euros for more than a day) and especially an anonymous work location. These (female) prostitutes are often independent, but there are suspicions that organized groups make use of hotels. The phenomenon seems less widespread than one would expect from the media attention. Currently there seems to be only one hotel, outside Amsterdam, that is still connected to it, at least as far as respondents know. In addition to the given that women rent a room and pick up clients, there are also women who visit the hotel's guests.

The hotel escorts have a non-Dutch appearance (East European). Potential point of concern is that, according to respondents, the women do not look well taken care of: drug use is presumed.

The existing literature gives little information about prostitution in bars/cafés and entertainment venues. The exception is the study by Korf et al. (2005). The Turkish cafés and hostess bars are known. Often only (ethnically oriented) insiders are familiar with them. This study found mostly suspicions about the scope of such venues, primarily from community liaison officers who maintain that there are a number of Turkish cafés where prostitution is offered. Meanwhile the city administration has closed one such café. There are also assumptions of male prostitution in so-called *dark rooms* at swingers clubs. Furthermore there are stories circulating about prostitution in pizzerias and call stores. These phenomena are predominantly based on suspicions of civilians and entrepreneurs and hard to prove. None of the respondents could give solid figures about the extent of these forms of prostitution. There is also little known about the background of the prostitutes working in bars/cafés and entertainment venues. The women are supposedly from Eastern Europe, young, and according to some respondents, forced into prostitution. The scope of these particular forms of prostitution seems to turn out much smaller than expected, certainly in proportion to the other sectors. This doesn't alter the fact that there are certainly illegal situations, and potentially also human trafficking.

Part of the here described entire escort sector has not (yet) been licensed, namely the independent escorts. The number of women offering independent escort services is between 200 and 350; the number of men offering independent escort services is around 400. Apart from a few exceptions, none of them has registered with the Tax Authority. Both women and men are predominantly Dutch; male escorts are between 18 and 35, most women already past their 30s or 40s. Most male escorts seem to be exclusively active in the escort sector; in multiple cases female escorts are active in several sectors and show common ground with home prostitution, prostitution in bars/cafés, entertainment venues, and on other locations. Health care concerns relate to personal safety and safe sex. During the study no structural wrongs whatsoever have surfaced for independent escorts.

Prostitution at meeting points (for instance in a park or parking lot) happens. Respondents mention notably young Moroccan boys who are approached by clients and then provide sexual acts for money. Their predominant motive is revenues. Fares run between 25 and 50 Euros. Reliable number estimates are lacking. From existing literature (Biesma et al., 2006) it seems that this particular form of prostitution is limited, too; at least during several observation sessions no prostitution was ascertained. Unsafe sex and drug problems seem to play a role for part of these (male) prostitutes.

There is some general suspicion that prostitution occurs in Chinese hairdressing parlors, but without any clear evidence. Prostitution in these venues is hard to prove, partly because the sexual activities don't take place in the parlors themselves. There are no reliable number estimates. Once in a while prostitution in Chinese hairdressing parlors has been proven. The prostitutes have a Chinese background and according to a police respondent they are often in the Netherlands illegally; at least they are in a dependency situation.

4.. Wrongs

Article 273 of the [Dutch] Penal Code makes, among others, forced prostitution punishable. There are so-called "signalenlijsten" [lists of signals] available on which basis it can be determined whether human trafficking may be the case. There is plenty of literature on forced prostitution available. An important study for Amsterdam is the so-called "Sneep study"¹³, resulting from an extensive human trafficking case in among others Amsterdam. It contains high percentages of women (up to 90%) who were forced into prostitution.

Modalities of force may vary from threat (also of family in the country of origin) to violence. The threat factor does not always play a part in a woman's decision to work in prostitution, but it reveals itself clearly in daily work practices of the prostitutes in Amsterdam. They lack – in various gradations – sufficient freedom while exercising their profession. Discussions about accurate percentages and numbers of forced women, which in any case cannot be given, lead away from the point that ought to be discussed, namely the fact that there are women who provide sexual services for money not in total freedom. Based on the lowest given percentage – about 10% of the window prostitutes – this still regards more than 100 women. Once again, this number will be, according to various respondents, a considerable underestimation of the total number of forced prostitutes.

The police reports annually some 37 cases of human trafficking (mostly forced prostitution). Registered data cover victims and suspects of human trafficking. Most victims are under 21, the suspects between 25 and 32. It should be explicitly noted that these data cover cases that have been subjected to (extensive) police investigation. In reality the police notices many more signals that may indicate human trafficking. Precinct Beursstraat records all signals noticed during the periodical vice control in the Wallen area. From this we can conclude that there are still women forced into prostitution and that the Wallen area still has a (strong) character conducive to crime.

The many interviews with respondents reveal that De Wallen is the most vulnerable area for forced prostitution of all three window prostitution areas in Amsterdam. Estimates of respondents about the number of forced prostitutes also vary in the present study from 10-90% (see also the Sneep study). This wide range can be traced back to the different populations of prostitutes (and clients) in the three different areas (see Chapter 3 about window prostitution).

