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Prostitution and Human Trafficking

Focus on Clients

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Contents

Part I Investigation on the Demand for Trafficked Women

1 Introduction	3
Andrea Cauduro, Andrea Di Nicola, Marco Lombardi, and Paolo Ruspini	
2 Review of the Research Studies on the Demand for Prostitution in the European Union and Beyond	5
Andrea Cauduro	
3 Objectives and Methodology of the Research	23
Andrea Di Nicola and Paolo Ruspini	

Part II Results from the Fieldwork in Italy, Netherlands, Romania and Sweden

4 Innocent When You Dream Clients and Trafficked Women in Italy	31
Andrea Cauduro, Andrea Di Nicola, Chiara Fonio, Andrea Nuvoloni, and Paolo Ruspini	
5 The Flesh is Weak, the Spirit Even Weaker Clients and Trafficked Women in the Netherlands	67
Damián Zaitch and Richard Staring	
6 Romania: Emerging Market for Trafficking? Clients and Trafficked Women in Romania	123
Dan Alexandru Dragomirescu, Carmen Necula, and Raluca Simion	

7 In the Land of Prohibition? Clients and Trafficked Women in Sweden	163
Johanna Hagstedt, Lars Korsell, and Alfred Skagerö	
Part III Perspectives on the Clients through an Internet Survey	
8 An Internet Survey to Understand Clients	205
Marco Lombardi and Chiara Fonio	
Part IV Conclusions	
9 Learning from Clients	227
Andrea Di Nicola and Paolo Ruspini	
Bibliography	237
Index	249

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Part I
Investigation on the Demand
for Trafficked Women

Chapter 1

Introduction

Andrea Cauduro, Andrea Di Nicola, Marco Lombardi, and Paolo Ruspini

Client: Have you ever had a [...] by an Albanian?

Researcher: No...

Client: You should have one, they're great!

"I'll tell you something: between an exploited girl and a 'free' one, I choose the exploited one. Because a girl who's being exploited has to give money to her pimp, otherwise she'll be beaten. The others, when they've earned enough they stop working. The exploited ones no: even they don't want to work, they have to stay there and if they don't pay the pimp they're beaten [...] If you think about it, you notice it is more a help than anything else. We all know they're exploited, so it's better to go with them, otherwise they'll be slaughtered!"

These two tough excerpts from interviews with clients of foreign prostitution stress the core point of this work: There seems to be a different view, a different logic that moves these men in their search for commercial sex. This is the focus of the discussion and the main reason for this volume. We have attempted to study the phenomenon of trafficking from a different and innovative perspective: the *demand*.

Trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation (and not only) has involved all the European Union and more in general Western European countries in the past twenty years. In this field, many pieces of research have been carried out to analyse the phenomenon and suggest possible areas for intervention. All these works have contributed to develop knowledge on the issue, though they have some limitations as they are almost exclusively focused on the *supply* of "trafficked sex", i.e. who the victims and traffickers are, which routes are employed, which countries are the origin/destination, and so on.

This volume is one of the first attempts to investigate the other side of the coin. In this regard, thanks to a long period spent in the field and an internet virtual ethnography, it has been possible to discover some significant elements such as the fact that clients of trafficked prostitution are likely to be ordinary men (professionals and workers, married and single, high and low educated, young and elderly persons); in other words, they are *transversal* to all social classes and do not represent a particularly deviant group of individuals.

In addition, this work tries to focus not only on *who* the clients are, but also on *why* they look for this segment of commercial sex. In particular: is it a "biological"

need for sex, or loneliness and disaffection that drive them? Then, is it a group activity to be carried out with friends or a lonely search?

In order to collect such information, we tried to enter into *direct* contact with customers, using different techniques, to have a deeper insight into their universe and dynamics.

The research was conducted in four EU countries that have adopted different policies towards prostitution: Sweden and Romania with their prohibitionist approaches, Italy and its “tolerance” and the Netherlands with a regulationist model. This choice permitted the study of different sex markets and their specific “demands” for the trafficked prostitution that has developed under these models.

This volume is made up of nine Chapters. After the present introduction, Chap. 2 illustrates the most relevant literature on the demand for prostitution and trafficked prostitution, while Chap. 3 focuses on the methodology adopted for the research in the four countries.

Chaps. 4-7 are the core of the work. Each chapter presents the national legislative frameworks on prostitution and trafficking together with the results of the fieldwork on the demand for trafficked prostitution. In particular, the profile of clients (*who* they are and *why* they look for trafficked sex) has been investigated showing the analysis of the virtual ethnography carried out on the internet and of the semi-structured interviews with clients, policemen, prostitutes and so on.

Chap. 8 illustrates the data collected through an anonymous internet questionnaire administered to clients active on web forums in the four countries selected. This tool was designed to integrate the virtual ethnography and allowed the collection of further information on their features and motivations.

Finally, Chap. 9 summarizes the most significant findings and makes some possible proposals for new policies to tackle trafficking.

Chapter 2

Review of the Research Studies on the Demand for Prostitution in the European Union and Beyond

Andrea Cauduro

At the present time there is a fundamental gap in research knowledge on the demand for *trafficked* prostitution. In fact, up to now, the most significant literature has mainly focused on prostitutes, traffickers, routes, dynamics of the phenomenon and clients of *common* prostitution, but almost nothing has been done regarding the demand for *trafficked* prostitution.

Yet these actors, neglected by scientific studies, play a decisive role in the development of the phenomenon. Obviously, without demand for trafficked prostitutes this segment of the sex market would not exist.

This chapter surveys the most significant studies carried out to date on the clients of prostitutes, and on what induces them to seek commercial sex. The survey divides into two main parts: the literature on the clients of *common* prostitutes, and the literature on the clients of *trafficked* prostitutes. As stated above, the latter comprises a limited number of studies, because research in this field has concentrated almost entirely on the analysis of the supply of trafficked prostitution.

2.1 Clients of Common Prostitution

2.1.1 Extant Literature on Clients of Common Prostitution

The majority of studies on the demand for prostitution have been conducted in the UK and the USA, and since the late 1930s. Davis (1937) analysed the phenomenon, confuting the assumption that poverty is the sole cause of the supply of sexual services: *A frequent proposal for abolition¹ under capitalism is that the salaries of working girls be raised. This proposal, which ignores the demand side, assumes that girls enter prostitution through economic necessity. [...] The harlot's return is not primarily a reward for abstinence, labor, or rent. It is primarily a reward for loss of social standing. She loses social esteem because our moral system condemns the commercialization of intercourse* (1937: 750).

¹In this context 'abolition' means the prohibition of prostitution.

Davis also stressed that pure economic measures are likely to be ineffective: *In a competitive system as soon as the salaries of working girls are increased, the supply of prostitutes diminishes. The resulting scarcity increases the effective demand, in the form of price, which rises as the supply diminishes. [...] With the rise in price, working girls even with good salaries will be tempted into the profession* (1937: 751).

After Davis's study, further research was conducted to determine the demand for prostitution. To be noted in particular is that the literature has concerned itself with two main questions: understanding "who clients are" (i.e. age, social class, number of customers, etc.); and "what motivates them to purchase sexual services" (i.e. what their attitude to prostitution is, and why they seek out commercial sex).

2.1.1.1 Profiling the Client: Number, Personal Features, Violence on Prostitutes and Life Stories

How Many Men Purchase Sex?

The first significant study on the role of clients in the sex market was conducted in the US in the late 1940s (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948). The aim of this survey was to estimate the number of males who had paid for sex at least once in their lives. According to the survey's results, two thirds of the men contacted had done so and 15–20% were regular clients of prostitutes.

In 1949, the Mass Observation Unit in Britain (quoted in Stanley, 1995) conducted a study in which the methodological shortcomings of the work by Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin were stressed and remedied.² The outcome of the survey was that around one fourth of the males interviewed had bought sex at least once in their lives (1995: 450).

During the 1970s, two distinct studies highlighted that the majority of clients were married and aged between 30 and 60 (Winick and Kinsie, 1971) and that a large number of them purchased sex when away from home (Gagnon and Simon, 1973).

In 1989 in Norway, another quantitative study was carried out to estimate the number of clients of prostitution in the country. The analysis found that 13% of the 1,001 men randomly chosen for the study had paid for sex at least once in their lives. However, the significant finding was that only a minority of the men interviewed were habitual clients. This induced the researchers to conclude that only a small proportion of prostitute clients are responsible for the largest part of the overall sex market (Priour and Taksdal, 1989).³

²The methodology used (direct and short interviews conducted only with males) was criticised as being inaccurate (Brooks-Gordon, 2006: 134).

³To be noted is that a substantial proportion of the men interviewed were sailors who had hired prostitutes during long periods abroad. This datum affected the overall calculation made by the study (on this see also Brooks-Gordon, 2006: 82).

In 1992, the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs) was carried out in the USA. This study warrants particular attention because it represented a very important step forward in research on the demand for prostitution. The methodology consisted in administration of an anonymous and general questionnaire on health issues in the fifty states of the Union. Among other things, the interviewees were asked if they had ever paid for sex in their lives. The results showed that 16% of the men interviewed had paid for sex at least once in their lives. Although there were no other specific questions on frequency, type of woman and sexual acts chosen, the overall findings yielded an overview on trends in prostitution in the US. For example, the percentage of men who had paid for sex and had served in the army was triple (35.9%) that of those who had not served in the army (12.6%) (Michael, Gagnon, Laumann and Kolata, 1994).

In the same period, two similar surveys conducted in Britain estimated at around 7% the number of men who had purchased sex at least once in their lives (Knox, MacArthur and Simons, 1993; Wellings, Field, Johnson and Wadsworth, 1994).

In 1995–1996, Liverpool City Council, Liverpool City Challenge and Liverpool Centre Partnership (Campbell, 1998) conducted a survey on street prostitution in Liverpool. The researchers adopted an ethnographic approach to construct a profile of prostitute clients in the city. To this end, semi-structured interviews were conducted with clients who called an anonymous hotline established for the research (1998: 158). The sample was not representative (as stressed by the author); however, it enabled the collection of useful information on the features of prostitute clients: in particular, data on age, ethnic origin, employment status and residence (1998: 159–160). In contrast with previous surveys, the overall finding of this study was that the typical prostitute client was an ordinary man, not a deviant (1998: 160).

One of the widest-ranging surveys on the demand for prostitution was conducted in six countries (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland and USA) between 1996 and 1997 (Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman, 1998: 173). This composite survey was divided into two phases. First, analysis of the existing literature on the phenomenon and the study of judicial files⁴ in Vancouver (Canada) led to the design of a questionnaire on “sex and sexuality” aimed at collecting information on sexual trends and reasons for buying sexual acts. The second phase was conducted also via the Internet and involved administration of the above-mentioned questionnaire to residents of the six countries examined. In addition, some interviews were conducted with Canadian clients (1998: 172–173). The findings of this research showed that 8% of the men surveyed had paid for sex only once in their lives, 33% had paid between two and ten times, 32% between eleven and fifty times, and the remaining 27% more than fifty times in their lives (1998: 198). This seems to confirm Prieur and Taksdal’s (1989) hypothesis that a limited number of clients are responsible for the largest portion of the sex market. The survey also pointed out that clients purchased sex in more than one venue: streets, escort services, massage parlours, bars, hotels, personal advertisements and brothels (1998: 198).

⁴For kerb crawling.

In 1998 in Puerto Rico, a survey was carried out on relationships between elderly male clients (aged over 60) and prostitutes (Santos Ortiz, Lao-Melendez and Torres Sanchez, 1998). In this case, a qualitative approach was used to gain better understanding of sexuality in men aged over 60 and their possible contacts with prostitutes. One of the most interesting findings was that a high percentage (61%) of the males aged between 60 and 93 interviewed “reported a frequency of one or more instances per week” with a prostitute (1998: 213), thus confuting the stereotype of the absence of sexuality in elderly people.

In 2004 in France, the *Mouvement du Nid* and *IFAR* contacted 63 male prostitute clients and interviewed them to collect details on their features and motives for seeking commercial sex (Bouamama, 2004). The study found that the majority of the interviewees were aged over 50 (36.6%), mainly single or divorced (65.1%), but 55.5% of them had one or more children. As regards the type of prostitution chosen, 46% of the men stated that they used women working on the streets (2004: 28–30).

Another study on the demand for prostitution was conducted by Sven-Axel Månsson (2005) and made some of the most reliable estimates on the number of men paying for sex at least once in their lives in nine countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Russia⁵ and USA). The results ranged between 7% in Britain⁶ and 39% in Spain.⁷

After this brief description of research estimating the number of prostitute clients in several countries, Table 2.1 summarizes the findings of the above-illustrated studies.

Personal Features of Clients (Age, Marital Status, Race, Education, etc.)

As far as the personal features of prostitute clients are concerned, the above-mentioned research by Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman (1998) showed that, in the six countries investigated, “their ages ranged from eighteen to sixty-seven years, with a mean of twenty-nine. [...] 57 percent are single, 33 percent are married or live in a common-law relationship, and 9 percent are separated or divorced. [...] Eighty-seven percent of the respondents are Caucasian. The majority of respondents are employed full-time (56 percent) or they are students (30 percent)” (1998: 197).

In the same period, Martin A. Monto conducted a study for the American National Institute of Justice on the clients of street prostitutes (Monto, 1999). For his research, Monto used a sample of 1,342 men voluntarily attending a re-education program for clients of prostitutes (who had been arrested for soliciting) in San Francisco, Portland and Las Vegas.

The research found that the clients’ ages ranged between 18 and 84 with a mean of 38; with a slightly higher proportion of Hispanics and Asians compared to the overall population of the three cities. In addition, some significant differences in

⁵Data for Russia refer only to the city of St. Petersburg.

⁶Based on the above-illustrated data collected by Wellings, Field, Johnson and Wadsworth, (1994).

⁷Based on data collected by Leridon, Zesson and Hubert, 1998.

Table 2.1 Percentage of men who paid for sex at least once in their lives in a number of countries.

Country	%	Year	Reference
Finland	13%	1999	Haavio-Mannila and Rotkirch, 2000
Great Britain	15–20%	1948	Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948
Great Britain	25%	1949	Stanley, 1995
Great Britain	6.4%	1993	Knox, MacArther and Simons, 1993
Great Britain	6.8%	1991	Wellings, Field, Johnson and Wadsworth, 1994
Multi-country ⁸	8%	1997	Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman, 1998
Netherlands	14%	1989	Leridon, Zesson and Hubert, 1998
Norway	13%	1989	Prieur and Taksdal, 1989
Norway	11%	1992	Leridon, Zesson and Hubert, 1998
Puerto Rico ⁹	61%	1998	Santos Ortiz, Lao-Melendez and Torres Sanchez, 1998
Russia ¹⁰	10%	1996	Haavio-Mannila and Rotkirch, 2000
Spain	39%	1992	Leridon, Zesson and Hubert, 1998
Sweden	13%	1996	Lewin, 1998
Switzerland	19%	1992	Leridon, Zesson and Hubert, 1998
United States	16%	1992	Michael, Gagnon, Laumann and Kolata, 1994

Source: Elaboration of extant literature data

marital status emerged between the interviewees and the US population. In fact, only 41% of clients were married, compared to 56% of US males. Moreover, 22% of married clients defined their marriages as “not too happy”, compared to 2% in the overall population (Monto, 1999: 29–30).

Another significant detail to emerge from Monto’s study is that only around 10% of the respondents declared that they used prostitutes more than once a month (1999: 31–32). In this regard, the author pointed out that “men arrested for trying to hire prostitutes may represent the less experienced prostitution client, with more experienced clients better able to avoid arrest, either due to the knowledge of police procedures, familiarity with prostitutes themselves, or participating in off-street prostitution” (1999: 32).

As regards age, the survey reported that 24 was the mean age for the first encounter with a prostitute, while habitual clients were more likely to have their first encounter at a younger age (*ibid.*).

The interviewees were also asked about their use of condoms: 73% declared that they “always” used one, 12% “often” and 6% asked for manual masturbation, which did not require the use of a condom (*ibid.*).

Finally, Monto also investigated sexual activities with prostitutes, highlighting that fellatio was the most frequent act (51.7% of the cases), followed by vaginal

⁸The survey was conducted through an internet questionnaire in which 77 percent of the respondents were from USA; 13 percent from Canada; 5 percent from Australia and New Zealand and 5 percent from British Isles (Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman, 1998: 197). Final results were not disaggregated per country, for this reason one has chosen the indication “Multicountry”.

⁹In this case the survey was conducted only on a group of males between 60 and 93.

¹⁰The data from Russia only concerns St. Petersburg.

sex (12%), oral and vaginal sex (10%), manual masturbation (5.7%), anal sex (0.9%), other activities (2.5%), while 17.3% of the interviewees reported two or more of the “most common” sexual activities with prostitutes (1999: 32–32).¹¹

Finally, in 2003, Anne-Maria Marttila carried out research on Finnish clients purchasing sexual services from Baltic and Russian prostitutes (Marttila, 2003). The author relied on the specialist literature and interviews with a number of men in order to determine their features and motives (2003: 3–4). She also visited specialized Finnish Internet forums in order to learn the jargon of clients and to monitor the use of this medium in the demand dynamics.

Although Marttila’s sample was not representative and homogeneous, it yielded some details on the habits of Finnish prostitute users. It was found that the majority of them were sexual tourists who purchased sex in Tallinn or St. Petersburg. Furthermore, they used adult prostitutes, although some of them stated that they had had sex with minors, above all when abroad (2003: 4).

2.1.1.2 Why do Men Buy Sexual Services? Attitudes Towards Prostitution and Motives for Purchasing Sexual Services

Motives That Push Men to Look for Commercial Sex

Since the earliest studies (e.g. Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin 1948), attempts have been made to explain why clients purchase sexual acts. Of course, as far as this early research is concerned, it should be borne in mind that it was conducted in the USA of the first half of the twentieth century, when sexuality was generally a taboo. For this reason, its conclusions must be regarded in light of its historical context. Those authors pointed out that prostitution was mainly sought to satisfy *sexual perversions* (such as fellatio)¹² that could not be obtained from regular partners.¹³ Moreover, they tried to explain clients’ motivations by pointing out that prostitutes were regarded as an easy, cheap and certain way to get sex (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948: 607).

In this regard, the growing sexual freedom that has characterized Western societies since the 1960s should be borne in mind when considering the different approaches adopted by researchers in more recent studies. In particular, since the 1960s, many American psychological studies have focused on the motives and possible mental illnesses that induce men to buy sexual acts from prostitutes. Among these, to be mentioned in particular, is the research by Charles Winick, who analysed 732 men and sought to explain their purchase of sex as a form of

¹¹The above-illustrated research was also re-published for *Violence against women* (Busch, Bell, Hotaling and Monto, 2002).

¹²At that time, fellatio was considered a sexual perversion, and in some of the states of the Union it was also a criminal offence.

¹³Sullivan and Simon (1998: 135), citing Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1948), reported that 48 percent of white men with a college education, 49 percent of white men with less than a college education, and 37 percent of African-American men with a college education asked for oral sex from prostitutes.

psychopathology (Winick, 1962). His theories were then developed during the 1970s by Janus, Bess and Saltus (1977), and above all by Stoller (1976). According to the latter, the purchase of sex is “a habitual, preferred aberration necessary for one’s full satisfaction, primarily motivated by hostility” (1976: 4).

These works were followed in the 1980s and 1990s by other important psychological research studies which sought to determine the motives for hiring prostitutes, arguing that customers were essentially “common men” and not particularly deviant (McLeod, 1982; Holzman and Pines, 1982; Diana, 1985; Kinnell, 1989; Høigard and Finstad, 1992; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; Campbell, 1997; Monto, 2000).

In this regard, McKeganey and Barnard (1996) distinguished five main reasons for purchasing sex:

- the chance to buy particular sex acts
- the opportunity to approach a large number of women
- the chance to have women with specific characteristics
- the contact with prostitutes can be minimal
- the element of thrill involved in paying for sex

In two surveys conducted in Britain in 1993 and 1994,¹⁴ Campbell (1998) noted that motives largely corresponded to those identified by McKeganey and Barnard (1998: 163–166).

Another important definition was put forward by Blanchard (1994), who identified the concept of “McSex” i.e. the search by men for variety, control and the immediate satisfaction of sexual urges. According to Blanchard, prostitution responds to these needs.

A similar set of motives for purchasing sexual services were identified by Grubman Black (2003). In this case, the reasons were divided into six categories:

- Loneliness, shyness, awkwardness: men look for long-term relationships with prostitutes and consider sex to be an intimate and secret practice
- Need for uncommon sexual acts: the motivation is the chance to experiment with something new
- Thrill of the hunt: men seek out prostitutes to enjoy the power of choosing a woman
- Changing the rules: men force women to perform acts against their will and/or engage in some form of violence
- Roughing her up: men vent their frustrations on prostitutes, assaulting and despising them
- Ultimate control: this is another kind of need for dominance, because men use prostitutes to exercise total power over them, treating them as mere commodities

Another attempt to classify customers’ motives was made in the survey by Bouamama (2004: 35–77), who interviewed 63 French prostitute clients in order to profile them.

¹⁴Knox, MacArther and Simons, 1993; Wellings, Field, Johnson and Wadsworth, 1994.

A section of Bouamama's study analyses the first time that the subjects had been clients of prostitutes (i.e. not necessarily their first sexual experience). In this case, the researcher found a significant role of the peer group in hiring a prostitute, this being an act considered normal by the others. In addition, the frequent purchase of sex by friends seemed to induce the men to introject this "norm" so as to be accepted by the group (2004: 56–57). Another set of interviewees reported, by contrast, solitary entrance into the world of prostitution, sometimes hiding it from their friends (2004: 59–60). The research also found that some respondents became clients following an unsuccessful affective relationship (2004: 60–61). Finally, Bouamama identified some further reasons for purchasing sex: relaxation, as a consequence of drug/alcohol use and because of a lack of self-confidence (2004: 61–62).

After this analysis, Bouamama also focused on clients' sexual lives. The results indicated widespread dissatisfaction due to a decrease in the partner's libido, or lack of pleasure with the habitual partner (2004: 63–65). Moreover, the experience with prostitutes was often considered unpleasant, and it aroused feelings of shame, guilt and self-ridicule (2004: 65–67). In this regard, the survey highlighted the need of some customers to obtain affection from prostitutes, so that some of them explained their sexual dissatisfaction as being due to the lack of dialogue and tenderness given by prostitutes (2004: 69–70). This aspect was also stressed by the "impossible kiss" (*le baiser impossible*) that some men reported: They stated that they fell in love with prostitutes and tried to kiss them on the mouth but were rejected and that their illusions were frustrated (2004: 71–73).

But Bouamama also found some clients who, on the contrary, declared themselves happy with their relations with prostitutes. The author indicated four main reasons for this satisfaction:

1. Relief: the interviewees purchased sexual services because they gave relief from the difficulties of daily life
2. Need for domination and feeling of power: the men exerted the power of money (*le pouvoir de l'argent*), which gave them a sense of dominance over women, who were mere commodities for them
3. Therapy: customers used prostitutes as a kind of therapy for their depressions and personal troubles
4. Improve self-confidence: this category comprised men who were satisfied with their encounters, because through prostitution they were able to regain trust in themselves and their capabilities (2004: 74–76)

Interestingly, in this case too, some features of prostitute clients resembled those found by Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes and are described below.

As said, another attempt to categorize client motives has been made by Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes (2005), who built the five-type scheme presented in Table 2.2 by drawing on the literature and in-depth interviews with clients.

In the dirty whore fantasy, clients are attracted by prostitutes regarded as "sexual animals" ready to satisfy their urges. Besides this attractive aspect, there is also contempt for the "whore" as a lost and deviant woman, as opposed to the "Madonna", who should be respected.

Table 2.2 Clients' motivations for purchasing sexual services

Motivation	Description
The dirty whore fantasy	Expressions of contradictory feelings of curiosity, excitement and contempt
Another kind of sex	Images of a certain kind of sex which cannot be experienced with a non-prostitute woman
No other women	Referring to shyness, fear, advanced age, physical and mental disabilities: "there are no other women for me"
Shopping for sex	Images of sex as a consumer product
Another kind of woman	Images of a true and natural femininity. Expression of strong anti-feminist notions

Source: Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes (2005)

In the another-kind-of-sex category, men use prostitutes in order to engage in sexual practices not possible with wives or regular partners. As seen above, in this regard Monto (2001) found that 51.7% of the men interviewed in Portland, San Francisco and Las Vegas asked for fellatio from the prostitutes they used.

The no-other-women category comprises clients with great difficulties in contacting women in general because of physical and/or psychological obstacles. For this reason, they turn to prostitutes in order to satisfy their sexual desires; otherwise, "there is no other woman for me". In this case, too, Monto found that out of 700 interviewed clients, 42% agreed they were "shy and awkward" when trying to meet women, 23% felt unattractive physically and 23% "had difficulties meeting women who were not nude dancers and prostitutes" (Monto, 2000: 80).

Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes include in the shopping-for-sex category those men who regard prostitution as a commodity, relying on the above "McSex" expression coined by Blanchard (1994). They also point out the role of pornography and "sex commodification" in Western society as push factors behind the view of prostitution as a kind of "shopping".

Finally, the another-kind-of-woman group comprises clients who seek out prostitutes in order to re-establish the supremacy that men have lost in Western society. In this regard, O'Connell Davidson (2001) points out that, for example, sexual tourists consider the prostitutes that they meet abroad to be women who have accepted their "role" of subjugated beings who must satisfy men's sexual needs (2001: 13).

An important attempt to systematize the various approaches to the possible motives inducing clients to buy commercial sex has been made by Ben-Israel and Levenkron (2005: 18–25) drawing on the extant literature. These authors focused on three macro-categories of motives inducing men to seek commercial sex: first, biological reasons connected to the "inner" nature of men; then, individual psychological factors and finally, social and supra-individual elements. These are now described in detail.

Biological Theory

This theory postulates that, "the male sexual impulse is an instinct as uncontrollable as the need for food or drink. [...] Women, on the other hand, have a weak sexual impulse". According to this theory, "sex in exchange for payment answers the need

of many men for a sexual outlet” (Ben-Israel and Levenkron 2005: 18; Sion, 1977: 24–29). The authors maintain that this theory is now outdated, because more recent studies have stressed both the “controllability” of the sexual impulse and the important role of social and cultural factors in characterizing this male “need” (Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005: 18; McIntosh, 1978).

Psychological-personality Theories

This cluster of theories seeks to give a psychological explanation to the need for commercial sex, relying above all on “childhood traumas, education, and world views that developed over time regarding concepts such as sex, eroticism, and power” (2005: 18). Ben-Israel and Levenkron include within this framework the results of research by several authors,¹⁵ and they elaborate six categories:

- The dirty whore fantasy (Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005: 18–19)
- The need for a “degraded sexual object devoid of human qualities” (2005: 19–20)
- The need for a “real” manhood where women are subjugated to the male (2005: 20)
- The need for different sex not obtainable from regular partners (2005: 20–21)
- The need for a compassionate prostitute (2005: 21)
- The need not to be considered a client, especially for “sex tourists” sensitive to the social blame of this label (*ibid.*)

Social Theories

Here too, the classification is based on examination of the literature.¹⁶ It shifts attention to the social level, pointing out that: “the mechanism of the sex industry [...] is not driven by independently acting individuals; it is both a product and a shaper of surrounding social and cultural context” (*ibid.*). In this case, the authors identify four main categories:

- The feminist theory that focuses on the “power relationships between men and women” and the need for domination over women by clients (2005: 22)
- The commodification of sex by the mass media and cultural models of sexuality (2005: 22–23)
- The role of the peer group and the demand for prostitution as a “means of male bonding” (2005: 23)
- The need to return to “the old good days” when male dominance was unchallenged: This category is an adaptation of the first one linked to trafficking. In fact, the above-illustrated need for dominance induces men to seek out prostitutes from developing countries, where women are still strongly subservient to men. This belief is reinforced by such colonial stereotypes as: “African women are ‘wild’, Asian women mix ‘exotica’ and ‘obedience’, Latin American women are ‘hot’ and so on” (2005: 23–24).

¹⁵E.g. McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; O’Connell Davidson, 2001; Grubman Black, 2003; Bouamama, 2004; Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes, 2005.

¹⁶E.g. Funari, 1997; MacKinnon, 1989; O’Connell Davidson, 1996; Pendelton, 1997; Sheiner, 1997.

After this examination of studies investigating the possible reasons for buying sexual services, Table 2.3 synthesizes the most salient ones identified, also taking into account the three macro-categories developed by Ben-Israel and Levenkron.

2.2 Clients of Trafficked Prostitution

As said above, despite the extent of trafficking for the exploitation of prostitution, few researchers have focused on the demand side of the overall sex market. Now presented are the most salient studies on this matter, their research methods and conclusions.

2.2.1 Extant Literature on Clients of Trafficked Prostitution

Raymond, Hughes and Gomez (2001) conducted one of the first research studies on trafficked prostitution in the USA. They interviewed 128 persons connected to the sex industry, police officers, social service/healthcare workers and academics (2001: 28–29). Their results highlighted that trafficked prostitution in the USA was generally organized along ethnic lines (e.g. Chinese and Vietnamese massage parlours and Mexican brothels) with different prices and access policies for non-members of the ethnic group concerned. In regard to Chinese brothels, a client stated: “Japanese and foreigners (Whites and Latinos) generally start at least \$20 more than Chinese and Korean” (2001: 69). Furthermore, “If you happen to be Black, sometimes the Korean [sic] places just won’t let you in” (ibid.).

It emerged from interviews with prostitutes that the majority of their clients were Caucasians, mainly aged 30–50 and married. In addition, men from the US military were frequently reported as customers. To be noted in this regard is that strip bars and brothels are frequent around US military bases, and Asian trafficked women are often exploited there as prostitutes (2001: 69–70). As far as clients’ occupations were concerned, the research identified various types: workers, professionals, politicians, academics, etc. (2001: 70).

The study also focused on the attitude of clients towards trafficked prostitutes, finding that they mainly wanted young girls (sometimes under-age) and would complain if the women tried to set limits on their requests (2001: 71–72).¹⁷ As regards the use of condoms, the results show that the men often expected not to use them and would pay more to have unprotected sex (2001: 72–73). Finally, the research stressed various forms of violence perpetrated against women by customers: physical violence, sexual assault, sadistic sex and the use of weapons (2001: 75–77).

¹⁷ An interviewed prostitute indicated some sexual acts and relative prices: “*Sitting naked: \$10; verbally abusing men: \$10 - \$20; masturbation: \$20; homosexual fantasy: \$20; using a dildo: \$30; anal sex with dildo: \$40; pee in a glass: \$100; sniff shoes, pop balloons with my high heels, hotdog man-put ketchup and mustard on his penis, tie a string on his penis and tug*” (Raymond and Hughes, 2001: 72).

Table 2.3 Principal motivations for purchasing sexual services as emerged by literature

Motivation	Description	Macro-category	Source
Physiological need for sex	“Men are men” and because of their nature they need sex (e.g. McSex and shopping for sex)	Biological theory	Blanchard, 1994; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes, 2005; Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005
Impossibility of getting non-commercial sex	The only way to obtain sex is buying it (e.g. because of shyness, awkwardness, “no other woman”)	Psychological theories	Grubman Black, 2003; Bouamama, 2004; Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes, 2005; Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005
Need for affection and comprehension	The prostitute is someone to talk with and not only a “sexual object”. She gives the affection that is normally denied by regular partners	Psychological theories	Bouamama, 2004; Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005
Particular sexual acts and/or chance to have many sexual partners	Chance of getting unusual sexual performances not obtainable by regular partners (e.g. fellatio or anal sex), also for the influence of pornography and sex commodification in the media	Psychological/social theories	Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948; McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; Grubman Black, 2003; Bouamama, 2004; Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes, 2005; Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005
Need for dominion	Power exercise over a woman who is completely subjugated because she is paid (i.e. re-establishment of the role of the man, the power of money)	Social theories	McKeganey and Barnard, 1996; O’Connell Davidson, 2001; Grubman Black, 2003; Bouamama, 2004; Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes, 2005; Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005
Peer group	Meeting prostitutes is seen as something normal by the peer group and consequently introjected as a social norm. Meeting prostitutes is important to be accepted by the group	Social theories	Bouamama, 2004; Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005

Source: Elaboration of the extant literature

In 2002, Raymond et al. published a detailed analysis of trafficking for sexual exploitation in five countries, i.e. Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United States. The research focused inter alia on the “buyers” of sexual services, using for the purpose in-depth interviews with trafficking victims who had received assistance in four out of the five states examined. The most significant results are summarized below.

Indonesia

Twenty-five interviewed trafficked prostitutes reported that their clients were mainly Malaysians, Singaporeans and Indonesians; followed by Chinese, Arabs, Bruneians, Indians, Taiwanese and Westerners (Europe and USA). Ages ranged between 18 and 60 and the mean was 39 (Dzuhayatin and Silawati, 2002: 81). The study also highlighted that a large group of clients was made up of old Chinese men who bought the time of prostitutes in order to receive care and attention (*ibid.*). Moreover, a significant number of customers were Western sex tourists who exploited the low costs of services: “Buying women for sexual activity was considered cheap and exotic entertainment, not affordable in their countries of origin. Respondents said that for the amount of US\$100, these men could afford to pay travel costs, stay in 3-star hotels, take all meals in restaurants and book young women for 2 nights” (2002: 82). Finally, as far as violence by clients was concerned, the interviewed women reported some cases (mainly linked to demands for oral or anal sex), but they generally indicated their pimps as the principal “source of violence” (2002: 82–85).

The Philippines

Forty-four trafficked prostitutes were interviewed for the report (Santos, Belarmino and Ignacio, 2002: 91). They were mainly exploited in Japan, where they catered to customers aged 30–50, who sometimes asked them for “a good time together” and “normal” sex. However, the women reported several cases of clients who wanted “perverse or sadistic sex” (2002: 107). Some of the women interviewed had been trafficked to Nigeria, where they serviced Filipino seamen, Taiwanese and Japanese businessmen, and some locals. They reported that regular clients were not generally violent, and that some of them had become their boyfriends (*ibid.*). Finally, as far as sexual services were concerned, the women reported that many men asked for oral sex, which disgusted them (2002: 108).

Venezuela

In this case, the research team interviewed forty-one women trafficked to Venezuela for the purposes of prostitution (Ramirez Rodriguez and Linares Gonzales, 2002: 161). They reported that their clients’ ages ranged between 18 and 80, and that they belonged to all social classes, occupations and ethnic groups (2002: 166). As seen above for other countries, in Venezuela also the women were asked to engage in all kinds of sexual practices “including oral, anal and sadistic sex” (2002: 167).

As regards the use of condoms, the interviewees stated that only a small percentage of clients used them regularly, while others tried to have sex without them, assuming that the women were healthy or because they found unprotected sex more pleasurable. In addition, clients offered more money or alcohol so as not to use condoms (2002: 168). Finally, the survey found that the great majority of ex-prostitutes had undergone episodes of violence by clients: in particular, beatings, strangling, and threatening with firearms (ibid.).

The United States

For this section, thirty-four victims of trafficking to the US, mainly from Russia, were contacted (Hynes, Gomez and Rusakova, 2002: 188). In this case, too, the results indicated that clients were mostly men aged 20–70, of all social classes, ethnic groups, mostly married and with many different occupations (2002: 195). As far as sexual acts were concerned, the interviewed women were often forced to engage in anal or oral sex and sometimes sadomasochistic acts (2002: 196).

A few other reports (in particular ILO, 2005; Belser, de Cock and Mehran, 2005; Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003) have sought to improve data collection methods and have shifted their attention to trafficking in human beings and its features. Special mention should be made of the IOM Report by Bridget Anderson and Julia O’Connell Davidson (2003), which examined the relationship between the demand for trafficked prostitution and/or domestic labour and the extent of trafficking in human beings in six pilot countries (India, Thailand, Italy, Sweden, Denmark and Japan). The importance of this survey arises from its close concern with the role of demand in the dynamics of human trafficking. The survey was based on interviews with clients of prostitution and/or forced domestic labour, as well as with trafficking victims assisted by the IOM.

The results showed that clients generally know that traffickers exploit prostitutes (2003: 23), but this is not decisive in changing their attitude to prostitution. In addition, some interviews highlighted the use of “neutralization techniques”¹⁸ to justify client violence. According to some of the men interviewed, violence was merely a reaction against “substandard services” or the “forced use of condoms” (2003: 24). This commodification of prostitutes was summed up by a client who said: “she is a commodity offering a service and she should accept that” (2003: 25). The exploratory nature of the survey warrants further research because, on the basis of the data collected, the authors argue: “[one] could almost say that supply generates demand rather than the other way round” (2003: 41).

A 2005 study on the clients of trafficked prostitutes in Israel was based on interviews with trafficking victims who had received assistance from the Hotline for Migrant Workers in the period 2000–2003 (Ben-Israel and Levenkron, 2005: 17). As in other surveys, the results revealed that the Israeli clients of trafficked prostitutes were from all social classes, with diverse occupations and that they were sometimes

¹⁸For a definition of neutralization techniques, see Sykes and Matza, 1957.

very young adolescents (13–14 years old) who had sex with prostitutes in performance of some sort of initiation rite (*ibid.*).

2.3 Limits of the Extant Literature

As seen above, although quantitative data on the extent of human trafficking indicate an increase in the number of victims,¹⁹ studies on the demand for trafficked prostitutes are almost non-existent. It is therefore unclear whether and how demand affects the phenomenon, whether clients are aware that they are using trafficking victims, and above all whether and how they differ from the clients of common prostitutes.

Indeed, “from a theoretical point of view, the client is central to the study of prostitution. Without him, there is no sex trade. Politically, the client is central because prostitution is held out to be the quintessential instance of the male sexualization, commodification, and exploitation of women. From the point of view of policymakers the client is central because he represents an obvious site of social intervention, be it in the name of protecting neighborhoods and preventing nuisance and/or preventing sexual exploitation of children and violence against women who prostitute. And yet we know very little about the client” (Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman, 1998: 172). This sentence is the introduction to a study carried out ten years ago. However, as pointed out at the outset, since then knowledge about the phenomenon has progressed only little.

As seen above, the majority of studies focus almost exclusively on the demand for common prostitution. This is clearly the main weakness in studies on the topic, for the attention paid to profiling the client of common prostitution leaves some core questions unanswered: Is the user of a trafficked prostitute different from a “common” client? Why does he choose trafficked prostitutes? Is he aware of the exploitation? These and other issues must be examined in consequence of the great changes in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today, the sex market has a globalized dimension in which trafficked women account for large part of the overall prostitution supply.

Another limitation to current research is the impossibility of collecting reliable quantitative data due to the covert and intimate nature of prostitute use. Monto (2004: 165) has also underlined the difficulty of collecting information from clients often reluctant to divulge personal details. It should also be pointed out that even where prostitution is not criminalized it is nevertheless often regarded as deviant. This hampers sampling procedures and consequently the production of reliable statistics.

Various qualitative approaches have been developed to remedy this lack of information and to profile the customers of prostitution. One notes in particular the widespread use of semi-structured interviews with prostitutes as means to collect

¹⁹See Di Nicola, Orfano, Cauduro, Conci, 2005; Di Nicola, 2004; ILO, 2005.

details on clients. This approach has the advantage of yielding reliable information on clients: their age, education, social background, etc. In addition, it is best able to detect client violence on prostitutes. Furthermore, as far as the motives for purchasing sex are concerned, direct contact with prostitute clients seems to be the most efficient method, given the obviously more precise information that it yields.

From the methodological point of view, however, interviews raise the problem of comparability, because questions and data collecting criteria tend to differ greatly from one study to another. However, at the current stage of research, these qualitative methods seem most effective because they enable the researcher to “enter” the intimate sphere of prostitute clients (e.g. through semi-structured interviews or life stories). In this regard, the results available appear promising, above all in order to understand prostitute client motives in general and they seem best suited for extension to the clients (or possible clients) of trafficked prostitutes in particular. This category of prostitute clients, in fact, is likely to be more reluctant to share their choices because of public blame and possible criminalization.

Of course, although direct contact with clients is a key instrument with which to improve overall knowledge about this population, the difficulty of meeting them should be stressed. In this regard, a part of the extant literature relies mainly on clients convicted for kerb-crawling and attending re-education programs (e.g. Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman, 1998; Monto, 1999). However, the data collected may be affected by the attempt to gratify the interviewers in order to prove a “good will” of re-socialization. For this reason, it is important to extend the range by contacting “active” customers unaffected by the bias of convictions or State programs.

2.3.1 Need for Exploring Who Clients of Trafficked Prostitution Are

Who is the client of trafficked prostitution? After the above survey on the most salient studies, the question is still unanswered. Some research studies have proposed hypotheses, and some similarities have been found; nevertheless, a definitive answer is far from forthcoming at the moment. Further analysis is required to improve knowledge about this actor of the sex market: his age, social class, work, marital status and so on. In addition, precise information on this side of trafficking would give researchers better understanding about the dynamics of the phenomenon and possible influences on it by clients.

In this regard, there has been much debate in recent years between two opposite, and often ideologically driven, points of view. On the one side stands the regulationist approach adopted in the Netherlands, which aims to “manage” prostitution by considering it a profession and thus remove it from illegality. In this scenario, men are “regular” clients who purchase a legal “good”. On the other side is the prohibitionist approach adopted in Sweden with its firm stance against prostitute clients, who are criminally liable for purchasing sex (Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano, 2006).

For the time being it is not possible to say if there is a better model on prostitution than another in tackling human trade, and these questions should be answered only after deeper analysis has been made of the world of clients, so that a clearer picture of the overall scenario provides the basis for measures to tackle the criminal organizations that manage the process.

2.3.2 Need for Exploring Pushing Factors for the Choice of Trafficked Prostitution

For complete understanding, besides constructing the profile of the client, it is necessary also to determine the reasons that induce him to seek out sexual services. As the literature shows, there is a wide range of motives; but which of them are the most significant for clients of trafficked prostitutes? Are there concrete differences between a client who chooses common prostitutes and one who chooses trafficked ones? Is there a real choice, or is the sex market made up only of trafficked women? None of these questions has been answered by the studies conducted to date. For this reason, to “complete the puzzle” it is essential also to improve knowledge of these factors, also for the purpose of refining the above-mentioned tackling strategies.

Chapter 3

Objectives and Methodology of the Research

Andrea Di Nicola and Paolo Ruspini

3.1 Research Need and Objectives

Trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation is one of the most worrying and one of the largest illegal markets of our society. However, the *demand* that characterizes this market is still unexplored. Our research and this book, which presents its results, aim to contribute in filling the gap of knowledge by answering some basic and driving questions.

The first set of questions refers to the client and his characteristics, the first objective of the study being to give a picture, though probably blurred, of the “who”. What are the main features of the client of trafficked prostitutes? Is he different from a “common” client? Why does he choose this segment of the market? And most of all, is he aware about the trafficking and the conditions of exploitation?

The second set of questions aims to understand the dynamics that push clients towards trafficked prostitutes. The second objective of the study, in fact, is to shed light on the “why”. Which are the most significant pushing factors for clients of trafficked prostitution? With reference to these factors, are there actual differences between a client who chooses common prostitution and one who chooses trafficked prostitution? Is it a real choice or is the sex market made up only of trafficked women? Are the factors that push clients towards trafficked prostitution *individual*, *network* or *environmental* ones?

In detail, these factors can be defined as follows:

- *Individual factors*: i.e. motivations relying on personal choices or needs. For example, difficulties in having a stable relationship with a partner, sexual diseases or search for transgression
- *Network factors*: i.e. motivations relying on the network of people surrounding the client. For example, experienced friends, high visibility of prostitution in the area of residence, owners of nightclubs and in general facilitators of prostitution that put into contact clients and prostitutes
- *Environmental factors*: i.e. motivations relying on the social and cultural situation. For example, national policy on prostitution, scarce control by police or cultural background, such as a patriarchal view of the world

The third and the last set of questions concerns policy implications; since, the third objective of the analysis is to understand “remedies”, i.e. if it is possible to devise tailor-made policies aimed, not at stopping prostitution, but at reducing the demand for trafficked prostitutes. Based on the knowledge acquired, which kind of approach is advisable for reducing the demand of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation?

Summing up the study aims at understanding who the clients are, why they look for trafficked prostitution and how to stop this demand.

But, are the responses to these issues the same if we move across countries with different cultural, social, political backgrounds which display different policies on prostitution? Are punters of victims of trafficking and their motives similar in such diverse countries? The research presented in this book is comparative in scope. Its added value also resides in the fact that the same questions – and similar research methodologies, as one will soon read – were carried out in Italy, the Netherlands, Romania and Sweden in order to achieve outcomes that could be cross-comparable. The decision fell on these four countries not only because they cover a wide spectrum of prostitution regimes (Italy falls within the area of abolitionism, the Netherlands opts for regulation, Sweden and Romania implement different forms of prohibition), but also because they embrace all the possible roles of a nation within the trafficking chain (origin, transit and destination).

3.2 How to Identify Trafficked Prostitution

Nowadays many people are aware that the definition of trafficking in human beings has been definitively and internationally reached with the First Protocol to the 2000 Palermo Convention. Trafficking in human beings *shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*¹

¹ Art. 3 lett. A of the *Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime*, Doc. A/45/49 (Vol. I) (2001).

In addition to the text of the United Nations, the European Union elaborated its own definition of trafficking of human beings and smuggling of migrants with the Council Framework Decision, 19 July 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings, in O.J. no. L 203 of 01/08/2002, pp. 1–4.

However, this normative definition was not operational enough for the purpose of this research. One of the most significant problems researchers had to face, in fact, was the identification of trafficked prostitution. In other words, what are the peculiarities of this segment of the market compared to “common” prostitution? Help in this sense came again from the most valuable literature that highlights some distinctive features of this sector.² In particular:

- Overwhelming presence of foreign prostitutes
- Limited knowledge of the national language by victims
- Use of violence to subjugate and force them into prostitution
- Services offered at lower prices than native prostitutes

Starting from the above points, a set of proxy indicators was thus elaborated and employed in the empirical part of the research (Sect. 3.3 below) to detect the probability of customers having entered into contact with trafficked women. Therefore, a man was considered their client if he met *foreign prostitutes*, with *little knowledge* of the native language, possibly showing *signs of violence* and offering services at a *lower price* than local prostitutes. Of course, not all these indicators had to co-exist, but the more the indicators are present, the more likely it is that a man had sexual intercourse with trafficked prostitutes.

3.3 Methodology: Towards “Virtual Ethnography”

The research this book presents is exploratory. The difficulty in approaching the demand side of prostitution is certainly evident to anyone: clients of trafficked victims belong to the so-called hidden populations and a hidden population is difficult for researchers to access because its members are neither easily identifiable nor easily found. Statistically speaking, it is also not possible to define a sampling frame for a hidden population. Put simply, we cannot see and we cannot count a hidden population; we cannot know its size or its exact characteristics. This entails methodological approaches that are different from those commonly used with more easily observable populations, such as snow-ball sampling. Since whatever method is used is well-nigh impossible to establish a sample frame and to select a random sample from it, it means that statements true for the group of clients subject to the research (the sample) cannot be generalized to the entire population of clients

² Andreani and Raviv, 2004; Barjaba and Perrone, 1997; Bernieri, 2002; Borg, 2001; Bruinsma and Meershoek, 1999; Brunovskis and Tyldum, 2004; Bureau Nationaal Rapporteur Mensenhandel (BNRM), 2005 and 2007; Carchedi and Orfano, 2007; Cicone, 2005; Council of the Baltic States, 2003; Di Nicola, 2004; Di Nicola and Cauduro, 2007; Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano, 2006; IOM, 2000; Kangaspunta, 2003; Lehti and Aromaa, 2000; Migration Information Program, 1996b; Monzini, Pastore and Sciortino, 2004; Rahmani, 2004; Savona et al., 2003; Savona, Decarli and Di Nicola, 2002; Sciortino, 2004; Tampep International Foundation, 2004; Tureikytė and Sipavičienė, 2001; U.S. State Department of State, 2007.