Most respondents in this study currently mark women from Eastern Europe as the largest risk group. They work in window brothels where pimps have the best opportunities to control and supervise. They are primarily young girls landing from their native country directly in the prostitution. When in the past women were lured to the Netherlands under false pretences (work in bars/café's), this is no longer the case. The women know that they will land in prostitution. They want to escape poverty in their native country and try their luck in the Netherlands. It also happens that women or their family are in debt, which the women must pay off by working as prostitutes in the Netherlands. Once in the Netherlands they don't know the language, can't find their way through the bureaucracy, and are completely dependent on their 'boyfriend'. Other parts of the force factor are that women must give up a large part of their revenues and that they themselves are not allowed to determine their work routine (which is of course also the case with other forced prostitutes).

The focus on East European women in the context of human trafficking does not change the fact that women from other countries, too, can be victims of human trafficking. In this context there is (still) talk of young immigrant girls who fall prey to so-called 'lover boys' (pimps). The problem surrounding African girls in Amsterdam Zuidoost forced into prostitution seems to have disappeared and it seems to be relocated to other countries. Respondents connect this group of women to a possible abuse of the B9 regulation¹⁴.

Apart from window brothels, other prostitution sectors are, according to respondents, not free of (forms of) forced prostitution. The escort sector comes to the fore as potentially risky. It is plausible that forced prostitution occurs in the not-licensed escort sector, namely among those who work under the minimum rate. Numbers cannot be given. Also within the licensed sectors (escort, clubs, and private houses) women can be forced into prostitution. Based on interviews with respondents from the escort and club sector, the impression is that prostitutes do not report this fact to the owner/manager; they entertain a mutually professional relationship and both parties have good reasons to keep it that way.

Under age prostitution does no longer or hardly anymore exist, at least as far as we have been able to ascertain in this study. It is in everyone's best interest (pimps, owners of window brothels and clubs) to prevent such wrongs at least in the face of the outside world. Employment of underage prostitutes may cause a shut-down of for instance the club. Financial consequences are too great to take such a risk.

5. Closure of windows impact

In the context of coming down on the criminal infrastructure and taking on the degeneration of among others the Wallen area, at the time of this study the city of Amsterdam closed 102 of a total of 509 window brothels in a two year period. One of the questions addressed in this study concerns the impact (if any) for window prostitutes. From interviews with respondents including prostitutes, and information from 202 window prostitutes inquired about their plans if confronted with closure of their window, the following picture emerges.

The large majority of window prostitutes will continue working in prostitution. Their principal reasons are revenues and the absence of (good) alternatives. A remarkable 8% of the women indicated that they would keep working in prostitution due to force. As a matter of course, prostitutes stop working at some moment, but this decision seems to be part of an autonomous process and unrelated to window closure.

When their window was shut down, prostitutes rented another window primarily somewhere else in Amsterdam, if necessary from another owner. The major effect of relocation can therefore be restricted to the Amsterdam window prostitution. The reason is that the window prostitution sector has its own particular character that attracts certain types of prostitutes. Structural relocation to window brothels outside Amsterdam is practically nil, exactly because of Amsterdam's unique character. It is possible that some forced women have to work also in other cities (carousel system), but this, too, seems to be a rather isolated movement, separate from the closure of windows.

The force factor also impacts relocation to escort and the special forms of prostitution: when women are forced to window prostitution, the pimp can make them work in other sectors, too. Also this seems to be unrelated to window closure.

The interviewed respondents don't consider it likely that women will move from a window brothel to a club or private house. It's possible that prostitutes will move on to working independently (home prostitution), but these prostitutes have meanwhile built their own clientele, know their way around in the Dutch society (their own home, advertising on the internet), and can make such a comparative assessment in total freedom. In other words, force is absent.

The closure of window brothels has had a number of consequences for prostitutes in terms of labor circumstances. Rental rates have risen due to higher demand (and also due to the added sales tax). Sometimes prostitutes have to rent a window for a longer period if they want to have a guaranteed work space, and/or they must pay extra for a place on the rental list. Due to the closure of windows

the power of some owners has strengthened, simply because there is enough demand for window brothels. The consequence is also that prostitutes have less courage to complain, for instance, about a badly maintained workspace or about rental schedules.¹⁵

Finally the study shows that mutual competition among prostitutes has strengthened, as can be noticed in lower rates for sexual services.

One important question cannot be answered adequately based on this study but must be taken into consideration. What will happen if the number of available windows can't handle the demand any longer? Based on the current policy following the recent Strategy memorandum¹⁶, in case the closure of 40% of all window brothels, this may well lead to an increased competition among prostitutes with the potential consequence that prostitutes continue working elsewhere or even in other sectors, voluntarily or forced. Potentially, the illegal circuit will expand (escort, home prostitution). There is no way around that prostitution is a trade with excellent revenue possibilities. A possible development could be that the composition of the remaining window prostitutes gets a homogenous character, namely prostitutes who survived the competition battle by working under the going rates. As yet it seems that [these survivors] will be East European prostitutes. In the long run, Dutch native and South-American prostitutes might disappear. These potential consequences, as sketched here, of the closure of a large number of window brothels are – once again – speculative.