(Di Nicola, 2007: 53 and 59). This was and is a severe limitation of the research presented here. Considering these difficulties and in order to overcome them, the research group agreed to triangulate different data-gathering techniques, and it used:

1. Interviews with clients, usually identifying customers through snow-ball sampling
2. Web “participant observation” in the Internet chats and forums. The choice of this virtual ethnography was rather important for it allowed researchers to access the Internet world of punters, to enter into contact with them for a prolonged period of time and to study their behaviours and attitudes commingling with them in their Internet environment and pretending to be one of them
3. An anonymous Internet questionnaire, advertised on the Web to collect some further details about the clients of trafficked prostitution and in particular information on “who” the client is and “why” he looks for trafficked prostitution (a detailed presentation of the results of this tool is given below in Chap. 8)

The empirical collection of information was conducted in a similar way in each country by the different national researchers involved, to make the results as comparable as possible. There are obviously differences originating from the environmental and political factors peculiar to each country under investigation. As a consequence, while there is a tendency towards a certain degree of uniformity in the methodological approach among the research teams of the three Western European countries, the same cannot be said about Romania. The latter Eastern European country makes a special and interesting case from a scientific point of view in light of its legislation and recent history mostly as source, transit as well as to a much lesser extent, destination country of trafficked prostitution. Thus, the Romanian team focused its attention on fewer clients of prostitution in general as well as mainly native Romanian prostitutes, pimps and their related criminal networks. The reader, in each chapter devoted to the analysis of the national situation, will find more specific information and the national peculiarities of the research methods used by the researchers in that country.

3.4 Limits of the Research

When the research started, a long debate occurred amongst the research team regarding possible different strategies to conduct it. One thing was certain: almost nothing similar had ever been done in Europe before and the field was completely uncharted. For this reason, apart from interviews, the most suitable choices appeared to be an Internet questionnaire and an Internet ethnographic approach that could cast some light on this research area and could try to give a preliminary picture of the client population. However, also in this case there is no claim to give the final image of the punters of trafficked prostitution within the countries considered, because even if the number of forumers was higher than for interviews, it cannot either be considered to be fully representative of the entire population of men who use to meet trafficked prostitutes.

In addition, another difficulty of the research shall not be concealed: the difficulty in distinguishing precisely between a client of “common” and a client of “trafficked” prostitution. In fact, these two segments of the sex market tend to overlap and even punters do not always identify (or do not care to identify) if a woman is victim of trafficking or not.

However, all these data-gathering techniques provided a first, albeit blurred but useful, picture of the demand for sexual services from foreigners and trafficked persons to start a more accurate discussion on it and, hopefully, to orient further, and more precise, future research in the field.

Part II
**Results from the Fieldwork in Italy,
Netherlands, Romania and Sweden**

Chapter 4

Innocent When You Dream

Clients and Trafficked Women in Italy

Andrea Cauduro, Andrea Di Nicola, Chiara Fonio, Andrea Nuvoloni,
and Paolo Ruspini¹

4.1 Introduction

Over the past twenty years in Italy, the phenomenon of trafficked prostitution has grown producing an increase in criminality and social insecurity. In this regard, some pieces of research have been conducted to explore the phenomenon and suggest possible areas of intervention.² However, current studies have focused only on “one side of the coin”, i.e. the supply for trafficked sex, neglecting its demand.

This chapter presents the results of the first exploratory study conducted in the country on clients of trafficked prostitution. In particular, the work has tried to answer the two core questions: *Who are the clients of trafficked prostitution in Italy* (i.e. age, social background, occupation, education) and (above all) *if they do look for this segment of the overall sex market what is the rationale behind it*.

To achieve these goals, the research team adopted a double approach aimed to collect information through virtual ethnography (i.e. analysis of specialized Web forums which punters use to meet and share opinions on their status of clients) and a “standard” qualitative approach (vis-à-vis interviews with clients). The standard/virtual approach was chosen because of the invisibility of the phenomenon and the correlated men’s reluctance to share such intimate details of their sexual lives.

The first part of the study foresaw a *static* participation in the Web forums through the reading of various posts inserted by participants. Later, there was a *dynamic* contribution with the stimulation of discussions on trafficking. Finally, there was also the advertisement of an anonymous Internet questionnaire, the results of which are presented in Chap. 8.

¹The various sections of the present Chapter can be attributed to their authors as follows: Andrea Cauduro: 4.1, 4.4.1, 4.4.1.1 and 4.4.2.1; Andrea Di Nicola: 4.2, 4.3.2 and 4.5; Chiara Fonio: *Network factors, Network influence and individual reasons, The review area* of section 4.4.2.2; Andrea Nuvoloni: 4.4.1.2 and 4.4.2.2; Paolo Ruspini: 4.3.1 and 4.5.

²Among others see Aghatise, 2004; Biffi, 2004; Carchedi, Picciolini, Mottura and Campani, 2000; Ciconte, 2005; Danna, 2004; Di Nicola, 2004; Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano, 2006; Donadel and Martini, 2004; IOM, 1996; Neirotti, 2002; Savona, et al., 2003; Savona, Decarli and Di Nicola, 2002.

After this phase, on the basis of the obtained results, a scheme for a semi-structured interview was elaborated and through a snowball technique and a gatekeeper, it was possible to contact and interview 16 customers in order to collect further details.

As stated above, in this regard, an important caveat must be made: in fact, due to the exploratory nature of the present work, it is not the aim of this study to provide a final profile of the Italian client of trafficked prostitution. However, the research presented here is an attempt to broaden knowledge on trafficking in Italy and (above all) stimulate further studies in this brand new area.

4.2 Trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation in Italy

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation have considerably evolved in Italy since the 1990s, when the scenario of Italian prostitution has significantly varied, mainly as a consequence of the economic crises that involved several Eastern European countries (in particular Albania) and which led to massive emigration flows towards the Peninsula.³ Criminal organizations smelt the business and stepped in. The result was that the Italian sex market underwent a major transformation: local prostitutes were rapidly replaced with women from Albania, other Eastern European countries and also Nigeria.

Italy has thus become one of the most pre-eminent European States of destination and transit for victims of trafficking with the aim of sexual exploitation. *“Its geographical position and the instability characterizing all the countries close to the Balkan area, make it both a suitable final destination and a transit point for illegal flows directed towards other European countries”* (Viero, 2002: 4). Points of access into Italian territory are areas that are particularly vulnerable to illegal entry both by land and sea: the Italian-Slovenian border, the Adriatic coasts, and in particular, more and more, the coasts of Puglia and Sicily. There are also reported cases of entry by air at large and small airports (e.g. Fiumicino airport in Rome). The routes used are very flexible. For instance, the classic one through the Otranto channel has changed since 2003, as a result of closer investigative and judicial cooperation between Albania and Italy and the new radars installed to identify and intercept speedboats; therefore traffickers modified their modus operandi. Victims are often hidden in trucks which cross the channel on regular ferries, or traffickers smuggle them into Greece and then to Italy with fake documents on ferry lines. The routes from Albania to the North through the Balkan States are also exploited with more frequency. What is certain and true, for Italy as for other European

³ See e.g. Barjaba and Perrone, 1997; Ciconte, 2005; De Guttry and Pagani, 1999; IOM Kosovo, 2002; Migration Information Program, 1996; Monzini, Pastore and Sciortino, 2004; Norzi and Vergano, 2003.

countries, is that the new geopolitical scenarios after Schengen treaty are rapidly modifying the roles of several nations, as origin, transit or destination together with the shape of the routes themselves.⁴

Traffickers bring the victims into the country both legally – or apparently so (e.g. using false or forged identity and travel documents) – and illegally (e.g. the so-called journeys of hope). This can happen both with or without the consent of the victim. Foreign ethnic organizations (primarily Albanian, Nigerian, Chinese, Russian and Romanian) almost have a monopoly on trafficking, although they may collude with Italian groups or single individuals. These ethnic criminal groups display different levels of organization: they may constitute real and proper criminal networks able to supply services ranging from transport to illegal entry and residence, or they may carry out only simple and isolated activities in the trafficking and exploitation chain: e.g. the *passeurs* who facilitate only the crossing of borders.⁵

The combined effect of these causes and of the trafficking activities of these criminal actors is that the sex market of foreign women in Italy today is divided into two main segments. On the one hand, Eastern European women coming from countries such as Albania, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Romania, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria and on the other, African women mainly from Nigeria.⁶ More recently Chinese trafficked prostitution seems to be on the rise, especially in cities such as Milan and Rome and this could be a possible indicator of a new trend in the composition of the sex market (e.g. Gargasole, 2005; Rotondo, 2002). The ages of the victims vary between 18 and 25, with minors coming above all from Eastern Europe (see e.g. Tampep, 2004: 117).

As far as recruitment is concerned, victims are generally contacted personally by their traffickers and convinced to migrate. It is clear, however, that a significant number of them are aware of what they will do in Italy, while some of them are deceived with false promises of jobs or marriage;⁷ that is to say that a growing number of victims know that they are going to prostitute themselves in Italy. However, this does not mean that they do not undergo sexual exploitation by their traffickers and pimps and that they exercise their will in a complete voluntary and free manner.

Trafficked prostitution in Italy is mainly performed outdoors. This is likely a consequence of the Italian prostitution policy – the so-called Legge Merlin of 1958 still in force – that, while tolerating the exercise of prostitution, explicitly prohibits the running of brothels. In addition, since the 1970s, Italian prostitutes have shifted

⁴ Andreani and Raviv, 2004; Barjaba and Perrone, 1997; Carchedi and Orfano, 2007; Ciconte, 2005; De Guttry and Pagani, 1997; Di Nicola, 2004; Donadel and Martini, 2004; Monzini, Pastore and Sciortino, 2004; Rahmani, 2004; Tampep International Foundation, 2004.

⁵ Di Nicola, 2004; Savona, Decarli and Di Nicola, 2002; Savona et al., 2003; Surtees, 2008.

⁶ Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano, 2006: 86; Carchedi, Picciolini, Mottura and Campani, 2000; Ciconte, 2005.

⁷ Bopp, 2004; Ciconte, 2005; Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano, 2006; Donadel and Martini, 2004.

into private apartments, while mainly drug-addicted Italian women began to operate on the streets (Biffi, 2004). According to Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano (2006: 86), today 75% of trafficked women are exploited on the streets, while the remaining 25% are indoors. Notwithstanding the clear preponderance of the outdoor supply of sex, some studies stressed how several women (especially Albanians) quickly leave the streets, probably moving into apartments (Bedin and Donadel, 2007: 103–104; Tampep International Foundation, 2004: 114; Donadel and Martini, 2004: 183–193), a trend also confirmed by the men interviewed for this research.

How vast is the market of trafficked victims for prostitution? Some attempts to calculate the actual number of victims in Italy have been made. First, research studies by Parsec-University of Florence (Carchedi et al., 2000) have shown that the number of trafficked women can be estimated by extrapolating a sub-set of the population of foreign prostitutes calculated on the basis of empirical research. The numbers of trafficked women estimated by Parsec University ranged from 1,453–1,858 (min.) to 1,942–2,216 (max.) for 1996, and from 1,103 (min.) to 1,446 (max.) for 1998.

More recently, Transcrime (Savona, Decarli and Di Nicola, 2002) have proposed a quantification of both the number of women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and the turnover of traffickers and exploiters. In particular, Transcrime has produced:

- an estimate of the annual number of trafficking victims
- an estimate of the annual Turnover from the sale of the Women trafficked among criminal organizations (these are profits of the criminals who transfer foreign nationals from one country to another in order to supply prostitutes to exploiters in the destination countries) (TW)
- an estimate of the annual Turnover derived from the sexual Exploitation of the women trafficked (TE)

According to this study, the actual number of victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Italy during the period from 6 March 1998 to 31 December 2000 is between a minimum of 7,260 and a maximum of 14,520. The average annual number of victims therefore varied (for the period from 1999 to 2000) from a minimum of 2,640 to a maximum of 5,280. The estimate of TW for the period 1999–2000, for each year, varied from € 2,640,000–5,280,000 to € 36,960,000–73,920,000, and the estimation of the annual TE, between 1999 and 2000, from € 380,160,000–760,320,000 to € 475,200,000–950,400,000.

An even more recent piece of research was carried out by Transcrime in 2005 monitoring the situation in Italy (Di Nicola, Orfano, Cauduro and Conci, 2005). Estimates were based on official information provided by the Department of Equal Opportunities regarding the temporary stay permits issued to victims of trafficking (Ivi: 94). Table 4.1 presents these estimates.

If these are the numbers of foreigners who are trafficked towards Italy every year to be involved in the sex markets and of the related turnover of traffickers, one can

Table 4.1 Annual estimate of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Italy. March 2000–March 2004

Year	Min.	Max.
2000–2001	17,550	35,500
2001–2002	18,360	36,720
2002–2003	17,970	35,940
2003–2004	19,710	39,420

Source: Transcrime on data of the Italian Department for Equal Opportunities

imagine the extent of the related demand for sex services by foreigners. Our main task in this chapter is then to better describe the relationship between this *demand* and the *supply* of sexual services by trafficked foreign victims.

4.3 Legislation and Policies in Italy

4.3.1 National Legislation and Policies on Immigration⁸

The Italian experience of immigration differs from that of the traditional countries of immigration in Europe. Italian colonial history was, in fact, very short and did not shape immigration as it occurred in those countries. Italy is undoubtedly the most relevant example of the “Mediterranean model of migration” which encompasses Spain, Greece and Portugal (even though the latter is not strictly a Mediterranean country and decolonization fuelled to a certain extent its recent immigration history). All of these countries experienced strong emigration in the past and still a large number of their citizens live abroad. Furthermore, these countries became mostly countries of immigration at the end of the 1970s when the Northern European states fully adopted restrictive immigration policies, and the factors fuelling their own mass emigration had been exhausted (Caritas, 2003).

Migrants from underdeveloped countries started to enter Italy in the mid-1970s (there were 156,179 legally resident foreigners in 1971). The migratory inflow became important only during the second half of the 1980s, when it was estimated at more than 100,000 people per year. The immigrant population has almost doubled every ten years to date. On 1 January 2007, foreigners present have been estimated at almost 4 million (Blangiardo, 2008).

Few migrants entered Italy holding a work or stay permit.⁹ Its short history as a receiving country is marked by five amnesties (1986–88, 1990, 1995–96, 1998 and 2002) involving about 1.5 million people. With respect to the countries of origin of immigrants, the data reflects a variegated population, made up of numerous different nationalities, some represented by substantial numbers, others more modest.

⁸This section is a revised and updated writing of Ruspini, 2005.

⁹Most of the ‘irregular’ residents entered legally with a tourist visa or for work and their legal justification for residence subsequently expired.

On 1 January 2007, the first nationality, namely Albanians, accounted for 12.8 of the foreign resident population in Italy, followed closely by Moroccans 11.7% and Romanians 11.6%.¹⁰ These are the only three groups to reach double figures. None of the other national groups reaches 10%, though the fast increasing presence of Ukrainians should be considered as well as that of Chinese, Filipinos and Tunisians (Blangiardo, 2006). As far as religion affiliation is concerned, the recent estimates made by the ISMU Foundation (Scalon, 2008) show that the majority are Christians (50.1%), slightly more than a third are Muslims (36.7) and less than one in ten (7.0%) belong to Eastern or other religions. It should be noted that Muslims are not only the second largest grouping but also the fastest growing.

The foreign community is not distributed uniformly throughout Italy. About 65% of the legally present foreigners are currently found in the Northern and 23% in the Central areas of Italy (Blangiardo, 2008). The marginal presence of immigrants resident in the Southern regions and in the islands is correlated to the potential demand in the labour markets of the Northern areas, both in industry and agriculture. This attraction is further confirmed by the distribution of permits according to type. Of the total, 58.9% of residence permits are granted for work and the figure increases appreciably in the Northern areas, where another 60% of permits are issued for this reason. Moreover, a substantial proportion of the other motives are familial. The flow that produces them is secondary, at least in the first phase of settlement, and prevalently concerns females, especially in the case of citizens from countries of the Southern shores of the Mediterranean (Blangiardo and Farina, 2003). The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the current legislation and public policies for immigrants in Italy.

The bulk of the legislation that governs immigration and integration matters in Italy is the result of the conflation of two laws dating back to 1998 (law 286/98, i.e. Turco-Napolitano) and 2002 (law 189/2002, i.e. Bossi-Fini). From the early 1980s, at the beginning of the migratory flows to Italy, the migratory system was marked by a strong demand for foreign workers (from the informal economies, families and small- and medium-sized companies) and, at the same time, by the absence of real possibilities of legal entry. Irregular entry has become an endemic factor in the Italian immigration history. The majority of immigrants presently in Italy have undergone a period of irregularity at one point or the other of their migratory experience. Until very recently, and even today to a certain extent, Italian policy has mainly concentrated on managing the “back door” of illegal entry (Sciortino, 2000).

A planned quota system was introduced only in 1998 with the adoption of the first organic law (no. 40/1998) to address immigration in a comprehensive way. The quota must be determined by one or more annual decrees (family reunifications are outside the quotas). The Consolidated Act of 1998 introduced the job-seeker visa, which provided for the allocation of an annual quota of residence permits to people in search of a job.¹¹ The Bossi-Fini law (no. 189/2002) significantly modified

¹⁰Own elaboration based on Blangiardo, 2008.

¹¹Such workers could enter the country sponsored by private individuals, regions, municipalities and associations listed in a register. Sponsors had to deposit a guarantee, demonstrate a sufficient income, offer decent accommodation and pay the contributions for public health insurance.

the framework for immigration by repealing the sponsorship mechanism and embodying the rigid principle that immigrants cannot enter to look for work but can enter only if they already have work. Thus, this law tightened the relationship between work contract and employment on the one hand, and the residence permit on the other.

The residence permit for work is made dependent on a combined employment and residence contract (*contratto di soggiorno-lavoro*). The residence permit cannot last longer than the contract – not more than nine months for seasonal workers, one year for temporary workers and two years for non-temporary workers. It can only be renewed for the same time (and no longer for double the time, as used to be the case). A worker who loses his job and becomes unemployed has the right to be registered in the job placement lists and to legally reside in the territory for six months (not for one year as used to be the case under the previous law) with a legal residence permit.

Family reunification is immediately possible for holders of at least a one-year renewable visa. Family members have the right to work. The 2002 law restricted parents' right to reunification. They are entitled to family reunification only if they can prove that no other child can provide for them in the native country. Six years of documented residence was required to be entitled to receive a permanent residence card (five years under the 1998 law). This provision became overtly in contradiction with the 2003 directive of the Council of the European Union (CEU) concerning long-term resident third country nationals who are granted a permanent status after 5 years (CEU, 2004). The Prodi government, elected in April 2006, approved two legislative decrees (3/2007 and 5/2007) which abide by the above EU directive and smoothes access to family reunification.

The issue of a supplementary decree to the Bossi-Fini law provided for *measures of legalization* (no. 195 of 9 September 2002), which resulted in the massive immigrant amnesty that Italy has adopted to date. When the deadline expired (11 November 2002), over 700,000 applications to “regularize” residence had been presented. About half the applications were for domestic workers and the other half for other jobs in dependent employment. Because of the length of time involved in processing the applications, from 2003 there were hundreds of thousands of foreigners illegally present in Italy but awaiting “regularization”. A primary challenge was to define their legal status, in part due to possible changes in their employment position. For instance, many people-minders were already unemployed due to the death of the person assisted, and so without the work which they applied to regularize in 2002.

Precariousness is one of the most troubling aspects of the situation created by the rules introduced in 2002. Critics have insisted greatly on the “precariousness” caused by a marked reduction in the average duration of residence permits, as well as the marked preference of the Italian government for allowing foreigners in only as seasonal workers. In particular, those who lose their jobs had great difficulty in finding new employment in time to renew their permits, while many “seasonal” workers tend to overstay. This could lead, in the fairly short term, to the formation of another sizeable group of foreigners without residence permits. This outcome,

clearly in contrast with the stated objectives of the law, also stems from the protracted inability to offer reasonable and timely opportunities for regular entries through decrees programming the flows of immigrants, despite a steady demand for foreign workers.

The gap between planned legal quotas and demand for immigrant labour continuously reproduces a large strata of illegal immigrants. Legalization programs have thus become a substitute for an active policy of legal entry.

As far as immigrant integration is concerned, the Italian model seems to be inspired by a pragmatic and realistic principle. The law-making process in Italy sought to benefit from the shortcomings of other models of integration adopted in European countries that had already experienced immigration processes of their own. The Single Act (law 286/98) and other bills aimed at embodying what can be defined as a “reasonable model of integration” (Zincone, 2001). The model singled out two main goals of integration policies: (1) low conflict interaction between nationals and immigrant minorities and (2) respect of immigrants’ personal integrity. Each of the two main political goals to be achieved can in turn be divided into two sub-goals: (1) low conflict through (a) safety and security measures meant to reassure Italian citizens and (b) pluralism and communication measures meant to produce mutual respect and understanding; (2) integrity through (a) full rights for legal immigrants and (b) basic rights for illegal immigrants (Zincone, 2001).

At the operational level, the Single Act envisaged that measures for “social and cultural integration” are included in a 3-year planning document on migratory policies to be drawn by the Cabinet. The 1998 framework law created a variety of actors at all levels in implementing the national strategy. The reorganization of the Italian ministries and sub-ministries over the past years has meant that some of the governmental institutions that pass and implement policy have changed or have not been reinstated. In general, all the existing bodies, especially the local organizations, are charged with publicizing their role and providing information on integration measures. Specific initiatives may be developed at the local level for women and second-generation migrants, based on identified needs. The local strategies promoted by adult education services, and less frequently by municipal and provincial authorities, provide language and cultural training, but without any benchmark so that the structure is decided by the promoter (Chaloff, 2003).

Over and above central and local power institutions, the Italian legislation framework on immigration confirms the important role of the “third sector” and the trade unions together with a minor involvement of immigrants associations in providing support and integration to immigrants.

Mixed marriages and naturalizations show slightly different trends in Italy. The Italian Institute of Statistics (Istat) reported about 28,000 mixed marriages in 2004, which represent 10.4% of total marriages, in comparison to 3.2% in 1992. Their frequency is higher in the Northern regions where the process of integration is more advanced, and lower in Southern regions which are usually a point of entry from which migrants later move on (Caritas, 2003). Furthermore, other non-official data show a rocketing increase in 10 years of mixed couples living together, i.e. from 65,000 in 1991 to around 600,000 in 2006 (Polchi, 2007).

The 2002 immigration law did not alter the Single Act provisions concerning pluralism and communication measures. Respect for cultural diversity has been recognized, the use of cultural mediators and the promotion of multicultural programs have been overall funded and support for the learning of the language of the country of origin was provided. Furthermore, the law promoted communication measures by providing special support for learning the host language, i.e. Italian, in schools and in special classes for adult migrants. There is, however, a striking imbalance in the way national funds have been allocated to date if one compares the ratio of financial support for expatriation with that for integration. The Italian authorities currently spend approximately 180 million euro a year to send illegal immigrants back home and only 40 million on integration policies (Adnkronos, 2006).¹²

Lastly, in compliance with the provisions of the Single Act (Article 18), victims of human trafficking, forced prostitutes in particular, are allowed to receive a special residence permit for reasons of social protection, i.e. to remove them from the violence and obligations of criminal organizations and to help them take part in assistance and social-integration programs. Noteworthy is the role played by the NGOs in the promotion and drafting of these provisions (Ruspini, 2000).

4.3.2 National Legislation and Policies on Trafficking in Women¹³

This section aims at linking the above description of the framework for immigration in Italy with an overview of the legislation and policies on prostitution and trafficking in women. Outdoor and indoor prostitution are not prohibited, but running a brothel is explicitly prohibited in Italy. Nevertheless, prostitution is not officially considered a profession and prostitutes do not enjoy either the rights of workers nor social security benefits. Law no. 75 of 1958, “Cancellation of regulations on prostitution and the fight against exploitation of prostitution” (known as “Legge Merlin”, after the senator who proposed it), abolished the *regulationism* model that was established in 1861.

In Italy, prostitution has always been a “hot” issue that is periodically discussed in the media and by the public at local and national level. Some of the offences provided by the Merlin Law have caused and still cause a lot of discussion as they are considered outdated as well as a violation of the rights either of the prostitute

¹²One further legislative mechanism adopted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign affairs to counter illegal immigration following the example of other EU member states, are the ‘readmission agreements’ for illegal immigrants, especially with the countries of origin of the main flows (Eastern Europe and North Africa). The implementation of this mechanism affected thousands of non-EU female citizens, mainly Albanians, involved in prostitution.

¹³This updated section draws originally from Di Nicola, Orfano, Cauduro and Conci, 2005.

or the client. For instance, the criminalization of those who favour the prostitution of another person is much disputed since, under this provision, it is possible to punish a client who drives a prostitute to her/his place of work and who permits her/him to change clothes inside his car.

Following the same reasoning, prostitutes who live and share costs with other prostitutes or with a partner can be punished. These scenarios are less common nowadays but they are strongly dependent on the interpretation of the Merlin law by judges.

The significant number of bill proposals on prostitution sitting in Parliament mirrors the constant interest towards this issue. The approaches proposed greatly differ, but they are generally aimed at regulating prostitution through the legalization of its outdoor and/or indoor forms.

In the 2001–2006 legislature, the Bossi-Fini-Prestigiacomo bill proposal (no. 3826/2003) was the most debated, even though it never entered into force. This bill proposal intended to amend some parts of the Merlin Law and to fight street prostitution as “the most serious offences of sexual exploitation [that] are committed in this place”.

Article 1 of the bill, in fact, prohibited the exercise of prostitution in a public place. Violation of this article would be punishable with a fine or arrest for up to 15 days of the prostitute, while the client would have to pay a fine, which would cancel or limit the application of the prostitution crime of aiding and abetting. Assistance between prostitutes and the rent of apartments for the purpose of prostitution would be no longer considered acts that favour the exploitation of prostitution. Furthermore, this bill intended to allow condominium regulations to limit or prohibit the exercise of prostitution within their own premises. Finally, this proposal did not mention medical checks for prostitutes, but it advanced that, in case of a death or grievous bodily harm as a result of a sexual illness, the judge should assess whether the prostitute was negligent as to her/his health controls.

According to its opponents, Bill no. 3826 was a repressive law that did not provide a clear definition of prostitution, listing a whole series of obligations prostitutes should fulfil without being entitled to any rights. It was considered discriminatory and thus unconstitutional since prostitutes and clients would have been punished differently even though they behaved the same way (Tampep International Foundation, 2004). It also failed to appropriately address the phenomenon of trafficking. In fact, critics stated that the application of this bill proposal would have led victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation to re-victimization as the result of their confinement in hidden places and the enforcement of their immediate expulsion as illegal immigrants without verifying if they were actually victims and, thus, without complying with the tenets of Article 18 of the Consolidated Act on immigration.

There are a number of provisions of the Merlin law that foresee further repressive measures. Article 4 of the Merlin law modified the Articles 531 and 536 of the Criminal Code. A person is punishable if he/she operates brothels, rents out a building for purpose of prostitution, regularly tolerates the exercise of prostitution, recruits and facilitates prostitution, persuades somebody to prostitute herself/himself,

induces somebody to move herself/himself to exercise prostitution, works in a national or international association committed to the recruitment of persons in order to exploit them for prostitution, favours or exploits the prostitution of another person. This article provides for many different offences (or, at least, different situations) the same punishment: the imprisonment of 2–6 years and a fine. The penalty can be doubled if there are specific aggravating circumstances (Article 5, L.75/58).

As mentioned earlier, favouring the prostitution of another person means facilitating the overall exercise of prostitution. The conviction of these cases of favouring depends on the interpretation made by the judges. Soliciting in a public place was considered a crime, but from 1999 it is punishable only as an administrative offence. Law no. 269 of 1998 modifies the Criminal Code prohibiting juvenile prostitution as well as tourist operations intended to exploit minors. Prohibited activities include organizing or publicizing travel to procure persons for the purposes of prostitution that harms juveniles in any way. Punishment for such offences ranges from 6 to 12 years of imprisonment and a fine.

The Italian Parliament passed its first law to specifically punish trafficking in 2003. Law no. 228/2003, “Measures against trafficking in persons”, defines and covers all forms of (internal and cross border) trafficking for different types of exploitation, slavery and servitude. It also specifies the elements of the crime (violence, abuse of authority, profiting from a situation of physical or psychological inferiority of the other person, etc.). Offenders may be punished by imprisonment for a period from 8 to 20 years and the compulsory confiscation of profits derived from their illicit trafficking activities which will be used to establish a “Fund for anti-trafficking measures”.

In this regard, Law no. 228 of 2003 modified the Criminal Code and introduced the offence of “reducing to or keeping in slavery or servitude” (Article 600), “trafficking in persons” (Article 601) and renewed the provision related to “trading in slaves” (Article 602) (Di Nicola, 2004; Fachile, Nicodemi, Conti Nibali and Alteri, 2007).

4.4 Clients and Their Attitudes Towards Trafficked Women in Italy

4.4.1 Who are the Clients and What are Their Relations with Trafficked Women?

The following paragraphs present the results of the research activities that aimed to explore the figure of the client as emerged by the interviews with punters and in the Internet analysis. In particular, attention has been paid to investigate *who* the client is (age, education, marital status, etc.) and *why* he looks for this segment of the market, relying on *individual*, *network* and *environmental* pushing factors (see Chap. 3).

4.4.1.1 Who are the Clients as Emerged by the vis-à-vis Interviews?

As illustrated above, thanks to a gatekeeper, it was possible to organize some *vis-à-vis* interviews in the Verona area with 16 men over two days. In this regard, it must be borne in mind that, because of the exploratory nature of the study, the sample of interviewed people is limited and cannot be considered representative of the entire Italian population of clients of prostitution. However, these results together with the Internet analysis (forums and Web questionnaire) provide a first picture of Italian punters of trafficked prostitution. Consulted people ranged from 20 to 58 mainly from Southern Italy and working in small construction companies in Northern Italy. Unlike the clients active on the Web, this group of men did not use information technology. The interviews were conducted over two days with two different groups of men. Some of them were habitual clients of prostitutes, while others had only some sporadic contacts (above all when younger), but were non-habitual clients at present time. This difference led to a division of the sample into two sub-groups: (1) habitual clients of foreign prostitutes and (2) non-habitual clients of prostitution. The main characteristics of the two groups are described below.

Habitual Clients

A number of interviewed men were habitual clients of foreign prostitutes who offered cheaper sexual services than Italians, who spoke little Italian and who showed signs of violence on their bodies. Therefore, according to the methodology used, they were likely to have a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with trafficked prostitution. These men were mostly employed in the construction sector as carpenters or masons. Their education, in contrast to clients active in Web forums, was low or very low. The vast majority came from Southern Italy and moved to the Verona area because of lack of jobs in their native cities where they left their wives/partners. This peculiarity seemed to play a determinant role in the search for prostitution when away from home. As far as the age was concerned, interviewed men ranged from 23 to 50 and were mainly concentrated in their late 30s and 40s. Unlike data collected on the Internet, a significant number of the men had a wife/partner and some of them stated they had one or more children. Another difference that was noticed was with regard to education, because the interviewees had a lower education than men who filled in the Internet questionnaire. Summarizing the information provided by the interviewees (see Table 4.2), one noticed a substantial similarity with details collected on the Internet. In particular:

- As far as nationality was concerned, customers used to meet foreign prostitutes mainly from Eastern Europe (Romania, Russia and other former USSR countries) and Africa (mainly from Nigeria)
- As far as the language was concerned, they reported that foreign prostitutes spoke poor Italian (enough to “make people understand” what they say)

Table 4.2 Features of habitual clients of foreign prostitution as emerged by in-depth interviews

Inter- view ID	Age	Marital status	Client of foreign prostitutes	Job	Favourite prostitutes	Perception of violence and exploi- tation	Favourable to the reopening of brothels
1	38	n.a. ¹⁴	Yes	Construction entrepreneur	Eastern Europeans	Yes	Yes
2	34	Married	Yes	Carpenter	No preferences	Yes	Yes
3	38	Separated	Yes	Construction entrepreneur	Eastern Europeans	Yes	Yes
8	39	Common-law husband	Yes	Mason	Eastern Europeans	Yes	Yes
9	50	Common-law husband	Yes	Construction entrepreneur	No preferences	Yes	Yes
10	46	n.a.	Yes	Carpenter	No preferences	Yes	Yes
11	23	Single	Yes	Carpenter	Eastern Europeans	Yes	n.a.
12	40	n.a.	Yes	Carpenter	n.a.	Yes	Yes
13	n.a.	n.a.	Yes	Cook	Eastern Europeans	Yes	Partially

Source: Elaboration of data collected through in-depth interviews

¹⁴Not available.

- As far as violence was concerned, they stated that some prostitutes (above all the African ones) showed cigarettes burns and bruises on their arms and legs
- Finally, as far as price was concerned, they stated that foreign prostitutes normally offered cheaper performances when compared to Italian ones (around a half of the price)

Unlike the forum users, the interviewed men used to have more frequent meetings with foreign prostitutes (generally twice per month); while as far as the place of their rendezvous was concerned, interviewees pointed out that they used to solicit prostitutes on the streets and then moved to private apartments. This indication seems to be in line with what emerged in the Internet survey, where no man indicated the street as a place for the sexual encounters. As stated above, more research should be conducted in this field to understand if this is a common trend in the overall Italian sex market.

Coming now to a closer comment, a few details about the sex market in the Verona area emerged from the discussion. First, a clear division into three main ethnic groups was made: (1) African women, (2) Eastern European women and (3) South American transsexuals. Customers observed in particular how African women work during the day, while Eastern Europeans and South Americans are active during the night.

As far as the offer of transsexuals was concerned, the interviewed clients unanimously preferred women and had no interest in them. Furthermore, the majority of them had a clear preference for Eastern Europeans, because African women were considered “dirty”, “more exploited” and “cold”. In this regard, punters stressed that Eastern Europeans used to show “affection” and “comprehension”, therefore

establishing a kind of relationship with the client who feels he is welcomed and somehow taken into consideration by prostitutes (see Sect. 4.4.2.1).

As far as language was concerned, a number of men stated that prostitutes normally do not speak Italian very well, even though they are able to understand/make understand the fundamental words concerning their work. In this regard, customers pointed out a difference between Eastern Europeans and Africans, because the former tend to speak better Italian than the latter.

The interviewed men noticed also signs of violence on women, because they detected cigarettes burns and bruises on legs and arms of the prostitutes they met; finally, a common perception of a higher rate of violence on African women emerged from the interviews.

As far as price was concerned, customers pointed out some trends in the market. Firstly, they noticed a general difference with Southern Italy where the cost of living is noticeably lower than the Northern part of the country.

Secondly, they noticed that locals normally work in apartments and offer their service starting from 100 euros, while foreign women are normally available on the streets and cost around 50 euros. Finally, a few interviewees also indicated some price differences between Africans and Eastern Europeans, the former being cheaper than the latter.

Through the interviews with men, we also tried to understand their perception of the exploitative criminal organizations behind trafficked prostitutes. The scenario that emerged was of a general awareness about exploitation and trafficking. In this regard, some clients were well informed about the phenomenon e.g. thanks to TV reportage or newspapers. However, this general awareness went together with a strong minimization of the exploitation. In fact, customers generally declared that prostitutes had to work for a pimp, but were able to earn a lot of money in a very short time.

One peculiar aspect was pointed out by a client. In fact, he justified his choice of trafficked prostitution as a form of help in favour of women:

“I’ll tell you something: between an exploited girl and a ‘free’ one, I choose the exploited one. Because a girl who’s being exploited has to give money to her pimp, otherwise she’ll be beaten. The others, when they’ve earned enough they stop working. The exploited ones no: even when they don’t want to work, they have to stay there and if they don’t pay the pimp they’re beaten [...] If you think about it, you notice it is more a help than anything else. We all know they’re exploited, so it’s better to go with them, otherwise they’ll be slaughtered!” (Interview no. 8).

Connected to the issue of exploitation, it must be pointed out that over the last few decades the debate has risen and become a very hot argument (Danna, 2004: 165–185). For this reason, through the interviews, we also tried to monitor clients’ attitude towards national policy on prostitution. The results clearly indicate that the majority of them were in favour of the reopening of houses of prostitution. In this regard, brothels were seen positively because they appeared to be able to guarantee medical protection, hygiene and privacy for clients. Furthermore, they were considered effective tools to reduce (or eliminate) pimp

exploitation and break the trafficking chain. Finally, brothels were believed to be able to remove prostitutes from the streets, thus reducing social disorder and car accidents. In addition, some clients declared they were in favour of the regularization of prostitution for fiscal reasons because in their opinion women should pay taxes on the incomes of their work. As far as the last two points are concerned, the client's opinion was often affected by the considerations about exploitation and earnings described above.

Non-Habitual Clients

The second part of the group was made up of non-habitual clients of prostitution in general. This segment of men mainly had a few experiences with prostitutes in their younger days but not at the present, in particular if they were married. Some of them admitted they had sporadic contacts with foreign prostitutes but the number and frequency of these rendezvous was too low to consider them as habitual clients.

Notwithstanding their "non-choice" of prostitution, these men lived in the same environment as the habitual clients, being their colleagues and sharing much time and many experiences with them therefore their perception of exploitation and the reasons for the non-choice were examined.

As mentioned, these persons were mainly colleagues and friends of the previously interviewed habitual customers. Therefore, they principally came from Southern Italy and worked in the construction sector. Their ages ranged from 20 to 58 and also in this case, a number of them were married with one or more children.

Questions on the perception of exploitation were posed and the majority of them were aware of the harsh conditions foreign prostitutes are subjected to. This awareness was both the fruits of their personal experience and/or what they had heard from the habitual customers' stories.

"I think what they do is wrong. This thing of trafficking Whites and Blacks to exploit them. It's a shame in my opinion" (Interview no. 6).

"All of them are exploited. They can't do anything else. Only very few of them do it freely, because they have their own homes and are regular. The fact is that the vast majority of them are illegal immigrants, so pimps offer them a place to live, etcetera and prostitutes pay for these services" (Interview no. 15).

The discussion was also focused on brothels and in this case too the majority were in favour of their reopening. Similarly to habitual clients, this portion of the group perceived houses of prostitution as effective tools to reduce/eliminate exploitation and a good system to avoid the social disorder that derives from street prostitution.

"I think they should be reopened. [...] More cleanliness all round. I mean you could walk along the streets without seeing this mess all around! It's not nice to see all this mess when you go out for a walk with your wife or girlfriend" (Interview no. 7).

“At the moment, there are pimps who provide clients, etcetera. If you had free brothels you wouldn’t need a pimp any longer. [...] We [clients] know where to go and we’re aware it is a protected and controlled place. Now you spend 30 on the street, but you don’t know what happens. It would be better to pay 50 in a brothel, but 50 guaranteed. In addition, I’ve heard that such a system is already present in other more developed countries” (Interview no. 15).

Table 4.3 presents in synthesis the main features illustrated above.

Table 4.3 Features of non-habitual clients of foreign prostitution as emerged by in-depth interviews

Interview ID	Age	Marital status	Client of foreign prostitutes	Job	Favourite prostitutes	Perception of violence	Favourable to the reopening of brothels
4	20	Single	No	Mason	n.a.	Yes	n.a.
5	33	Married	No	Mason	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
6	26	Single	Yes	Carpenter	n.a.	Yes	n.a.
7	29	n.a.	No	Carpenter	n.a.	Yes	Yes
14	n.a.	n.a.	Yes	Cook	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
15	58	Married	Yes	Restaurateur	Eastern Europeans	Yes	Yes
16	33	Married	No	Mason	n.a.	Yes	Yes

Source: Elaboration of data collected through in-depth interviews

4.4.1.2 Who are the Clients as Emerged in the Internet Analysis?

Part of our research revolved around the analysis of the Web¹⁵ with the aim of defining a profile of the Internet client of trafficked prostitution. In particular, we tried to outline the differences between the clients active on the Web analysed (CAW) and the clients of prostitutes as conventionally described in the studies on the matter.¹⁶ Eventually, we tried to understand the CAWs’ position with regard to trafficked prostitutes. While this section deals with the profile of the CAW, Sect. 4.4.2.2 focuses on the motives that drive the clients towards or away from trafficked prostitutes.

In the first of the cited studies (Monto, 1999), the client is described as ranging from 18 to 55 years old although the majority is younger (26–35 years, followed by

¹⁵To facilitate the comprehension of the broad variety of specialized websites we chose to divide the sites in three main categories: Advertising websites (bulletin boards), Escort service websites, and Forums (message boards). While Advertising websites and Escort service websites offered a few pieces of information on the typology of clients, giving way mostly to speculation about their nature, the forum analysis was by far the most exhaustive source for what concerns the comprehension of the client personality.

¹⁶Monto, 1999. To broaden the topic see also Bush, Hotaling and Monto, 2002; Grauerholz, 2000; Sawyer, Metz, Hinds and Brucker, 2001–2002; Harras, 1996; Brooks-Gordon and Gelsthorpe, 2003.

36–45 years). They are prevalently White males in full-time employment and with a high-school leaving certificate. There is not a significant majority of married men, but those who are married reported to be “pretty happy” or “not too happy” with their marriages.

The CAWs seem¹⁷ to confirm these findings: the average CAW is generally a member of the working/middle class; he has stable employment but he is not particularly satisfied with his wealth and life style. He has a secondary level education, and ranges in age from 20 to 35 years old (with a top limit of 40–45 for the seemingly oldest forum users).

In comparison to the clients described by literature and to the clients interviewed, this new generation of clients is younger and more familiar with usage of Web and forum/chat rooms. They spend a lot of time chatting, upgrading and updating their forums/Websites, and many of them reportedly contributed to the ongoing discussion from their workplaces.

With respect to clients in the majority of studies, CAWs are less likely to be married, or to have stable relationships with women. The few that admitted to having been married were particularly angered due to disastrous separations and loss of children (whose custody was granted to their mother).

They are strictly heterosexual, but they did not express any particular disapproval of homosexuality.

Whereas the client has been described as violent and more likely to endorse “rape myths”¹⁸ by some researchers, this seems not to be the case for the majority of the CAWs under investigation. Usually these men have serious difficulties in interpersonal relations with women, and although some of them reported “to loathe” women, nobody ever stressed approval of violence or coercion against women/prostitutes.

The subsequent questions brought forward by the literature under consideration were focused on the clients’ attitude towards sex: they do not consider premarital sex as being wrong but they disapprove of teen sex. Noteworthy is that part of the clients objected to extramarital sex and considered it “always wrong”.

¹⁷ It is essential for a correct understanding of the following findings to keep in mind that the Web constitutes an indirect form of communication that allows Internet users to describe themselves as they please. By no means could we ascertain the users’ identities or the truthfulness of their affirmations. We could only rely to their willingness to share their experiences with others like them, without lying about their identities.

¹⁸ Rape myths are “attitudes believed to support sexual violence against women”. According to each researcher’s personal beliefs/ideologies, the acceptance of the rape myth has been put into relation with the purchase of sex. Some studies on the subject are: Church, Henderson, Barnard and Hart, 2001; Dalla, Xia and Kennedy, 2003; Kinnell, 2001; Monto, 2004.

However, Monto and Hotaling (2001) state that within their sample “clients of prostitutes do not seem to be more likely to endorse rape myths than any other sample of men”. “Rape myth” was in fact conceived by Burt (1980) and since then significant social changes in society “have made misogyny less acceptable”. Eventually, the acceptance of rape myth was connected to violent sexuality and sexual conservatism.

The CAWs analysed concur for what concerns premarital sex and extramarital sex: they often talked about pedophiles as “degenerate” or “sick” persons. Their attitude changes towards extramarital sex: as specified above, the majority are not married, and the few that seemed to be married, never objected to frequent prostitutes while being married.

The clients conventionally described in the literature often thought about sex, from “every day” to “once to a few times a week”; unfortunately, the degree of the Internet investigation did not allow us to ascertain CAWs’ frequency of discussing sexual-related arguments.¹⁹

Furthermore, the mainstream clients usually had more than one partner a year, but reported having sex more on a monthly basis. Once again, our perspective of the CAW’s sexual life does not allow us to confirm or deny these statistics.

Ultimately, the mainstream clients reported having attended nude dancing shows and to have bought X-rated materials in the previous year.

CAWs, on the other hand, never stressed a particular interest for this kind of material.

Clients Active on the Web (CAWs) View on Trafficked Prostitution

More specifically, according to their view of trafficked prostitution, the Clients Active on the Web can be divided into: those who claim that forced prostitution does not exist and tend to minimize the phenomenon on the basis of empirical data produced by other clients who have gained a reputation among the community (the so-called opinion leaders²⁰) on the one side and those who are aware of trafficked prostitution and express their preference for escorts who are supposed to be “free” on the other side.

1. The first group includes a more classical “faction” that is made up of angry men who believe that prostitution has always existed and that prostitutes are truly the ones profiting from the needs of men, as well as a new kind of client, that is a tormented person who is victim on one side, and persecutor on the other side, in other words a man that reflects the anxieties and disorders of the new generations.

They are both convinced that foreign women always decide freely to become prostitutes instead of doing jobs that are more backbreaking. According to these men, the largest part of foreign women sell themselves at will, only a few are forced into prostitution, while exploitation is believed to be a negligible phenomenon. In fact, prostitutes have higher incomes than the majority of conventional men. Since

¹⁹Nonetheless, their perseverance and constant contribution to the Internet discussion on prostitution and related arguments let us presume of an equally high frequency.

²⁰The opinion leaders are usually administrators or regular users of websites/forums that provide different kinds of data, sometimes the results of personal research in order to prove that trafficked prostitution is not a common trend.

these prostitutes are in control of their lives and work, no abuse is configurable: They are free to decide what services to offer and if a client does not behave properly she has a variety of choices to deal with him (from simply refusing him, to going to the police and reporting that she was assaulted). Habitual/random users help foster these beliefs: They report personal experiences with prostitutes they state to be “perfectly independent”. Clients Active on the Web trust each other and “first-hand” experiences are held in the highest regard.

Notwithstanding any contrary evidence (research papers, media campaigns, etc.), these clients are ready to claim that few immigrants, sometimes minors, are the only explicit slaves; for the most part forced prostitution is deemed as an exception, far from reality.

This typology of Internet client is strongly anti-feminist and feels underestimated by society. They are convinced that modern man is targeted by society, that is women, most often feminists, and by other men too: This mistreatment is called “male-bashing”.²¹ Consequently, they maintain that “only a man can understand a man”. These clients seem to endorse the belief that men suffer from a high level of testosterone. This burden imposed by the very same Nature, causes a permanent and irreversible state of arousal; for this reason, men have the right to be satisfied by women, at no cost or agreed-in-a-contract obligation.

These men believe that going with a prostitute is humiliating because a man has to pay for something that should be free for him.

Within this group, a consistent majority presents peculiar characteristics. This “new” kind of client feels like he is induced to pay for sex. He stresses that a stable relationship could be very expensive, as expensive as sexual appointments with prostitutes. Men who are not blessed with physical attractiveness or who cannot benefit from high incomes are already out of chance with any women they like. This kind of man feels like he is no longer ahead of his own sexual life: He could choose whom to flirt with, but the final choice is always up to women. Hence, he is not avoiding obligations or the emotional attachment of a conventional relationship; he simply cannot have them in conventional ways (or he believes he cannot). When he goes with a prostitute, he seeks affection and tenderness, someone to care for, someone that does not judge him by his money or appearance. For the most part, this kind of client feels ashamed for going with a prostitute and would rather spend time with a female companion.

2. The second group includes clients who tend to deliberately avoid streetwalkers for different reasons (from trafficked prostitution to the sexual abilities of escorts). The most crucial one seems to be their knowledge of forced prostitution, which is closely connected to streetwalkers.

Even if clients did not have individual experiences with exploited girls, they frequently state that they are conscious of this issue and they do not wish to take

²¹ For a throughout explanation of “male-bashing” see Della Vecchia (2004) and the website <http://www.uomini3000.it> (last accessed 07.25.2008)

advantage of subjugated women. While they are not at all moved by moral concerns, the large majority condemns forced prostitution and prefers escorts who are perceived as free sex workers.