Concluding remarks

This study into the prostitution branch makes it clear that regulation is absolutely necessary in order to fight abuses. The question is whether the current package of measures is sufficient. Prostitution may be a legalized profession since 2000, wrongs still exist, and among certain groups of prostitutes even on a large scale. Legal formalities and procedures are sometimes used to cover up exploitation of prostitutes. The glamour still endures. This social problem requires a major effort of all actors involved, national and international.

The study also shows the internet offering ample opportunities for offering sexual services, and that many prostitutes use this medium.

The trend that the more traditional forms of licensed prostitution (window, clubs, and private houses) are losing ground is likely to continue in the near future.

By contrast, all kinds of forms of home prostitution, possibly combined with escort service, will expand due to the convenience of online advertisement and the permanent demand for paid sex. This development requires an anticipating administration that can guarantee both the safety and health of prostitutes, and is capable to further professionalize the prostitution branch in order to make the prostitute's profession less vulnerable.

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Endnotes

1. We define prostitution as offering sexual services for money. We ignore frequency or intensity.
2. “Not-licensed” does not necessarily mean “illegal” (note by FvR)
3. Prostitutie en Gezondheidscentrum (*Prostitution and Health Care Center - private organization founded in 2008*) www.pg292.nl (note by FvR)
4. Police Precinct Beursstraat has jurisdiction over the Wallen area (De Wallen: the famous Red Light District) (note by FvR)
5. Scharlaken Koord (*Scarlet Cord*) – a Christian relief organization www.totheildesvolks.nl (note by FvR)
6. About condom use: prostitutes who have registered with the Tax Authority rarely report their entire condom use truthfully. Although it is deductible, they fear that it will reveal their income. The tax people see it as 1 condom = 1 trick @minimum rate. (note by FvR)
7. GGD: The Municipal Health Care Agency (note by FvR)
8. Korf et al. (2005) mention in their study still 20 illegal brothels in homes. This seems to be a matter of forms of (more or less organized) home prostitution.
9. The Opting-in regulering is a 2008 regulation for sex business owners and independent sex workers working through escort agencies or in clubs/private houses. If sex workers are not legally employed by the business, they are for tax purposes independent contractors. As such they “opt in” to sign an agreement with the business to be paid net revenues for services rendered (after legal tax and social premiums have been withheld). They also agree to report all their extra monies (client’s tips) to the owner who includes them in his mandated tax return. The businesses have an appropriate agreement with the Tax Authority. For business owners the opting-in regulation is an alternative to the only other legal option: employing sex workers full time, which is no real option for both parties: too expensive for the business, too restrictive for the sex worker. (note by FvR)
10. A Climbing Wall facility near Central Station (note by FvR)
11. Both suburbs Amsterdam Zuidoost and Bijlmer house a large ethnic (Surinam and African) population (note by FvR)
12. De Rode Draad (Red Thread), advocacy organization for sex workers since 1985 www.rodedraad.nl (note by FvR)
13. The so-called Sneep Study (2008) has sex trafficking as subject. Its official title: Schone Schijn – de signalering van mensenhandel in de vergunde prostitutiesector (*Glamour – Signaling human trafficking in the licensed prostitution sector*). Published by the KLPD/ Dienst Nationale Recherche (Domestic Police Force/ National Investigation Agency). The context was a domestically widely publicized investigation and trial against six migrant (I believe Turkish) sex traffickers operating in the Netherlands. All were found guilty. The study reports from this investigation and includes materials such as transcriptions from tapped phone conversations. (note by FvR)
14. The B9 regulation guarantees illegal migrants who are assumed trafficking victims and (voluntarily) report their case to the authorities, a temporary regular residence permit in exchange for cooperation with the authorities during investigation, prosecution, and eventually court trial. Generally the permit lasts for the duration of the procedure and does not guarantee extension. The regulation is described in chapter B9 of the Wetboek Vreemdelingenrecht (Dutch immigration law), hence its name. (note by FvR)
15. Observations in window prostitution areas show empty windows despite an increased shortage. At least there is no prostitute at work in these windows. It could be that they are not rented. More likely is that windows aren’t rented on days and hours that are unprofitable. It doesn’t bring revenues to rent on days and hours when there are few clients. Or maybe the prostitute has rented the window for a longer consecutive period and doesn’t work intermittently. The window then is empty but nevertheless rented.
16. City of Amsterdam: “Herbestemming raambordelen 1012 en Singelgebied” (*New Use of Window Brothels in the 1012 zip code and the Singel area*) – Draft December 22, 2009 (note by FvR)