The perception of escorts as being completely free is due to at least three reasons. The first is “moral justification”: clients justify the fact that they arrange sexual appointments with escorts because streetwalkers are exploited. The second is related to the opportunity to chat with escorts in real-time online chats where the prostitutes give the impression of being ordinary girls who simply “like” sex. The last reason is connected to the second: escorts appreciate sex and show emotional involvement. Nobody forces them; rather it is an individual choice, which has positive impacts both on the psychology of clients as well as on the sexual skills provided by these girls. These clients are neither angry nor tormented, rather they are men who can afford the high rates of escorts and who do not disdain to pay for sex.

4.4.2 Factors that Push Clients to (or not to) Choose Trafficked Women

4.4.2.1 Clients Met for the Semi-structured Interviews

Individual Factors

The first element that emerged could be named as the *chance of trying something exotic*, because men that stressed this aspect experienced prostitution to “try something different or new” and for the “aesthetic” features of the girls. Concerning this factor, one can notice a ludic component: Men went with prostitutes to try something new, to pass some time and/or to have many different sexual partners.

In detail, a first-time client stressed the thrill for having the chance of meeting a foreigner:

“you try one because she is Black, another one because she’s Yellow, from China, Japan or Vietnam or Malaysia or from Eastern Europe like Romania, Moldova, Russia. This is the way you have experiences and then you choose this one is good, this not” (Interview no. 1).

Another man emphasized the need for something new and different from the routine:

“in my opinion there isn’t a great difference in having sex with a girl or a prostitute, so I go with prostitutes in order to try something different: to have fun. Otherwise days are always the same... and you know if you get bored, you die sooner or later” (Interview no. 9).

In addition, another interviewee stressed the “aesthetic” component:

“because I like her [...] it’s their ‘aesthetics’ I like” (Interview no. 11).

Finally, a customer made a comparison with Italian prostitutes, underlining that foreigners tend to be better because you can have just sex without much dialogue:

“Italians are slappers, we have all understood that. Foreigners make the best of a bad bargain, you can’t play a lot with a foreigner. I mean with an Italian you can joke, etcetera” (Interview no. 12).

A second element indicated by the interviews was the *physiological need for sex*. In this regard, some men stressed that they were married and working far away from home, thus the lack of “regular” sex provided by spouses or partners was indicated as the main reason for purchasing sex. Prostitution was then considered as a kind of compensation for men’s “natural” need for sex. In this sense, the interviewees highlighted a strong patriarchal view. According to them, in fact, the male has an inner and natural need for sex that has to be satisfied either by wives/partners or by prostitutes. In detail:

“Mother Nature created men and women with distinct roles. When marriages go bad it is because of the woman. The man is a hunter on a sexual level and he can go with whom he wants!” (Interview no. 1).

“Well, because of my job I’m away from my family in Southern Italy. I’m married and have three children. You know, I have my needs so I go twice a fortnight when I’m away from home. If I am at home, I satisfy my wife” (Interview no. 2).

“You know it doesn’t matter if you’re married or not. Married men go with prostitutes because the sexual urge is still active anyway!” (Interview no. 3).

“I have sex even three times a day, but I go with prostitutes anyway. You know I’m a man” (Interview no. 8).

“I work here and go back home every two or three weeks, so I go with a prostitute once a week because the more sex you do the better your performance” (Interview no. 10).

A third motivation relied on the fact that trafficked prostitution is *cheaper* than the common type. A few clients pointed out that the frequency of their rendezvous with prostitutes much depended on the availability of money. It must be stated here that in fact the interviewees were mainly carpenters and masons with medium-low wages. In detail, two clients stressed that:

“it depends on the money. Some months I go twice, some months only once... or two times in a fortnight. It depends on how much I earn. Because you know, currently there’s not much money around”(Interview no. 10).

[What’s the frequency of your rendezvous?] “Once a week. You know, I work here for a fortnight, and then I go back home. I can’t live without having sex. Of course, a lot depends on the money I have...” (Interview no. 11).

The economic element has not been closely analysed by current literature; however, it seems to play a determinant role in the choice of trafficked prostitution instead of the common type. In this sense, as a client (emblematically) pointed out:

“you pay fifty euros for a foreigner in a hotel room, while for the same service from an Italian you have to pay a hundred euros. So it’s obvious... you go twice with a foreigner!” (Interview no. 3).

In this regard, another important comment must be made here. The interviewed men indicated a significant price difference between Eastern Europeans and Africans, the former costing around 50 euros and the latter around 30. However, the vast majority disliked African women considering them dirty and more exploited:

“Africans are the cheapest, because there are many Eastern European ‘competitors’ who give a sense of hygiene. Instead, the Africans on the streets give you an idea of dirt: they’re always there with the same clothes on, and charge lower prices in order to earn something. You know, punters who go with Africans are normally elderly men, or other immigrants, like Moroccans, who are rejected by the Eastern Europeans” (Interview no. 3).

“Africans are cheaper. The more beautiful girls are more expensive and they are generally Moldovans or Romanians. [...] Well you know... blacks are dirty. [...] So you’re not happy to go with an African. It’s not a matter of racism” (Interview no. 8).

“Eastern Europeans are much cleaner. Africans are much dirtier. In addition, there is also a price difference. In my opinion, also punters who go with Africans are hygienically rotten because of their mental state or for other reasons” (Interview no. 1).

“Africans cost twenty euros and Eastern Europeans cost thirty” (Interview no. 2).

Linked to this aspect, a few clients underlined two important reasons for their preference for Eastern European women: skill and care. As far as the first one is concerned, some men pointed out that prostitutes from Romania, Russia and other former USSR countries were “hotter” and generally *more skilled* in the various sexual activities required:

“my experience with foreign girls is very positive. I have met many foreign girls, if I had to choose I would say Russians are the best. [...] they are hot” (Interview no. 1).

[Someone said that Ukrainians are “hotter”, is that true?] “well they give more lust, also Moldavans and Russians”. (Interview no. 10).

[Do Ukrainians and Romanians treat you in a different way?] “yes they’re more familiar, they excite me, while the others seem to be forced...” (Interview no. 11).

The second aspect interviewees stressed was the *need for affection and comprehension* that pushed them to look for Eastern Europeans. These prostitutes, in fact, were reported to give care, affection and a form of dialogue to their clients, therefore making them feel at ease:²²

“They don’t work like on an assembly line, ‘one man one shot’; they take you to their home and make you welcome. Italian prostitutes only work for gain: they ask you for a sum of money, hurry you to ‘come’ so that they can go away. But foreigners, if you ask them for some attention, they give it to you. They are interested in you and try to put you at your ease” (Interview no. 3).

“Apart from that they are good at doing sex and if you stay there [i.e. become a habitual client] they show affection and put you at ease” (Interview no. 8).

[You say you talked to these girls, so there’s some kind of relationship after sexual intercourse] “Yes, some of them tell me: ‘I want to settle down, I want a family, but I can’t do that by myself, because I don’t have a stay permit. And

²²This aspect was remarked upon also by the Romanian prostitute who was interviewed (see below).

I can't get away from my pimp because if I run away he might kill me" (Interview no. 11).

Another and very significant push factor for the choice of trafficked prostitution was its visibility on the streets. In fact, some men stated that outdoor prostitution is almost completely foreigners. In particular, it emerged that Italian women normally work in private apartments and are not visible, while foreign-trafficked prostitutes are mainly exploited on the streets. In this regard, one noticed how interviewed men used to solicit girls on the streets and then move into private apartments for the sexual services.

"You have a very little option: 99% of them are foreigners" (Interview no. 1). "There are only foreigners now, the majority at least [...] You actually can't find Italian prostitutes. They work in apartments" (Interview no. 8).

"Foreigners... they've all been foreigners. I come from Bari, in that area there are mainly Africans, here instead they're mainly Whites, Romanians" (Interview no. 13).

Finally, a client stressed his need for prostitution because he was not able to obtain non-commercial sex:

"You know, if you can't find a girl, a beautiful girl... you pay for her, otherwise you can't have her" (Interview no. 8).

Network Factors

As far as network factors are concerned, the most important one that transpired from the interviews was the *role of the peer group*. Many clients shared their experience with friends talking about it and above all going together to meet prostitutes. In this sense, prostitution was considered a kind of group activity to have a "different night", especially after partying.

"We share suggestions, everything: we're a family, like brothers" (Interview no. 2).

"We often go with prostitutes together. You know, you spend a nice evening together, you hang out, you see a beautiful girl and you go" (Interview no. 3).

"When I go out with my friends we very often find babes on the streets and if one goes... the other follows him" (Interview no. 8).

[Do you talk about your experiences with your friends?]

"Yes, me and my friends talk about it. There are people who get hyped up about it, but we generally talk about girls" (Interview no. 1).

[Do you also go with your friends?]

"Yes, but I mainly do it to pass the time, a nice evening and so on" (Interview no. 9).

[Do you talk about prostitution with your friends?] "Yes, if you go with a friend you say 'what about that girl?' and if she's okay, you go with her too. It's a kind of link..." (Interview no. 10).

"In Bari you go there, even without a car, under a bridge, with some friends and spend some time. Twenty Euros and that's all" (Interview no. 13).

Environmental Factors

These factors seem to play a minor role in clients' motivations; however, in the interviews, two main aspects emerged. First of all, the emancipation of Italian women who were painted as interested only in money and leisure. This development seemed to have subverted the traditional supremacy of the man in the family, placing up for discussion the patriarchal view of the world. In this sense, some clients stated that:

"Italian women have become very demanding, in my opinion. No it's not an opinion, it's the reality today. You know? Many foreign girls [prostitutes] end up with Italian men. According to Italian males, foreign women have something more than Italians. They are more willing. You know, Italian women are going beyond equality. The man puts up with it for a while, then he gets sick of it. [...] Italian women want a role that goes beyond equality. I leave a message to Italian women: reconsider your position!" (Interview no. 1).

"The fact is that nowadays you don't get married because Italian women are spoiled! But these foreigners are satisfied with less! With Italian women it's impossible because they are really spoiled [...] You know I'm a craftsman and earn three thousand euros a month, that's not bad, but an Italian woman wants at least five thousand a month! But foreigners don't want so much!" (Interview no. 9).

Beside this element, the influence of the *media* was also reported. In fact, the commodification of sex both through pornography and more in the general media was considered as a push factor that affected men in their search for sex.

"The mass media show Romania, Holland, the sex market... and also when someone who knows nothing about these issues sees a Romanian girl on the street, he immediately thinks about the 'sex countries'. You know, this is a factor that pushes you to go with a Romanian, a Russian or a Moldovan. The Italian woman is out-of-date, because all you have to do is go to a disco or a bar and find a woman who wants to fuck, and off you go! Instead, these foreign girls seldom come here, and every three months they change so you don't miss the chance to have sex with them" (Interview no. 3).

Table 4.4 summarizes the above-illustrated push factors for regular clients of trafficked prostitution.

Interview with a Prostitute

During the first meeting with clients, four foreign prostitutes joined the group for a moment and one of them accepted to be interviewed about her clients. She stated that she was a legal migrant who arrived in Italy five years ago from Romania and to be currently 23 years old.

Some general questions were posed in order to monitor her client group (age, profession, etc.), while other more specific ones were asked to have a countercheck for the clients' statements. The most significant points are presented below.

Table 4.4 Summary table of pushing factors for choosing trafficked prostitutes as emerged from the semi-structured interview

Interview ID	Individual factors	Network factors	Environmental factors
1	Chance of trying something exotic Lower price Eastern Europeans more skilled Physiological need of sex	Peer group Visibility of foreign/trafficked prostitution	Female emancipation
2	Lower price Physiological need of sex	Peer group Visibility of foreign/trafficked prostitution	Female emancipation Media
3	Chance of trying something exotic Need for affection/comprehension Physiological need of sex	Peer group	Media
8	Chance for something exotic Lower price Need for affection/comprehension Impossibility of getting non-commercial sex Physiological need of sex	Peer group Visibility of foreign/trafficked prostitution	n.a.
9	Chance of trying something exotic	Peer group	Female emancipation
10	Lower price Eastern Europeans more skilled Physiological need of sex	Peer group	n.a.
11	Chance of trying something exotic Lower price Eastern Europeans more skilled Need for affection/comprehension	Peer group	n.a.
12	Chance of trying something exotic Lower price Eastern Europeans more skilled	n.a.	n.a.
13	Need for affection/comprehension	Visibility of foreign/trafficked prostitution	n.a.

Source: Elaboration of data collected through in-depth interviews

Clients' Profile

The girl stressed that most of her clients were married, with a very small number of single men. Their age ranged from 30 to 65, with a greater proportion of people between 30 and 40. In addition, the prostitute stressed her clients had several different jobs including workers and professionals.

"Their age ranges from thirty or thirty-five to sixty or sixty-five. There are also some aged over seventy, they just come to have some company. [...] However, the average age is between thirty and forty, let's say seven out of ten. [...] They have all kinds of jobs: policemen, lawyers, in addition they're foreigners elderly and young people".

Clients' Need for Dialogue and Affection

The most significant part of the interview relied on the motivations that push men to look for prostitution. In this regard, the girl stated that many clients paid just to talk and have some hugs, instead of having sexual services.

"They need to talk to someone. It may be they can't talk to their wives about what they feel or their wives don't understand them. Then, they prefer foreigners because they [prostitutes] don't only care about money. Many Italian men have married street girls, because foreigners have big hearts".

[Maybe they pay just to be with you, without... doing anything. Are there many of these men?] "I personally have many clients like that. Sometimes they just ask me to hug them: exactly what they don't find at home. Sometimes they have been married for ten or fifteen years..."

These statements seem to confirm what semi-structured interviews revealed: prostitutes are not only seen as sex workers, but also (maybe above all) as persons with whom one can talk and share life's problems.

The False Myth of Sex Slaves

Another important point stressed by the girl was the "myth of sex slaves". In particular, she pointed out that only very few girls are deceived by traffickers about their real occupation in Italy. All the foreign prostitutes she knew were aware of their activity in the destination country before leaving their homeland.

"Many people say that all girls are exploited. That's not true. I've seen it on TV. Some of them are exploited but less than one in every twenty or thirty. [...] Here, more than 60–70% of the prostitutes already did this work before, so it's nothing strange for them. In contrast, until five years ago things were different: many girls were deceived and brought here. Now things have changed".

4.4.2.2 Clients Active on the Web

Individual Factors

Individual factors pertain to those personal motives that might push a client towards a foreign prostitute instead of another. With regards to the Internet users, the individual factors seem to elevate to the most influencing. This is probably due to the open-hearted side of the forums taken into analysis, and the evident willingness to share with other friends “the unbearable grieves” of the client’s life. This paragraph will outline their role in the choices made by clients.

Need for More Stable Relations

As an outcome of profiling the sample of Clients Active on the Web we might argue that clients tend to concentrate emotional needs towards non-street prostitutes. Street prostitutes are said to offer comparatively poorer services and the context does not allow too much intimacy. It is unlikely that a client will try/will be able to develop a more stable relation with a street prostitute.

Accordingly, the first reason that might push the Internet client away from trafficked prostitutes working on the streets is the difficulty of seemingly developing a relationship with them. Nevertheless, the same clients would rather opt for foreign prostitutes that work in apartments, as long as he can pay higher prices.

Sexual/Emotional Reassurance

The CAWs need to be reassured of their sexual dominant role, a role they have lost in their current lives. Meanwhile they also expect their partners to be participative to make the whole experience more lifelike. For this reason, they look for accommodating prostitutes that could make them feel more comfortable. Even if they might become aware²³ of the coerced position of certain prostitutes, they certainly would prefer to forget and leave aside those facts; the “importance of the illusion” is persistently cited as a primary element for a successful performance.

Cultural background is probably a key influence to understand why a foreign prostitute could better satisfy these needs. Eastern Europeans, Africans, South Americans and Chinese women all share a similar background. They all come from patriarchal societies where the role of women is far from equal to that of men. CAWs often refer to those countries as “lost paradises”, where a man is still treated with respect by local women. Certain users told of vacation trips to eastern European countries where they were finally able to date beautiful women without

²³ Hearsay and eye-witnessed experiences are the principal channels that allow the Clients Active on the Web to become aware of exploitation/trafficking. Nevertheless, as we stated in the CAWS’ profile, the web community is quite closed with regard to this kind of data and tend to ignore it.

being particularly wealthy or end up being humiliated by women no longer interested in male courtship. Either way, these men have found in foreign prostitutes an answer to their anxieties: the majority of the CAWs complained about the degeneration of values and yearned for morals no longer in vogue (essentially patriarchy). Foreign prostitutes hold those values and those morals: they are obedient, caring, they do not hurry clients, and they allegedly “feel like talking”. Substantially, they behave in a way the clients would like their women to.

This characteristic is particularly significant in the difference with Italian prostitutes, every way more similar to Italian women, bossing the clients around. This kind of client prefers foreign prostitutes that work in apartments or premises; calmness is necessary to make the client feel at ease, and it favours the acquaintance with the woman. Those more acquainted with the sex market are usually the more needy, sexually and emotionally; from time to time, or for occurrence, these clients do not disdain streets prostitutes, but always tend to recreate a connection, a bond, with the prostitute.

Price

The lower prices of foreign prostitutes are another important factor: On the one hand, they might attract all those clients that seek mere sexual satisfaction instead of affection; on the other hand, they might be the only choice available for poorer clients. In fact, some of the CAWs confirmed that a major influence in the choice of a prostitute is the price: foreign prostitutes are generally cheaper than Italian prostitutes, offering the same services at a lower price and allegedly with more “passion” than the local ones. Even for those clients that might be able/willing to afford indoor/escort prostitutes, the chance of saving money represents a convincing factor.

Prostitute's Involvement

In addition, foreign prostitutes seem to give the clients the impression of actually enjoying the sexual act. This is also true for indoor prostitutes, which are facilitated by the domestic context. This factor relies a lot on the personal inclination of the prostitute, and it cannot be elevated to a standard criterion for the entire category of foreign prostitutes. If, however, transport is a consequence of compulsion, trafficked prostitutes would be the most likely to provide for it.

Unusual Sexual Practices

Although some of the users confirmed their curiosity for sexual practices they do not usually enjoy at home, not many expressed the need for transgression or peculiar services.²⁴ Some of the users reported foreign prostitutes to be more “allowing”

²⁴These findings comply with the results of a study of Monto (2001) on the diffusion of “fellatio” among men caught in the act of purchasing sex. The results, although not representative, indicated that the arrested men preferred fellatio to any other sexual practice. More uncommon sexual practices were not emphasized.

for certain services (e.g. non-protected fellatio, non-protected sex, anal sex); however, as can be easily realized from any escort Website (which provides visitors with information on the services offered by each escort), indoor prostitutes, also non-foreign, can as easily indulge in such practices. Once again, the only difference that might drive the client to one of the two is the different price charged by escort prostitutes and street prostitutes. Foreign origins seem not to be too significant in relation to the sexual practices requested by the Clients Active on the Web.

Physical Features

All CAWs agreed on the physical features of foreign prostitutes. Although distant from Italian canons, foreign prostitutes (eastern-European in particular), matched the tastes of the Italian clients and have gained their wholehearted approval. Truth to be told, patriotic sentiments overcame some of them, and the (alleged) older users revived the myth of Italian women.

Personal features of the single prostitute are certainly among those details that a client takes into account when searching for a woman.

Language

The language factor does not seem to be a main concern: the clients analysed stated that foreign prostitutes are able to make themselves understood when they need to. Since many clients reported dialogues with them, and sometimes formed relationships, it is not odd to presume a sufficient familiarity with the Italian language. Older clients might prefer Italian prostitutes for fear of troublesome communications, but the average CAW is younger and more accustomed to dealing with foreigners.

Essentially, language cannot be considered as a significant influence on the choice of foreign prostitution.

Network Factors

The Internet analysis has taken into account one the most important network site among the prostitution-related Websites. Escortforum²⁵ is in fact a huge community of people (85,459 users and more than 65,000 messages)²⁶ whose purposes are either to find an escort through the online catalogue, or to share sexual experiences using the forum. The latter is made by different sections that address specific issues: from nightclub information to reviews of the escorts. The Website is a community of clients and a “red light virtual district” for escorts who have the opportunity to upload their pictures, write personal information and receive feedback from clients about their sexual skills. The Website is a well-known network

²⁵ <http://www.escortforum.com>. In June 2007, the site was put under investigation.

²⁶ Last accessed 05.13.2008.

community which has grown to unprecedented levels in the last few years and whose members often “go beyond” the issue of the performance of escorts. The significant success of prostitution-related forums, such as Escortforum, relies on the advantage of anonymity. The online users might not be willing to share their experiences with off-line friends and it would be misleading to ignore the powerful impact of online network communities on the choices and ideas of clients.

Network Influence and Individual Reasons

The most crucial network factor is embedded in the structure of the site: even if it is not a classical social network Website, the main aim of the forum is to offer a place for discussions, a gathering virtual space where users share their personal experiences. As a consequence, all the posted experiences could have an impact on the attitudes of clients. Above all, individual understanding of trafficked prostitution, often based on personal experiences with women who were forced into prostitution, plays an important role both to foster more general debates and to discourage sexual appointments with streetwalkers. In the forum, for instance, there are several posts focused on this issue: many clients emphasize the sad reality of streetwalkers, both because they have met forced prostitutes and because they “have heard” of the problem. Sometimes these clients attempt to awaken or “test” the level of awareness of other forum users by highlighting the poor life conditions of North Africans or East European forced girls.

Therefore, it seems accurate to state that individual reasons could have a network influence because they are shared among a large community of people. If personal motivations are revealed and discussed in a virtual community, they would likely become powerful network factors, which affect the choices and ideas of clients.

Some forum members state that “it would be a success if some forum users avoided streetwalkers”, others opened specific threads in order to “help forced girls” and to “save women’s lives”. While we cannot determine whether forum users changed their mind or deliberately avoided streetwalkers because of the “virtual network factor”, we would argue that some members use the forum with the purpose of “letting others know” about trafficked prostitution. Even if some of them express indignation and condemn exploitation and the trafficking of human beings, they generally minimize the role of organized crime groups underneath prostitution. Simply put, clients usually support the victims without blaming the perpetrators. They disregard numbers and figures that corroborate the evidence, and they are ready to help each other out whenever an external user attempts at purporting antithetical thesis. For what concerns the role of friends and the threat of being put to shame, the clients did not express any particular concern. Either because they share their experiences with them or because they keep them secret and aside, not one of them ever reported to fear such consequences for their acts. Moreover, feeling discredit as a likely repercussion would imply they do actually feel embarrassed for what they do while, in reality, they feel compelled and thus justified to go with prostitutes. In particular, experiences

with trafficked prostitutes,²⁷ especially streetwalkers, are often an “excuse” to justify appointments with the escorts. The latter are supposed to be free: arguably, the redundant statement that escorts are free and streetwalkers are forced has oriented the choices of the average client.

The Review Area

Another crucial factor that pushes clients to choose women who should be free (escorts) instead of forced streetwalkers is the “review area”, where clients post their comments about the sexual skills of escorts, the price and other pieces of information such as cleanliness. The reviews provide evidence of both physical appearance and sexual abilities. It is not surprising that some clients read them carefully before going further: many of them motivate their preference with the fact they “read all the reviews and decided to try”. The reviews have received such a high level of attention that the administrators of the Website have decided to add a “search review”, that is a search engine designed to help find reviews. The search review allows potential clients to ask for content meeting specific criteria and included the so-called top reviewers and top 30 ladies. The first are the “opinion leaders” who have written more reviews in comparison to other users. The review area is thus a sort of “word of mouth” more focused on the performances of escorts than on general topics.

However, several clients emphasize other skills, such as the “gift of conversation” and the opportunity to talk with someone who seems to be both attractive and clever. The descriptions of “free” and intelligent women are often in contrast with the representations of forced prostitutes: from the Internet analysis emerged the preference for the first group which is perceived as a category of “free” prostitutes. It is not a matter of only moral concerns. The advantages of free prostitutes, such as cleanliness, lovely conversations and emotional involvement during sex affect the preferences of clients for escorts.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors were thoroughly discussed by the Clients Active on the Web that we observed and, since the forums were long running, they had the chance to express their thoughts on the subject altogether.

National Policies and State Resolution to Prevent Exploitation

National policies have recurrently been at the centre of the debate. The users loathe and condemn the (neo-)abolitionist²⁸ approach of our country. They agree that

²⁷ Usually clients come to realize that street walkers are forced prostitutes because either the latter have shared their experiences of life, or clients have perceived them as mistreated.

²⁸ According to the distinction drafted in Di Nicola, Cauduro, Conci and Orfano, 2006.

prostitution has always existed and will forever. The so-called Legge Merlin (Law 75/1958), which caused the shutdown of brothels and to this day prohibits their re-opening, did not have the desired effect. On the contrary, it leaves room for risks of health and personal security for the ordinary client.²⁹

Foreign prostitutes that work on the streets are easy targets for STDs³⁰ (Sexually Transmitted Diseases like HIV/AIDS); this however never dissuades the clients from going with prostitutes, either Italian or foreigners.

Besides, sexual intercourse often take place in exposed environments (cars, dark streets and fields) and the clients run the risk of the sudden intervention of police or, even worse, bursts of violence from pimps. Some CAWs reported intercourses with eastern-European prostitutes that took place in fear of the arrival of their pimps.

Even if the clients consider exploitation as a minor phenomenon (on the basis of their mutual convictions derived from personal experiences), they agree that the chances of exploitation grow as assistance from the State diminishes. Moreover, the State should profit from prostitution instead of just paying the price. The advantages of a regulatory approach would consist in making prostitutes pay taxes and by drawing a profit from a law-regulated profession. The Netherlands is often taken as an example: legalization is the only way of avoiding exploitation, meeting the needs of prostitutes and satisfying the clients.

Backed up by a regulatory legislation, police forces would be able to focus their efforts towards more definitive issues rather than appearing from time to time and clearing the streets for a few days. According to the witnesses of the Clients Active on the Web under investigation, with our current legislation, police has no real authority over the prostitutes or the clients; a clear distinction between what is legal, and what is not, would definitely be of service.

CAWs are not afraid or do not particularly mind police roundups; they are careful and the Internet provides a useful source for warnings against these dangers. Eventually we might consider that, when police actions grow stronger and more frequent, the client could prefer indoor prostitutes, feeling safer and more secure thanks to the advice of his peers.

Foreign prostitutes might be more intimidated by the police: most of them came illegally to Italy and still reside illegally. Even so, the fear of expulsion usually affects them for only a short period and they are back on the streets as soon as the police have gone.

²⁹In 1994 some local administrations decided to target clients: clients caught by the police when accompanying the prostitute to the work-place should be charged with the offences of aiding and abetting prostitution. The 8th September 2000, Antonello P., a 25 year old client, was stopped by the police near Mestre (Venice) with a prostitute; he was charged of aiding and abetting prostitution and his car was seized. Antonello decided to commit suicide for fear of prosecution and shame of being exposed by the media. The 20th of September 2000, a sentence of the Tribunal of Perugia stated that “aiding and abetting” are offences applicable to third parties, and stopped the criminalization of clients. Danna, 2004.

³⁰Bindel and Kelly, 2003; TAMPEP INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION, 1996.

Religion

Surprisingly, the CAWs observed are rather conservative for the most part: they advocate enforcement actions to reduce criminality in their own cities of residence but, in the meantime, they feel it is their right to be free to pay for sex. They profess being catholic, whereas their lives as they describe them are not exactly adherent to the principles of the Christian confession. Religion is certainly not among the effective preventive factors.

Media Portrayal of the Clients

Media and television are viewed as instruments in the hands of bigots and censors, and a particular wave of hate was directed towards Don Benzi,³¹ an Italian priest who stood up to organized crime by encouraging prostitutes to leave “one’s life” and by providing them with accommodation and shelter.

CAWs believe that their “situation” is often misinterpreted by the national media, and subject to moralistic bias involved in their representation. Media usually uphold governmental resolutions against the client³² and often exaggerate their benefits. The clients also complain about the exaggerated (according to the so-called opinion leaders in the forums) representation of trafficking, which they consider less extensive. They argue about the figures cited by newspapers on the extent of trafficking, and give accounts of many personal experiences with non-exploited prostitutes that prove the media wrong.

Socio-cultural influences

Socio-cultural influences contributed largely to the evolution of the characters of clients. Customarily representatives of the middle class, they whine about their working conditions, low salaries and ensuing average lifestyle. Society offers role and models of life considerably above their achievable standards; as a result, they feel inadequate and the chances of finding women, albeit by paying, who do not judge their appearance, seem rather appealing.

In their perception, foreign women still believe in romance, they respect the role of men in the courtship, and they are “set”, as regards love affairs, on “calibers” that are more reasonable.

Even if these motives would better apply to non-commercial relations and non-working women, we must once again bear in mind that the users seek affection

³¹Don Oreste Benzi was a catholic priest who saw all prostitutes as victims and argued in favor of criminalizing clients, sometimes clients of foreign prostitutes only. He founded various charities that still work with prostitutes after his death in late 2007.

³²For instance, the (at that time) mayor of Rome Walter Veltroni decided to install surveillance cameras in the busiest streets of the city. Although mainly grounded on the need of regulating the traffic, they also work as potential detectors of aggression and other offences. Available at <http://www.repubblica.it/2006/09/sezioni/cronaca/veltroni-telecamere/veltroni-telecamere/veltroni-telecamere.html> (Time of the last visit: 02.10.2007).

and love from prostitutes. That is why these categories can analogically be employed to demonstrate that the Clients Active on the Web, at odds with those we interviewed, often relate to prostitutes as if they were not paying to have them. This attitude might be related to the different approach to buying sex: most of the interviewed clients were married and could have sex any time they wanted. They purchase sex as an “extemporaneous resource” when they are away from home for long periods, or when they want to “try something different” to their wives. The clients Active on the Web, on the contrary, are not usually married, and “end up” with prostitutes because of their incapacity to have relationships and because their presumed need for sex compels them to go with prostitutes. Some of them, in particular those who care and feel empathy towards prostitutes, might be able to realize the gravity of trafficking. Yet, the fact that they relate to prostitutes as to women they cannot have as regular partners, and not as “extemporaneous resources”, might push them to ignore the fact that those women are forced to be where they are.

In addition, the mutual support they give each other in the Web reinforces their conviction of doing the right thing and minimizes the effects of trafficking on the lives of prostitutes. The Web is a powerful tool to provide the necessary reassurance that these men need: since they are already liable to deny exploitation in all its forms, the chance of being reassured of “doing the right thing” by men in the same situation is more than sufficient to help neutralize their responsibilities.

Foreign prostitutes seem to answer these requirements perfectly. They are more submissive, they appreciate the gifts that the clients eventually bring them, and, allegedly, are the first to criticize Italian prostitutes. Socio-cultural considerations are probably among the most influencing environmental factors; the fact that they find a perfect correspondence with the profile of CAWs does certainly corroborate this opinion.

Table 4.5 summarizes the above-illustrated push factors for clients of trafficked prostitution active on the Web forums.

Table 4.5 Summary table of pushing factors for choosing trafficked prostitutes as emerged from the Web analysis

Area of the pushing factor	Pushing factor
Individual factors	Need for affection/comprehension
	Physiological need for sex
	Lower price
Network factors	Peer group (lesser importance)
Environmental factors	Need for dominion
	Female emancipation

Source: Elaboration of data collected in the Web forum analysis

4.5 Policy Implications

The analysis carried out in Italy suggests that there are at least three main forces that drive Italian clients towards foreign prostitution: *price, quality of the affective relationship* with foreign prostitutes (real or perceived) and their *high visibility*.

In this regard, non-national prostitution often coincides with trafficked sex and this emerged clearly enough during the interviews. Even when punters did not admit that foreign women were trafficked or refused the idea that a segment of prostitution is made up of exploited foreign women, they were very likely to have had sexual intercourse with trafficked women. There are different levels of understanding of trafficking for sexual exploitation among the clients under investigation. To simplify the matter, clients can be eventually divided into two different categories: those who openly admit the existence of trafficking in human beings and admit going with trafficked sex workers and those who fiercely deny it. In this respect, especially in Internet forums, clients often use “neutralization techniques”, i.e. arguments to deny the existence of trafficking or of its size so as to justify their behaviour (Sykes and Mazda, 1957). In addition, the existence of an Internet forum where a group of people, who share similar ideas, have opinion leaders and often deny the existence of trafficking can itself be considered a big neutralization technique.

Beyond the need for sex, cultural and economic reasons are thus behind the selection of foreign prostitutes, many of whom are trafficked in Italy. We are dealing with push factors that are strong, and it is easy to foresee that these forces will not decrease in the near future. The analysis also confirms that Italian clients are firmly against prohibitionist policies and do not seem to be daunted by any approach similar to the Swedish one. Some of them declared that such a model would instead result in an incentive to prostitution, given (according to them) the consolidated rule that prohibition fosters the use of prohibited goods or services. Furthermore, punters do not even seem to fear police intervention or any possible punishment either, at least if exercised in light forms. This means that the demand for foreign prostitution is rather stable. At most, tougher approaches may result in displacing prostitution and nothing more.

With all this in mind, what implications can we draw in terms of policy, if we want to reduce trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, and not prostitution *tout court*, this probably being a utopist intention, and anyway not our goal? Does this piece of research teach us anything; leave us anything beyond the awareness of a progressive deterioration of human relationships between men and women, within couples, in our Italian society? Can clients teach us anything? They are first of all like all of us: married, unmarried, divorced, looking for lust and more often than expected for some form of love. Maybe, if we look objectively, some hints and guidelines for possible policies can be found in the encounters with these people and the ideas either discussed with them or captured on the Web and questionnaire analysis. The most interesting aspect is that clients seem to understand very well, perhaps with more clarity than policy makers, that prostitution has many *different and specific costs*, in terms of health, crime, urban insecurity, taxes, human rights and that a prostitution policy must deal with all these aspects, not just one. If we put faith in what clients told us, we realize that they probably will not stop going to prostitutes, that the demand is constant and will not decrease, that foreign prostitutes are much appreciated, so that we have to look for a model of prostitution which *reduces the overall costs* of prostitution, *maximizing benefits*,

if any; a prostitution model able to reduce all the costs of prostitution included the human rights costs when dealing with trafficking in human beings, but not only these human costs.

Italian clients are undoubtedly against prohibition and are in favour of regulation. For them, regulation reduces sexually transmitted diseases, improves work and living standards for sex workers, increases fiscal gains and it is better because it produces less crime and more urban security for people. They seem to be very sure about that. The results of our investigation invite us to be more prudent and urge a search for more circumstantiated research evidence for this, which, up to now, is inexistent. However, generally speaking, the line of reasoning that we have to look for a system that is able to consider and reduce all the side effects of prostitution is certainly a direction to be addressed. We have to look at prostitution from different viewpoints and opt for a model that reduces the overall costs of this social behaviour, including trafficking.

For instance, coming back to the trafficking process and considering the neutralization techniques used by some clients (“trafficking does not exist” and “they want to do what they do”, etc.), policies which allow an understanding of which are the accepted or tolerated forms of prostitution would also achieve the added value of distinguishing between prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation. All forms of prostitution that go beyond the accepted ones could also be punished; it is arguable that in such cases clients can easily recognize that exploitation and trafficking can easily hide behind this other segment of prostitution, and that, meeting prostitutes in this segment, would mean to having a high probability of meeting trafficked victims.

To sum up, we should opt for policy options that maximize benefits and minimize all the costs of prostitution and which easily allow people to distinguish between legitimate prostitution and trafficking and exploitation. If we were able to follow this pattern, we could argue that the encounter with the clients has left us something. Thus, further research on the *demand* for trafficked prostitution is extremely important. The lack of knowledge on this side of the phenomenon must be filled in order to enact more focused and rational policies based on objective analyses and not on emotional or ideological grounds.

Chapter 5

The Flesh is Weak, the Spirit Even Weaker

Clients and Trafficked Women in the Netherlands

Damián Zaitch and Richard Staring

5.1 Introduction

Almost all existing studies and knowledge in the Netherlands on women trafficking for prostitution focus on the nature and extent of the “supply” side (criminal organizations and networks, transnational routes, recruitment techniques, exploitation forms, etc.), centre upon the life and situation of the women (regarded as victims, migrants, prostitutes or criminals) or are concerned with policy issues and interventions on women trade and prostitution.¹

In clear contrast with what happens in the study of other illegal markets – for example the illegal drug trade where research on all types of drug users proliferate – virtually no empirical research exists on the “demand” side of women trafficking for prostitution, both in the Netherlands and the rest of the world.² Some of the reasons may be that the consumption of sexual services by men is hardly defined as a social or crime problem, the relationship between clients and trafficked prostitutes is complex and problematic, and we are dealing with a large but discreet and invisible group surrounded by secrecy and taboos.

However, the nature and dynamics of the demand of women trafficked for prostitution cannot be ignored if one is to understand how and why women, particularly migrant women, work in the Netherlands as prostitutes under some form of coercion.

As we will illustrate below, most women working in the Netherlands as prostitutes, particularly in the middle and cheaper market sections, are foreigners. While many are regarded as free sex workers or entrepreneurs, others, according to Dutch legislation and the UN definition, are victims of “trafficking in persons” as they experience some form of coercion with the aim of exploitation. However, the development and enforcement of objective criteria and indicators to identify and react against forced prostitution has been obscured by the fact that various forms of coercion

¹ See among others Monzini, 2005; Adreijavic, 2004; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998; Aronowitz, 2001; Vocks and Nijboer, 2000; BNRM, 2007.

² Rare exceptions are for example the study of Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003.

and exploitation are also found within legal migration projects and prostitution settings and involve all types of adult women who have consented to sell sexual services. Many women are afraid, but others simply do not know or acknowledge that they are being exploited. Nicely drawn, clear-cut distinctions in legislation, policy papers and political discourses between “smuggling” and “trafficking”, legal and illegal migration, or forced and voluntary prostitution are far from evident for the very actors involved including sex operators, pimps, the women and their clients. Studying the experiences of clients with the women *they* consider or suspect are working under coercion, may offer a different perspective to the traditional law enforcement view on women trafficking.

Research conducted on men who pay for sexual services shows that the perceptions and the practices of “polar bears”³ are deeply embedded in cultural attitudes, social ties and political arrangements existing in specific local contexts. On the other hand, they are also shaped by global developments which involve transnational networks and cross-border mobility. This “glocal” nature of the demand for women for prostitution call for comparative, cross-national studies that can reveal which local and global forces are at play in the perpetuation of the demand for sexual services.

This chapter presents the main findings of the research carried out in the Netherlands on the demand for trafficked women for prostitution. After formulating the main research questions and presenting the methods and sources used by the Dutch research team (Sect. 5.2), the chapter will briefly outline the nature and extent of prostitution and women trafficking in the Netherlands (Sect. 5.3). The next section will summarize the existing legislation and policies in the Netherlands concerning immigration, human trafficking, prostitution and women trafficking in particular (Sect. 5.4). With a focus on the latest developments after the lifting of the ban on brothels in 2000, Sect. 5.5 will be based both on secondary sources (a growing body of reports, evaluations and studies) and on our material from interviews and observations. With a clear picture in mind on the “supply” side and on the developments at legislative, policy and enforcement levels, we are then ready to present the results concerning the clients (Sect. 5.6). Using all data collected, clients will be characterized and their views and attitudes on voluntary and forced prostitution, on the women and on other clients, will be presented and analysed. This section will describe the social relations that clients establish with trafficked women, pimps, sex entrepreneurs, relatives, friends, colleagues or other clients. A final section in this chapter (Sect. 5.7) will try to answer the formulated questions, extracting some conclusions and policy implications from the empirical findings.

³In Dutch ‘*Ijsbeer*’, ‘polar bear’ is one of the most common names for the clients of prostitutes which is used and accepted by clients themselves (in reference to the repetitive round walk of polar bears, performed by men in prostitution streets). The more popular notion of ‘*hoerenloper*’ (whore-hopper), widely used in media and common speech, has a clear pejorative meaning and is mostly rejected by clients as offensive. These emic categories also establish moral boundaries and are used for ‘othering’ the disrespectful man. As put by a client interviewed: “You have men who walk around calling the women ‘whores’ and ‘bitches’ [...], these are literally and figuratively the *hoerenlopers*. [...] Then you have the *ijsberen*, these men come for a cuddle...”

5.2 Methodology

The present study aims to describe the demand for trafficked women for prostitution: understand the forces that drive this demand in the Netherlands (legislation, socio-cultural factors, migration patterns, social networks, gender constructions, etc.) and assess the existing practices of intervention. The three main research questions can be formulated as follows:

- (a) *What formal and informal social interventions exist on the supply and demand for trafficked women for prostitution?*
- (b) *What is the nature of the demand for trafficked women for prostitution in the Netherlands and what forces shape that demand?*
- (c) *What are the perceptions and practices of clients on women trafficking and what is their role in the expansion or reduction of the demand for trafficked women for prostitution?*

The study has an explorative and qualitative character, due to the hidden and unregistered nature of the phenomenon and the actors involved, and the lack of previous research. The fieldwork started in January 2006 and continued for approximately ten months. It was mainly conducted by four junior researchers – three females and one male – under the supervision of the authors of this chapter.⁴ All junior researchers were involved in conducting open interviews and some form of observation. As well as open interviews and observations, we also analysed police files in the city of Rotterdam from the project *Report Crime Anonymously*, in this case on women trafficking for prostitution. Furthermore we analysed the largest Dutch Internet site by and for prostitution clients.

Overall, 46 respondents from different settings were interviewed. First of all, we interviewed 26 persons who identified themselves as prostitution clients. All clients are male and the majority claimed that they were still visiting female prostitutes whereas a couple referred to their activities in the past. We also interviewed four female prostitutes, three of whom came from abroad. Finally, we interviewed 16 respondents who could in some way be identified as “experts” in the field of women trafficking, most of them public officials fighting forced prostitution, such as police or health officers, but also representatives from NGOs and the sex industry.

One of the major problems we encountered was how to get in touch with clients of *trafficked* prostitutes. Finding those clients who were actively seeking trafficked prostitutes seemed especially troublesome. We opted instead, also after realizing that a clear-cut division between clients who did and did not visit trafficked prostitutes was more problematic than we primarily thought, for talking to clients of various types of prostitutes, focusing our interviews on the issue of trafficking and the client’s attitude towards the phenomenon.

⁴Our sincere thanks to Hanna Becx, Vanessa de Bruijn, Mark Griffioen and Mijke van der Linden for their deep commitment to the project during the preparation and data gathering phases. All junior researchers based their master thesis on data and topics related to the research project.

Some of the clients (8) were recruited on the Internet through participating in and analysing well-visited client forums and advertising in our own blog.⁵ Others were contacted through individual networking of researchers (8), from colleagues or NGOs working on prostitution (2) and during a visit to a brothel (1). All the rest (7) were contacted by snowballing from already interviewed respondents. We can talk about a *convenience sample* of clients that probably has low external validity and does not allow for generalizations. We tried to improve reliability by using a common topic guide for all the interviews with clients, by conducting several interviews by pairs of interviewers and by relying on method triangulation. We are very confident about the high internal validity of the data, with interviews often lasting several hours, high investments in building trust with respondents, observational and contextual data included in the analysis, and the use of alternative data sources.

The group of clients interviewed is clearly biased with respect to nationality and ethnicity. All men interviewed were Dutch citizens, with 90% being native Dutch, and only three men who had a Surinamese, Indonesian and Chinese background. A second clear bias in our sample regards the absence of men soliciting street and “toleration zone” prostitution (*tippel zones*). We then lack any sight on clients from ethnic minorities and those who look for street, often drug addict prostitutes, making our findings inapplicable for these two specific groups. There is also a clear over-representation of men that link their prostitution experiences with the use of the Internet, mainly as a place to meet with other men. For the rest, we have the feeling that we reached a wide spectrum of clients in terms of age, educational level, occupation, place of residence and soliciting, type and frequency of visits, ideology, experience, etc.

In terms of observations, the male junior researcher visited sauna clubs, together with clients who had been interviewed before. Other researchers extensively participated for some weeks, rather non-systematically, in the daily activities of a specific Dutch police unit in Rotterdam which deals exclusively with fighting trafficked prostitution. Briefings and other meetings were attended, and also some researchers accompanied police during routine control checks of several brothels and sex clubs. During the time we participated and observed in this special police unit, we were also allowed to analyse all the files from the project *Report Crime Anonymously* on trafficked prostitution.⁶

Besides interviewing and observation, one of the researchers made a systematic, intensive analysis of a well-known Dutch Internet site for and by clients of prostitutes.⁷ In order to select this site, we first took a broad look at all Dutch sites about prostitution through various search engines. This primary search resulted in an overview of sites divided into three categories. First, all those commercial sites on which prostitutes are being advertised (or advertise themselves) through stories,

⁵ However, we did not recruit any respondents from the advertisement we placed in the personal blog. We finally used it to provide information to those who asked about the project.

⁶ From 2005 onwards, the special project on anonymous crime reporting of trafficked prostitution was an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Justice. This project was financially supported until January 2007 and it is now at the stage of debating its continuation.

⁷ See paragraph 5.6.4 for a more detailed presentation of the findings.

Webcams, pictures, etc. Within this category (“by prostitutes and for clients”), there are also some sites by prostitutes putting themselves in the spotlight but also presenting information on their lives as a prostitute. The second category contains all those sites presenting general information on prostitution. These sites have a supportive, educative or referential purpose and offer information on (forced) prostitution, venereal diseases, and different kinds of NGOs and aid organizations that focus on the negative excesses around prostitution. The third category concerns all those sites that are aimed at offering reflection and information for the prostitute’s clients. These sites, made by and for clients, offer both information on the (qualities of) specific prostitutes and all kinds of discussions about prostitution.

The category “by and for clients” provides the most promising sites with information on how clients themselves think of prostitution and topics such as women trafficking. These sites offer online forums for posting the experiences of clients with the prostitutes. For several positive factors, the site *hookers.nl* within this third category was selected for intensive analysis. This site offers a large number of different topics and the thoughts of the client are at the centre. Sometimes prostitutes do participate in the discussion topics with the clients, but the prostitutes are forbidden to promote themselves. The site was started in 2002, and by December 2006 it had formally registered more than 80,000 active members, a large number of whom are engaged in the discussions. Some sections contain a lot of topics on women trafficking and forced prostitution through client’s eyes. The topics cover a broad spectrum: from “loverboys” to official policies on women trafficking.⁸ Another positive element for selecting *hookers.nl* is its accessibility for research. Due to the site structure, important elements such as number of discussions and the number of different active participants are counted by the site. The site can be easily searched by an internal search engine.

Within *hookers.nl*, a systematic search was made for relevant sections and discussions within sections. In early July 2006, the site contained around 22,000 separate discussions with over 180,000 messages. In order to select relevant sections, a first selection based on the title of the section was made and an arbitrary selection of forty messages within these sections was read in order to gain insights into the contents of the sections. Ultimately, two sections – “News Articles” and “Formal Nonsense” – contained relevant discussions, for instance on “loverboys”, “prostitution and loverboys”, “modern slavery” and “what do we think of the new action against women trafficking”. In early July 2006, these sections contained 1,020 subjects. In order to make a selection that could be analysed in terms of size, two further criteria were introduced: popularity (number of replies and number of hits) and content of the title.⁹ This selection resulted in

⁸*Loverboys* are usually portrayed in police and media reports in the Netherlands as a particular category of pimps: young men from ethnic minorities, more often Moroccan, with a career in petty crime, usually good looking, smartly dressed and behaving as wealthy ‘gentlemen’, who recruit and exploit young Dutch or Dutch-Moroccan girls by first becoming their boyfriends and then pushing them into prostitution.

⁹Early July 2006, all topics were visited over 10.000 times.

twenty-five subjects within both sections containing 1,537 messages of which 243 messages contained useful information on women trafficking that could be analysed. These 243 messages were written by 118 different online clients and were further subjected to a basic content analysis. For every discussion, a separate spreadsheet file was produced in which each reaction was registered by date, author and subject. Furthermore, every reaction was also analysed by way of “open coding” in order to grasp the thoughts of online clients about women trafficking. The topics used for the open interviews with clients guided this process of open coding.

5.3 Women Trafficking in the Netherlands

5.3.1 Nature and Extent of Prostitution

There are several forms of prostitution in the Netherlands. The first widely known modality is the so-called window prostitution. Window soliciting is originally a Dutch phenomenon but recently quite common in surrounding countries such as Belgium or Germany. Next to Amsterdam, only a few other large cities have window prostitution. There are twelve “red-light districts” with window prostitution in the Netherlands. Secondly, many prostitutes work on the streets in “toleration zones” (*tippel zones*). These zones were officially installed during the 1980s and 1990s, aimed to reduce the nuisance prostitution caused on the streets (particularly around main train stations) and to increase the safety of prostitutes. The Hague was the first to introduce the official zones providing medical care, and shelters to have a meal, showers and condoms. Although it improved the situation for some prostitutes it also opened up opportunities for women traffickers, illegal prostitutes (without residence permits) and drug dealers. Therefore, the first zone was shut down in Amsterdam in 2003 and various cities, including Rotterdam and The Hague, followed suit. A third form of prostitution can be found in escort services, which according to all sources have been increasing for the last five years. Fourth, many women work as “independent entrepreneurs” in brothels, sex clubs, saunas, sex farms, massage parlours and hotels. They keep all or part of the money paid by clients for the sexual services, while they pay money to the owners of the establishment in a concept of entrance, fee, commission or rent. Finally, many women work in private homes either inviting and/or visiting clients, contacting them through the Internet or mobile phone.

The exact number of prostitutes working in the Netherlands is difficult to calculate due to the large dark number. According to Van der Helm and Van Mens (1999), there were between 20,000 and 25,000 prostitutes working in the Netherlands at the end of the 1990s, of which 68% came from abroad. Ministerial research claims quantities of 25,000 (active) prostitutes in 1997 (WODC, 2004), while in 2005 Asante and Schaapmans (2005) estimated a number of 15,000–20,000

active prostitutes.¹⁰ Other estimations go from 14,000 prostitutes in 1999 (Luykx and Van Soest, 1999) to at least 18,000 prostitutes working only in the visible circuits of windows, clubs and streets (Visser et al., 2000). Alongside the fact that there is no good overview of prostitutes working in hotels, private homes (through telephone and the Internet) and escort services, all sources indicate a large number of illegal prostitutes (prostitutes without a residence permit), making any accurate estimation extremely difficult.

In 1997, the number of illegal prostitutes was estimated to be 40% of the total. The estimation by Asante and Schaapmans (2005) puts the percentage of foreign prostitutes at over 50%. Without a clear view of the definitions used by both researchers to determine the number of illegal prostitutes one can only ascertain a high percentage of illegal prostitutes within the whole market.

In the 1970s, the majority of foreign prostitutes were from Thailand and the Philippines, in the 1980s from Latin America and the Caribbean. After the fall of the Soviet Union, many came from Central and Eastern Europe. In 1999, no more than 33% were Dutch nationals, the remainder representing 44 nationalities. The majority were from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Romania and Poland. At the time, an estimated 5% of prostitutes were male and another 5% transsexual, the majority being migrants (particularly from South East Asia, Brazil and Ecuador). Ten per cent of all prostitutes were drug addicts, the majority Dutch nationals or former Dutch nationals (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

According to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the proceeds of the prostitution business in 2001 amounted to €660 million. This amount includes prostitution as well as exploitation, the legal and the illegal markets (CBS, 2004).

The prostitution industry in the Netherlands is formally organized only to a limited extent. The brothels are organized under two groups: the Union of Exploiters of Relaxation Enterprises (*Vereniging Exploitanten Relaxbedrijven*) and the Excellent Group. The owners of walled-in prostitution that let “working accommodations” are organized in the Consortium of Window Owners (*Samenwerkend Overleg Raamexploitanten*) (Daalder, 2002). In addition to the operators, prostitutes and clients are also organized nationwide. The prostitutes are organized in a foundation called “The Red Thread” (*De Rode Draad*). This foundation was established, following a discussion group in 1984, to serve the interest of prostitutes and (former) sex workers (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). From 1987 onwards, the foundation was subsidized by the Dutch government. For several years, *The Red Thread* has been associated with one of the largest Dutch Trade Unions, the FNV. This association is very important as it offers helpful information about every aspect of labour, from potential contracts up to denouncing abuses. The clients, on the other hand, are often represented in public discussions and media appearances by the foundation Man/Woman and Prostitution (MVP). However, this is a small, low profile organization (it has no home page) that was more active during the 1990s.

At a national level, there are several organizations that are specifically concerned with prostitution. These organizations are represented by the National Prostitution

¹⁰The WODC is the Dutch Scientific Research and Documentation Centre from the Ministry of Justice.

Platform (*Landelijk Prostitutie Overleg*). This platform is an assembly of all parties involved in the prostitution field to gather and exchange information, develop strategies and improve the sector as a whole; that is to improve its image, to disband its connection with crime, support the development of local policies on prostitution and promote the prostitutes' interests.

5.3.2 *The Extent and Social Organization of Women Trafficking*

As with most other crimes, it is impossible to present reliable data on human trafficking due to the hidden nature of the activities. The problems with the “facts and figures” around human trafficking are huge. According to Salt and Hogarth (2000: 31), there is a lack of data, and if available, it is often unclear how the data are gathered. According to these researchers, most statistical data on the number of trafficked people are at best rough estimates based on a set of assumptions. Furthermore, in most countries there is no central registration of human trafficking: different institutions hold different definitions and ultimately poor and incomparable figures (see BNRM, 2007: 9). According to the *Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings* (BNRM),¹¹ insights into the “dark number” of human trafficking are very limited, and victims are often reluctant to step forward out of shame, fear of the traffickers and their possible expulsion. Together with this, not all cases of human trafficking are recognized as such, nor are they systematically registered (BNRM, 2004: 1). In order to share some insights into the volume of women trafficking in the Netherlands, we will present figures based on closed police investigations and on registrations (Table 5.1), as well as figures from NGOs dealing with women trafficking. It should be kept in mind that the figures and trends described do not necessarily reflect trends within women trafficking, and could easily be influenced by changes in the data-gathering methods and context.

Table 5.1 Women trafficking in the Netherlands, 2001–2006

<i>Year</i>	(Possible) victims ^a	Of which minors	Registered cases ^b	Closed police investigations
2001	284	27	130	48
2002	343	41	200	55
2003	257	20	156	42
2004	403	26	220	60
2005	424	24	135	N/D
2006	579 ^c	N/D	N/D	N/D

Source: BNRM (2007), second column pp. 68–69, third column 190, fourth column pp. 141

^aAs registered by the Foundation Against Women Trafficking (STV).

^bCases registered with the Public Prosecutor.

^cPreliminary figures.

¹¹See footnote 14 for a description of the BNRM.

The NGO Foundation Against Women Trafficking (STV) collects data on (possible) victims. Of course, not all victims are reported to the STV. The police are the only party obliged to report victims of women trafficking, but citizens, support organizations or other NGOs can report to the STV. This implies that victims are missing in the figures and may even be counted twice. Nevertheless, the figures collected by the STV reflect the best available figures regarding the number of victims of women trafficking in the Netherlands.

The figures presented in the fourth and fifth columns are based on official police data. They should not be interpreted in terms of mirroring the increase or decrease of cases of women trafficking in the Netherlands, but first of all as figures representing the activities, priorities and capacities of Dutch police.

After the Eastern European borders opened, there was an influx of female sexual workers towards the Netherlands as well as to other European countries. The rise in unemployment figures, changes in familial structures, the position of prostitutes and the situation of ethnic minorities in sending countries are regarded as important (push) factors to explain the flux of these women from Central and Eastern Europe to the Netherlands (Vocks and Nijboer, 2000). According to the Foundation against Women Trafficking (STV), the number of reports on women trafficking doubled in 1993–1994 with offenders as well as victims mainly originating from Central and Eastern European countries (*Parlementaire Enquetecommissie Opsporingsmethoden*, 1996). More recent sources show that the registered victims of trafficking at the Foundation against Women Trafficking still come from Central and Eastern Europe especially from Bulgaria, Rumania and Russia (STV, 2004; BNRM, 2007). Most of the women from Central and Eastern Europe travel by car to the Netherlands (Kleemans et al., 1998: 107). A popular route for Rumanian and Moldavian women is through the Balkans, especially Bosnia Herzegovina and Albania. Most of the women enter the Netherlands via Germany. Women from other continents usually use air transportation. They mostly travel with forged documents or with a tourist visa. The obligation for a visa does not seem to make any difference to the traffickers (BNRM, 2005).

With regard to other countries, Thailand as well as Nigeria are frequently mentioned as important countries of origin. According to the report on *Minors in Prostitution in the Netherlands* (ECPAT, 2003), women from Nigeria enter the country as UMAs (unaccompanied minor asylum seekers) to later disappear to work in the prostitution. Recently, the number of Moroccan and Czech victims has been on the increase, as well as the number of Dutch victims during the years 2004 and 2005. As the newly published *Monitor of Human Trafficking in the Netherlands* shows, Dutch trafficked women compose a substantial percentage of the victims (BNRM, 2007). Recently, a large transnational active network of Turkish traffickers who exploited not only migrant women but also women with Dutch, German and Irish backgrounds was arrested.¹²

¹²It turned out that the majority of the 90 exploited prostitutes worked in the legalised and controlled formal brothels (*NRC Handelsblad*, February 10, 2007).

Most victims of women trafficking are between 18 and 25 years of age (Vocks and Nijboer, 2000; BNRM, 2005, 2007), unmarried and without children. Relatively often, victims of women trafficking, especially Central European victims, come from problematic families – single-parent families, alcohol-abusing parents, incest, mistreatment, financial and housing problems, psycho-social problems, etc. Many women were living with their parents on whom they were financially dependent. A large number of victims had already worked as a prostitute before and more than 50% knew that they would have to work in the sex industry. The educational background of victims differs between countries and periods. In the past, victims from Central Europe were usually better educated, as is the current generation from Eastern Europe. Recently, however, victims from Central Europe have shown lower educational levels and also a lesser degree of social integration in their home countries (Vocks and Nijboer, 2000).

Far less is known about the social organization of groups or networks of those engaged in women trafficking as entrepreneurs, pimps, intermediaries or facilitators. Most research is based on police and judicial files and from face-to-face interviews with women, police officials and legal sex operators.

Women traffickers often engage in small and ethnic homogenous networks in which ethnic and kinship relations play a central role, rather than forming large heterogeneous organizations or groups (Kleemans et al., 1998, 2002; Staring et al., 2005). In most cases, these networks consist of only a few traffickers who run all the different aspects of the business. Characteristic of most of these networks is the high level of violence used by the traffickers towards the female victims. Traffickers often try to take the women hostage by confiscating their identification documents, the money they earn or by the threat and even actual use of violence (Staring et al., 2005).

Recruiters are often acquainted with their victims. The traffickers look for women in their circle of friends in cafes, bars or in prostitution establishments. They promise a prospect of a well-paid position (prostitution or non-prostitution) with excellent working conditions. Because potential victims have neither the money, nor the connections, traffickers offer to arrange the necessary documents, including false identity papers or tickets. At a later stage, this debt bonding is often used as coercion (Vocks and Nijboer, 2000; Staring et al., 2005: 60–71). A more extreme method is the kidnapping or sale of women.

Exploiters use several ways to control victims, especially those without experience in prostitution, and prevent them from contacting the police or other organizations. According to Vocks and Nijboer (2000), these include:

- threat of or actual violence, rape and/or ill treatment of the victim
- threat or actual violence against the family of the victim
- coercion by debt bonding
- withholding money for a return ticket and seizure of identification papers
- confinement of victims at their workplace
- constant monitoring and prohibiting any contacts with family or friends
- tattooing of victims without their consent (as a title deed)

- selling or threat of selling to other pimps
- threat of expulsion by the police
- inducing fear about police corruption

A recent study by Bovenkerk et al. (2006) on the so-called *loverboy* phenomenon in Amsterdam shows that this supposedly “new” form of pimping is more complex than the simplistic image presented by media, help organizations, women and pimps themselves. While the authors do not deny this form of “modern” pimping, they challenge dominant views and socially constructed stereotypes that have all the ingredients of moral panic and urban mythologies. Cases involving “bad” Moroccans or Antilleans recruiting and exploiting “innocent” native Dutch young women are far less prevalent than believed, involve old well-known methods of recruitment and exploitation of women, often imply initiative and manipulation by the women themselves, and should be understood within the framework of a risk society (management of “threats” and enemies), multicultural conflicts (“ethnicization” of social problems), media culture (hip hop) and new forms of sexuality among Dutch youth.

More concerned with the situation of migrant women in the prostitution in the Netherlands and in their country of origin, Hopkins (2005) even talks about the “myth” of women trade, a concept that only regards women as passive victims to be helped and rescued, while it obscures more important projects (for the women) such as (labour) migration. Again, without denying exploitation and coercion by intermediaries (often men and women known to the women or from a close cultural or ethnic background), she shows the incoherence and futility of any perspective (and policy intervention) that ignores or denies these women their status and rights as labour migrants.

Whitehead and Demirdek (2004: 5) argue against the victimization discourse of human trafficking: “innocence, youth and victimization caught in a sordid ordeal of coercive practices and fraudulent promises”. These anthropologists favour a perspective that highlights the lived experience of those who have actively chosen commercial sex work, and are simultaneously students, maids or traders.

5.4 Legislation and Policies in the Netherlands

5.4.1 *National Legislation and Policies on Immigration*

Immigration control policies in the Netherlands can be characterized as rather pragmatic, as “an inevitable outcome of economic needs and humanitarian considerations” (Muus, 2004: 265). Muus describes Dutch immigration policies of the last decades as largely ad hoc, reactive instead of “proactively shaping the conditions for immigration” (ibid.: 266). In retrospect, the overall tendency is towards a more restrictive Dutch migration policy, a discouragement of illegal stay, and a further tightening of the opportunities for illegal aliens on the formal labour market and in

gaining access to the facilities of the welfare state. The focus of immigration policies slowly shifted from external to internal control; from controlling physical borders to raising barricades with administrative measures (see Entzinger, 2002).

Contrary to what policy makers first expected, most of the immigrants stayed and initiated further migration. The absolute number of immigrants – or ethnic minorities – gradually grew from 206,000 in 1971 to 648,000 in 1985 to around 1,600,000 people with a non-Western background in the Netherlands. As a consequence, almost 10% of the total population residing in the Netherlands by 2002 has a non-Western background (Statistics Netherlands, 2002; see Van der Leun, 2003: 12). To a large extent, these immigrants live in the urban areas.

With respect to the position of Dutch government towards the influx and settlement of illegal immigrants from the early 1960s onwards, three phases can be distinguished (Engbersen, 1999: 15–20). All the phases are characterized by specific formal migration patterns and accompanied by illegal migration flows and the settlement of illegal migrants from different source countries. The different phases are accompanied by different migration regimes and attitudes towards the residence of illegal aliens.

The *first phase* of *gastarbeiter* recruitment started in the early 1960s and lasted until 1969. This period of labour recruitment is also characterized as a period in which immigrants irrespective of their legal status were welcomed. Although a large part of the labour force was recruited formally by employers and soon under the supervision of Dutch government, labour immigrants also started to travel on their own to the Netherlands. Those immigrants that came “unofficially” and not through formal recruitment channels were labelled as “spontaneous immigrants”. Instead of excluding them, employers welcomed them as much as the formally recruited. The “spontaneous labour immigrants” were motivated and cheap as no mediation costs had to be incurred, and could easily be included in the booming labour market. Formal entry restrictions were limited and rather easy to fulfil. In 1968, a law was implemented that should have ended the spontaneous influx of labour immigrants as from then on everyone was obliged to obtain a work permit in their home countries (Engbersen, 1999: 16). Sometimes human smugglers are mentioned in research reports, but their activities are not problematized. During this period, illegal immigrants could easily get a work permit after finding a job, and in the long run a residence permit awaited them (Staring, 2001; Engbersen and Van der Leun, 2001).

The *second phase* is characterized by family reunification and started in 1969 onwards till the end of the 1980s. Although there were some new entry restrictions implemented for foreigners, like for instance visa controls for people from Mediterranean countries such as Turkey and Morocco, the number of immigrants increased during this period especially due to family reunification programs and the arrival of immigrants from (former) Dutch colonies like Suriname. This period is portrayed as a period of “tolerance”; although illegal immigrants were not allowed to enter the country and stay without “documents”, their stay and activities in various labour markets was “silently tolerated as ‘necessary workforce’” and no active policies were implemented. Many illegal immigrants were registered at their municipality and possessed a social-fiscal number that allowed them to participate in the formal labour market.

During the *third* and still ongoing *phase*, the number of immigrants in the Netherlands has grown as a result of birth, family formation and the entrance of asylum seekers and refugees. Among the unintentional outcomes of former colonial policies, economic interventions and the recruitment of guest workers in the early 1960s are the economic, cultural and relational linkages and bridges created between the Netherlands and non-European countries, resulting in sizeable ethnic populations in the Netherlands (Engbersen et al., 2002: 138–139). During this period, which is characterized as a period of *exclusion* of illegal immigrants, several laws were implemented to combat illegal entry and discourage illegal stay and illegal labour.¹³ According to Engbersen et al. (2001), this change into a policy of exclusion was motivated by two developments: first, the increasing number of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands during the 1990s, and, secondly, the end of a lenient policy towards long-term unemployed Dutch citizens. These changes affected the position of illegal immigrants in the Netherlands as they were driven towards the informal economy and into the hands of labour recruiters and more or less informal employment agencies (see Staring, 2004). During this phase, the presence of illegal immigrants is increasingly associated with the abuse of social services as well as with crime.

The elections of November 2006 marked a shift from the polarizing discourse on immigration and integration towards a much more general discussion on social cohesion, unity and welfare. Apart from some small rightist parties, the dominant political perspective was much more focused towards inclusive policies and the potential contribution of immigrants to Dutch society. The new Social-Christian government – Balkenende IV – relocated the integration portfolio from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Housing, Planning, and Environment. With this movement, it is believed that integration is not so much perceived as a problem of individual immigrants, but much more as a matter of disadvantaged socio-economic positions that should be improved. Among the measures taken in the newly developed integration policies is the amnesty for a large part of the (rejected) asylum seekers that applied for asylum before 1 April 2001 and who were still living in the Netherlands (see Keeney Nana, 2007).

During the last four decades, we have witnessed a social reclassification of illegal immigrants from “spontaneous labourers” to “undesired and excluded illegal immigrants” (Engbersen and Van der Leun, 2001). This reconfiguration of the “spontaneous labour migrant” into the “new untouchable” (Harris, 1995) coincides with increasingly tougher controls on illegal stay and entry. For the moment, the formal exclusion of illegal immigrants has culminated in two complementary white papers *Return Policy. Measures for a More Effective Enforcement of Return Policies*

¹³ Among the most important laws that were implemented during the 1990s that had a direct impact on the position of illegal immigrants in Dutch society are the linking of the social-fiscal number to a valid residence status in 1991, which excluded illegal immigrants from participating in the formal labor market, the Compulsory Identification Act of 1994, the Marriage of Convenience Act of 1994, the Linking Act in 1998 and the Aliens Act in 2000 (see Staring, 1998, Engbersen and Van der Leun, 2001).

(TK 29344/1, 2003) and *Illegal Aliens* (DVB, 2004). After measures aimed at reducing the asylum influx, these white papers stress the necessity of an effective return policy combined with measures aiming at discouraging illegal stay.

Looking back at the 1990s, it is difficult to sustain that Dutch immigration policies can still be characterized as reactive. Increasingly, it is noticed that these migration policies are proactive in a sense that politicians and policy makers actively seek to control the entrance of new immigrants and is keen on discouraging illegal stay. The two latest white papers described above are exemplary for these proactive migration policies. According to Cornelius et al. (2004), most attempts by the Dutch government to narrow the gaps between immigration control policies and its outcomes, especially in the field of irregular migration, have not seriously altered the image of the Netherlands as a welcoming country and come with unintended consequences. Especially in the field of entry and irregular migration, these efforts resulted in a stronger position of human smuggling organizations (2004: 30).

5.4.2 National Legislation and Policies on Human Smuggling and Trafficking

Although human smuggling and trafficking are often mentioned as synonyms and treated as equivalents, they do have a different history and refer to different topics. Human smuggling is first of all a newly defined crime in the Netherlands and, secondly, has always been directly related to controlling international migration. After 9/11, human smuggling has also been increasingly connected with the global fight against international terrorism.

The history of human trafficking dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century and has traditionally been associated with prostitution in Dutch criminal law. It is only at a much latter stage that the Dutch government explicitly links human trafficking with global processes such as international migration and transnational organized crime (Nationaal Actieplan Mensenhandel, 2004). Attention on human trafficking increased especially after the break down of socialist regimes in the early 1990s. Still, as the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (BNRM)¹⁴ already mentions in their first informative report (2002), human trafficking

¹⁴Already in 1904, the Netherlands subscribed to the 'International regulation with respect to the fight of the so-called trafficking in women and girls' and obliged itself to gather information on women trafficking through a separate institution. After the foundation of the first National Office by Dutch government in 1908, the independent *Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings* (BNRM) was appointed in 2000. This was done after a meeting of the European Union Member States where a statement on human trafficking was signed (the so-called *The Hague Declaration*) including the recommendation to install independent national rapporteurs on human trafficking in all EU member states (BNRM, 2002: 50–51, 68). Until 2002 only Belgium and Sweden had a comparable 'national rapporteur on human trafficking'. Other EU member states have not shown similar initiatives (BNRM, 2002: 68). Among the main goals of the National Rapporteur are the collecting information on human trafficking and reporting on this to the Dutch government (BNRM, 2004: 6).

can occur within a national territory, without victims crossing borders. Both crimes are framed within organized crime and dealt with by special teams within the National Criminal Investigation Service and both have their own information centre: the IAM for human smuggling and the BNRM for human trafficking. A major difference between human smuggling and trafficking is that the latter crime has its roots in debates on morality whereas human smuggling started as a border control issue.

Most police regions say that human trafficking is high on their priority agenda (Hopkins and Nijboer, 2001). But police investigations into trafficking in human beings are difficult and time consuming. Communication with the victim is also very difficult, due to language barriers, re-migrating victims as well as different cultural perceptions of sexuality and prostitution. The Public Prosecutor agrees that the police do not take up many trafficking cases. The lack of capacity is the main reason for the fact that a lot of offenders are not prosecuted. In 2003, 106 persons were sentenced for human trafficking (BNRM, 2005).

More than 90% of the suspects in the criminal women trafficking cases were resident in the Netherlands, but the majority of the apprehended traffickers were born in Central and Eastern Europe, especially Bulgaria and Albania (BNRM, 2005). The criminal network is mostly spread over more than one country. For the Dutch Public Prosecutor it is hard to detect and prosecute people that live in non-EU countries. Most of the time only the Dutch part of the criminal network is prosecuted (Van Dijk, 2002).

5.4.3 National Legislation and Policies on Prostitution and Women Trafficking

Prostitution as such has never been illegal in the Netherlands as long as it was voluntary (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). Clients are not punishable by law, unless those providing the sexual services are minors (art. 248c of the Criminal Code).

In 1911, the Netherlands adopted legislation prohibiting brothels and the exploitation of prostitution. This legislation lasted almost 90 years, but for the last 50 years there existed a policy of toleration (*gedoogbeleid*) on brothels, sex clubs and red-light windows. On 1 October 2000, articles 250bis and 432 were removed from the Criminal Code and the ban on brothels and pimping lifted. Since then it has been legal to run a business where men or women over the age of consent are voluntarily employed as prostitutes. The person running the business must satisfy certain conditions, obtain a license from the local authorities and pay taxes. Sex clubs, brothels and escort services may therefore operate as legal businesses (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). Prostitutes are also obliged to pay taxes and have the right to receive social benefits, health insurance and pensions.

The Netherlands was the first country in Europe to abolish the prohibition of brothels (Scholtes, 2000). The discussion to put an end to this prohibition started in the early 1980s, predominantly initiated by organized prostitutes, women's organizations, and social and medical workers. The overall goal was to improve the

position of prostitutes through legislation (Dütting, 2001). At that time, there were huge numbers of red-light windows, escort services, and prostitutes working on the streets or at home, all being endured and coerced. Illegal prostitutes lacking valid residence permits, like other illegal immigrants living in the Netherlands, were by and large tolerated during the 1980s (Daalder, 2002). It was not until the last decade that Dutch policies gradually changed their attitude and started to develop policies aimed at marginalizing and excluding illegal immigrants from daily life in Dutch society (Engbersen et al., 2006).

The idea came to exist that prostitution was impossible to eliminate and thus it should be regulated in ways that would decrease the undesirable consequences (harm reduction), an approach also followed for example in the field of illegal drugs. The abolition of the ban on brothels from October 2000 was supposed to achieve the following six objectives (Goderie et al., 2002; Goderie and Boutellier, 2006: 16–17):

- (a) The control and regulation of the exploitation of prostitution
- (b) Improve the fight against of involuntary prostitution
- (c) Protect minors against sexual assaults
- (d) Protect the prostitute's position in terms of exploitation, violence and bad working conditions
- (e) Combat the links between crime and prostitution (drugs, firearms)
- (f) Protect foreign nationals who are illegally prostituting in the Netherlands

Along with lifting the ban on brothels, the change of 2000 introduced art. 250a into the Criminal Code (which replaced the older 250 ter). This article mentioned the forms in which sexual exploitation of human beings were punishable: forced bringing or keeping of persons into prostitution, the bringing or keeping of minors into prostitution (voluntarily or not) or bringing persons from other countries into prostitution (voluntarily or not). According to article 250a, it was also punishable to make a profit from the aforementioned circumstances (Hopkins and Nijboer, 2001). In other words, art. 250a made a distinction between legal exploitation of prostitution (voluntary and adults) and trafficking in human beings (involuntary, minors or cross-border).

On 1 January 2005, article 273a replaced article 250a of 2000, expanding human trafficking beyond the realm of sexual exploitation (prostitution). As well as criminalizing the exploiting of another person for the purpose of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, article 273a also prohibits forced or compulsory labour or services, slavery, practices comparable with slavery or servitude, and trafficking in organs.

Anyone who forces another person to engage in prostitution, induces a minor to engage in prostitution, recruits, takes away or abducts a person to engage in prostitution in another country, profits from prostitution involving a minor or forced prostitution or forces another person to surrender the proceeds of prostitution is liable to a custodial sentence of up to six years and/or a fine up to €45,000. In the event of aggravating circumstances (the victim is under the age of 16 or if two persons committed the offence acting in concert), the sentence may be raised to a

maximum of 8 or 10 years. If the offence involves serious physical injury or danger to life, the penalty may be raised to a maximum of 12 years and to a maximum of 15 years for loss of life (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

In the Netherlands, traffickers and exploiters can be prosecuted without a declaration by a victim. But in the interest of the investigation and the prosecution, it is often desirable that victims or eventual witnesses tell their story to the police (Hopkins and Nijboer, 2001). Victims can stay in the Netherlands for a longer period at the disposal of the Public Prosecutor. The so-called B-9 regulation serves this purpose (Pieters, 2006). Its additional purpose is to offer shelter and protection to the victims. The victim is offered a period of three months, in which she has to take a decision whether she wishes to make a declaration of trafficking in human beings. If the victim decides to make a declaration, then this declaration is considered officially as an application for the granting of a residence permit for a determined period of time. Since December 2004, victims are allowed to work under the “B-9” ruling. It is however difficult to find work for these women. Some of the women want to earn money and then go back to their native countries or go back into illegal prostitution. According to the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), 122 women received a “B-9” permit in 2001. After the trial, the victim is sent back to the country of origin, which according to the National Reporter in Human Trafficking (BNRM, 2003), takes an average of 6 months. Only if it is too dangerous for them to go back, does the victim get a permanent permit (on humanitarian grounds). Very few victims were granted a permanent permit in the recent years.

5.5 Law Enforcement Practices on Prostitution and Women Trafficking

We will now focus on how the legislation and policies on women trafficking and prostitution have been applied and translated in terms of concrete interventions (law enforcement, controls, regulation, licenses, etc.). It is still a question whether, according to the secondary and primary data collected, the six aims mentioned above that guided the legislative and policy changes introduced in 2000 have been partially or totally achieved after 7 years.

5.5.1 Regulating and Controlling the Licensed Prostitution Sector

While lifting the ban on brothels at a national level, the Dutch government left to local authorities the task of formulating policy upon this matter, of course in line with national legislation (Goderie et al., 2002). They also had to implement the policies, issue licenses, etc. Every brothel operating within their jurisdiction had to have a license issued by the local authorities.

This new policy line on prostitution has to be primarily implemented by three policy domains: Care and Assistance, Public Security and Environmental Planning (Ngasirin, 2003). Within this framework, the policy has to contribute to the broad scope of public security: to protect the public from prostitution-related crime and to protect prostitutes from sexual violence and coercion. Environmental planning is used to determine the location of brothels, ensuring minimal disturbance for the surrounding residents. Finally, the domain of care and assistance is very important in offering healthcare to prostitutes. The local authorities are responsible for an easy access to health care, however medical checkups are not compulsory (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

The monitoring of brothels is logically also a local authority undertaking. It is primarily the (local) police that strive to ensure that brothels satisfy the conditions of their licenses. Brothels that fail to comply are liable to administrative punishment or, depending on the violation, can be prosecuted for the offences covered by article 273a of the Criminal Code.

According to a recent WODC evaluation report,¹⁵ all municipalities have almost completed the licensing process and carry out inspections to a greater or lesser extent. The police still play the most important role in monitoring the licensed sector, but lack however the capacity to monitor and investigate the unlicensed (illegal) sector. This situation is regarded as unfair by legal operators, undermining their willingness to comply with rules and cooperate with controls (Daalder, 2007).

In Rotterdam, one of the four major Dutch cities, regular controls of the legal sector fall under the responsibility of the district teams,¹⁶ but are often conducted by different officials such as regular police officers controlling the catering industry, treasury employees as well as members of special units fighting human trafficking. During such routine controls, licenses are checked, employee names are registered for potential tax payers, and specific agents check the identities of prostitutes and their legal status. Moreover, anti-human trafficking officials try to establish a certain kind of rapport with the prostitutes by introducing themselves and by asking them questions. These questions focus on the working conditions of the prostitutes, their working hours and the type of contract they are working under. They ask about their motives for working in the brothel, about their time in prostitution and about their colleagues. They pay attention to any signs of exploitation and human trafficking. They leave personal cards and ask the women to call them if they know or hear something. According to some respondents from the police, this attempt to build rapport has two goals. First of all, to fight human trafficking and the difficulties of gathering evidence in cases of trafficking. Prostitutes are seen as central and important key witnesses against human traffickers and, by building a rapport, officers try to increase the likelihood that one of them will come forward

¹⁵ This evaluation study (Daalder, 2007) includes three sub-studies carried out in 2006 by different research institutes under the supervision of the WODC on municipal policies, regulation and enforcement, on the social position of prostitutes in the licensed sector, and on the nature and scale of various forms of illegal prostitution.

¹⁶ The city of Rotterdam is divided into several districts.

with information on exploitation and trafficking. Secondly, this approach corresponds to the goal set by the legalization of brothels of protecting women against involuntary participation in prostitution and exploitation. But local authorities, labour inspections and the tax services remain in a complex position when it comes to brothels (Pot, 2003).

The routine controls only shed light on the problems to a limited extent. The focus of these controls is on “law maintenance” rather than on “investigation” and “law enforcement”. As a consequence, the actors inside these brothels are treated as customers and tax payers rather than potential offenders. Not much effort is put into concealing these visits and pimps as well as illegal prostitutes have all opportunities to hide, to flee and to inform other brothels and colleagues. The observations made during some of these controls and interviews with clients that were there during these controls confirm that owners were well informed of these visits and had instructed prostitutes as well as clients to behave in certain ways. These controls can hardly present any insights into illegal prostitution, let alone human trafficking.

Daalder (2007) points out that the “legalized” exploiters and women now feel more controlled and restricted than when they moved in a “tolerated” criminal environment. Most clients interviewed confirm this picture: they unanimously welcome the “idea” of legalization but actually experience the increased controls and regulations as a form of criminalization, as an attempt to track down prostitution. Jan Peter, one of the clients interviewed who regards a brothel as his own local pub, said about legalization:

“It has been legalized for the tax office, because it came to realize that these girls are making good money. Obviously, taxes should be paid, that’s what they believed, and then it had to be legalized.”

Leen, another client who also visits prostitutes in Germany and Belgium, is even more critical:

“It is my opinion that the entire legalization of prostitution in the Netherlands is mainly aimed by the authorities to strangle the sector. They are selling us the legalization as an instrument to eradicate abuses but, no, they just want to put more restrictions to prostitution and if possible make it disappear from the country.”

5.5.2 Several Forms of Displacement

We can point out various forms of displacement as a result of new regulations and controls. First, although Daalder (2007) found no evidence of local relocation, several sources indicate a shift from one type of business and setting to another. One trend is that both legal and illegal prostitution have moved from traditional public forms of prostitution (street, windows and brothels) to more private and invisible realms (backstage) such as the escort service (an extremely flexible notion with few rules and control), saunas, massage parlours, private houses, mobile

phones or the Internet. Of course, this shift from front- to backstage or invisible places is also influenced by more “autonomous” market and technological developments such as the spread of the Internet and mobile phones, new media, migration fluxes or the diversification of erotic services (Goderie et al., 2002). The “Red Thread” points out a decline in clients in certain sectors, another possible indicator of displacement. Clients seem to have a preference for massage parlours and saunas and ignore the classic brothels with the floor covering against the ceiling, the red lights and the “Frans Bauer” music¹⁷ (Altink and Bokelman, 2006). The “Red Thread” also found a marked increase in Thai parlours, a development that we were able to confirm in our interviews and observations.

Police officers explicitly dealing with (forced) prostitution also pointed to this shift towards the illegal market after the legalization in 2000. A member of the CPM unit claims that:

“This legalization has brought about something. That I know for sure. And, of course, the sex business has not decreased, but it did change, it organized itself differently. ‘Back room politics’ as it is called sometimes, did increase. But you could only guess, as you do not know for sure. What you do not control, you cannot know”.

According to one of the coordinators of the police control team on prostitution and human trafficking (CPM), part of the brothels could not meet the requirements needed in order to legalize their situation, continuing however in the business illegally and out of sight of inspectors and other authorities. This movement towards backstage places also meets the needs of clients as they seek a certain level of secrecy and anonymity.

Femke confirms the fact that there has been a drastic reduction in window prostitution. She has a friend who now advertises on the Internet and rents a room once a week where she receives her clients: easy to do and invisible for controls.

A second form of displacement implies internal movement from one place to another. Not so much the result of legalization, but much more a possible outcome of increased controls is the literal displacement of the phenomena towards another region or municipality with less strict regulations or enforcement (Daalder, 2007). Control does not mean that the demand for prostitution diminishes or decreases. According to one of the experts:

“If you would control the escort sector in Rotterdam every week, this market will move towards another area where there is less or no control on the escort sector” (Coordinator – CPM unit).

The increase of the escort sector in Amsterdam is a good example of this.

A third trend shows women and clients moving outside the Netherlands. In line with more general trends of increasingly feminized and heterogeneous migration flows towards Western countries, most interviewees agreed that a larger variety of women exists today in the Netherlands than 8 years ago in terms of country of origin, with a marked increase of women from Eastern Europe. Having said this, particularly from our interviews with clients and observations, we could also state

¹⁷Frans Bauer is a popular Dutch singer.

the move of non-EU women with no residence permit to other Western European countries. According to interviewed clients, this second form of displacement was due to the strength of (migration) controls. Many non-EU women – particularly from Eastern Europe – seem to prefer other countries such as Germany rather than the Netherlands. We found both by analysing the Internet forums and during our observations in German and Dutch saunas not only evidence of such displacement of prostitutes, but also an interesting flux of Dutch “sex tourists” that would visit German clubs and saunas due to the more varied origin of women and relaxed atmosphere. The growth of this “local” form of sex tourism (by car, no overnight stay) is certainly linked to a more general increasing trend of sex tourism towards the borders of Europe (Russia, Rumania, etc.), North Africa and specific Asian countries (Thailand, Cambodia, etc.). This displacement of the demand following a displacement or decrease of foreign women has also been indicated by Daalder (2007).

5.5.3 *Combating the Exploitation of Involuntary Prostitution*

Due to displacement towards backstage places, the police are increasingly dependent on anonymous reports, tips, incidents, statements by witnesses or by the outcomes of routine controls.

Insights into backstage prostitution are lacking as there is hardly any control or monitoring of these fleeting prostitution movements. According to one of the experts from the CPM of Rotterdam, it is not only a matter of difficult control, but also a matter of *lack* or *absence* of control. In other words, there is hardly any control on, for instance, escort service. In those rare cases where they were controlled, it turned out that all escort agencies somehow committed an offence.

Interesting is the case of one of the visited sauna clubs: Although we found many women from Poland and Hungary who slept there and worked in the sauna 7 days a week (€50 for half an hour in one of the 18 available rooms), they were officially “visitors” to the place and had no contractual relations with the sauna. For a fixed price of €50, the sauna offers a wide range of facilities and services, including sauna, whirlpool, restaurant and bar, porno cinema and a key to spend some time in one of their private rooms. While the owner does not know or register who goes with whom, or even if a commercial transaction takes place between the man and the woman, he does not admit (according to some male visitors), women from outside the EU and those under 18. We found however women with no resident permits, several young women (very popular with the male visitors) and pimps waiting outside the sauna. Here we have a good example of a “legal” business that can offer a nest to involuntary prostitution and is hardly controlled by the authorities. The same can be said of couple clubs and massage salons (Daalder, 2007).

Asante and Schaapman (2005), in their research about the invisibility of the sex industry, are extremely skeptical regarding the positive impact of legalization. According to them, the legalization of brothels may be a failure. Interviewing

those involved in the business, they studied the flows towards the invisible forms of prostitution like the escort services. In their opinion, without a law regulating escort services, legalization is an empty promise.

The empirical research by Goderie and Boutllier (2006) underlines the skeptical view of Asante and Schaapman. These researchers describe how, due to the legalization of prostitution, the number of formal brothels has declined and how the majority of all prostitutes working in Rotterdam around early 2006 are working illegally in backstage places instead of being formally employed in legal brothels.

According to one of the leading figures of the CPM team fighting human trafficking, the prostitutes that lack valid residence papers have, by and large, left the formal regular brothels. In the regulated sector, they mainly come across “victims of loverboys” whereas involuntary prostitution by illegal residents can be found in the escort branch:

“And if you are looking for the prostitutes who are forced or those who are really exploited, then you have to go to the illegal pubs, the bars where ‘animation’ and prostitution is done secretly.”

Due to the fragmentation of the prostitution circuit and the backstage movement of the most vulnerable and potential exploitative forms of prostitution, the police face an increasingly difficult task controlling this business.

As we explained earlier, the police are able to control and inspect the more visible forms of prostitution, while is either inefficient or incapable of controlling the escort branch or private prostitution via the Internet or telephone, both forms of prostitution intensified also by the easy access (van Duin, 2005). Moreover, they mainly target sex operators and not pimps operating in the background mainly in the window, escort and private home sectors. Indeed, the number of prostitutes with pimps has not declined.

Despite these facts, Daalder (2007) claims that it is “more likely” that human trafficking has become more difficult after one section of the prostitution sector is more regulated and controlled. However, she correctly points out the impossibility of producing reliable numbers to support that claim.

5.5.4 The Situation of the Prostitutes Improved?

All sources indicate that the number of women working in the legalized prostitution sector have declined since 2000 (Van der Helm and Van Mens, 1999; WODC, 2004; Asante and Schaapmans, 2005; Daalder, 2007). Some researchers even claim that due to the “2000 legalization”, the number of prostitutes informally employed in the illegal sector surpassed the number of those employed in the legalized sector. For the city of Rotterdam, an educated guess on the number of prostitutes in the different sectors supports this claim (Goderie and Boutellier, 2006). As a consequence, knowledge about this market has decreased. It is also unclear whether the overall position of prostitutes has improved at all. As mentioned above, local

authorities are responsible for the implementation of policy upon this matter. They may set by-laws to insure health care, better working conditions and forbid abuse. Prostitutes are in theory better protected by local and national legislation. The industry now has to comply with labour laws, like paying taxes and social insurance. Therefore, a prostitute forced to end her profession because of reasons beyond her control is eligible for unemployment benefit, like employees in any other sector. In this prospect, the unemployed, ex-prostitute or not, has to be available for another acceptable job. When prostitutes however decide to quit for any reasons other than those beyond their control they are not qualified to obtain unemployment benefit but can rely on social services (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

According to the "Red Thread", some advantages arose from the lifting of the prohibition. It is, for example, now possible for a prostitute to open a business bank account; they can tax-reduce their medical checkups and are liable for the above-mentioned social services. In their opinion nevertheless there is still much to be improved in the prostitute's position (Sparenberg, 2005). In a more recent report, the "Red Thread" concludes, after a thorough examination of the overall situation in the prostitution sector, that we can speak of a slight improvement in respect to the situation before 2000. But still fundamental human rights are being violated and basic regulations on the rights of entrepreneurs and sex workers are widely broken. Some improvements such as extremely long working days no longer being considered to be normal, contrast with the lack of regulation in labour relations, working conditions and contractual terms. Employment contracts, if present, mostly resemble strangle-contracts, and the earnings of many women, particularly in remote areas, have declined (Altink and Bokelman, 2006). They are also very critical of the responsibilities of local authorities, which in many cases do not know how to deal with the problem, or deny prostitutes licenses to start as independent entrepreneurs themselves.

The legal position of the prostitute as employee/worker as defined by law remains difficult to achieve in practice. Research also shows that labour inspections, social services and tax services do not feel responsible for improving the position of the prostitute despite the ambition of the policy (Dutch Ministry of Justice, 2002).

During our own observations, mainly conducted in sex clubs and saunas, we found a majority of non-native Dutch women, either from second generation ethnic minorities, EU citizens with working permits or non-EU citizens with Dutch nationality. These observations do not allow for conclusions about the impact of legalization since we were not able to compare the situation before 2000. Although sex entrepreneurs claimed to follow the rules and cooperate with police controls, we got the impression that those controls were mainly aimed at spotting illegal and forced prostitution and that neither the women nor clients were very enthusiastic or cooperative with the police.

The women we spoke to, working in very different settings, were rather critical about what legalization has actually meant. Esther, clearly not very happy that the tax office controls her earnings, explained that:

“...you have more rights but also more obligations. You can ask for a loan or a mortgage, but I did not try yet...”

Melanie, an Albanian woman working in a window in Amsterdam, also sees that while obligations such as paying taxes are really enforced, rights such as opening a bank account are only on paper, since banks refuse to open an account for a prostitute. She also complains that the tax office do not trust her or treat her correctly as they do other persons. But on the other hand she claims that she would do something else if she could work illegally in hotels or client homes. In fact, she prefers the situation before 2000 in which “...even when it was illegal [prostitution], the windows were legal. So that was exactly: all the line was fifty-fifty. It was fifty-fifty, so I think I choose for fifty-fifty...”

Femke, a Dutch woman working in a private house in Utrecht, is definitely for legalization, but again very critical about what happens in practice:

“...you can put on paper that this is normal work, but if most people disagree and there exists moral prejudices about it, then they will still be regarded and treated as not normal. (...) I then have to pay taxes, but I simply don't do it. I find it nonsense. I do not earn so much and still the government wants something from it: I say cheers! And wait to see how they help you if you have a back problem. I am not eligible for WAO [benefits in case of illness] and I have to insure myself with a very expensive contribution since I am in a so-called 'high risk' group. That's not the way people with normal jobs are treated.”

Whereas the legalization of brothels, among other things, meant to turn prostitution into “normal” labour, the question remains whether this profession is normalized within Dutch society (Pot, 2003). Prostitutes are now entitled to a legal status and registration as self-employed businesswomen (independent entrepreneurs). However, national figures show that they are hesitant to register themselves (Dütting, 2001). Reasons include unwillingness to pay taxes, being uninformed about the legal change and their rights but primarily the wish to remain anonymous. According to the spokeswoman of the Prostitutes Union Trade, the stigma of being a prostitute remains despite the new legislation. Prostitution seems to be far from being normalized.

5.5.5 Illegal Practices Among Licensed Operators

The “Red Thread” found in their recent study that many women, especially from Eastern Europe, live at their place of work. That makes them completely dependent on the operator, especially in remote areas and small places. During our observations, for example, we found that many women slept in the sauna where they worked 7 days a week. Moreover, many prostitution businesses do not particularly organize their management neatly, opening room for exploitation of workers, tax evasion and other abuses (Altink and Bokelman, 2006). They also claim that as a result of the new rules and controls, the number of licensed sex businesses has drastically declined. That was certainly not an aim of the new policy, since it

would simply imply that sex entrepreneurs and women are moving to the “illegal” prostitution circuit.

For those who legally stay in business, there exist many opportunity structures that allow them to break rules and to combine several legal and illegal practices including the illegal exploitation of women (women trafficking).

First of all, according to Altink and Bokelman (2006), the rules of “independent entrepreneurship” (whatever they are, since each municipality interprets the concept in a different way) are violated. Operators still use deceptive constructions such as shared-ownerships and corporations and maintain control over supposedly independent (women) entrepreneurs. Many Eastern European women are on paper registered as independent entrepreneurs but in practice they work as paid employees, which is forbidden by law.

Secondly, some sources point out that many municipalities are unable to enforce transparency in the management due to inefficient controls, unclear rules and/or hypo- or hypertrophy of rules.

Thirdly, our material also shows that legal operators are often confronted (with or without their knowledge) with cases of document fraud. Respondents closely connected with the prostitution scene at The Hague (mainly windows and brothels) explained that many Eastern European women do not actually come from the countries indicated on their passports. Kees, who has sold food to street prostitutes for almost 10 years, explains that

“You have the well-known case of the so-called ‘Baltic’ women. They come from all over, Russia, Moldavia, Rumania, but come to Holland with a Latvian passport. I see them all the time, they say they come from Latvia or Estonia, but speak Moldavian...”

He also claims that experienced window owners know about this, but ignore the problem as long as the women can show a valid EU passport. Femke also refers to many women from Eastern Europe who arrive with an Italian passport.

We also found many indications of illegal practices among legal sex operators and legal prostitutes. Femke explained that in the recent years many window owners have built more rooms in the same number of square meters, making rooms smaller while expanding their rent income. She claims that this has happened behind the backs of the police and the tax office, increasing tax evasion and money laundering.

As described before, in the legal sauna clubs we visited we found pimps and women with no residence permits. The situation in the “floating windows” in Utrecht is far from “pimp-free”. Esther:

“You only catch pimps through setting them up, as you never get them through the women, the police can do nothing about girls who are being forced. (...) Pimps are outdated, they should be already gone. I think that half of the women working here still have a pimp...”

Femke also refers to places such as the windows in Leeuwarden or Deventer, well known for the number of foreign women who are working under some form of coercion.

5.5.6 Foreign Nationals: Between Protection and Prosecution

Several debates and researches show the unfortunate and negative consequences on the position of illegal prostitutes (Pot, 2003; Dütting, 2001; Asante and Schaapman, 2005). Illegal prostitutes are in fact migrant women, mainly from non-EU countries, who lack a residence permit but still sell sexual services in the Netherlands. Formally excluded from the “legalized” sector and hunted from the streets, some still manage to work “legally” by faking identities or evading controls, while most of them have been forced to work in the invisible and unregulated sectors, and still others have gone to work to other EU countries.

There seems to exist a serious contradiction between the aim of protecting the women working illegally in the prostitution (basically non-EU nationals without residence permits), and other more prioritized aims such as “combating” illegal prostitution and deporting illegal migrants to their countries of origin. Indeed, while the number of prostitutes from Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Colombia and Dominican Republic has decreased, women from East European countries with an EU passport have increased in all sectors (Daalder, 2007).

Controls have been increased by the Dutch (foreign) police in order to find and extradite illegal residents, in line with the overall stricter control of illegal migrants. Due to the legalization of 2000, many legal brothel owners can hardly afford to hire illegal prostitutes (Van der Naald, 2005).

According to Femke, *razzias* and the deportation of women do not work because “they are back in their places a week later”. According to police officers, especially those women that deny their status of (exploited) prostitutes have more chance of returning after they have been expelled.

Police experts also point at a more practical issue related to the circular movements of these prostitutes. Illegal prostitutes who as a victim of human trafficking apply for the “B9” regulation cannot be taken into custody, but should be taken care of. It often turns out to be very difficult to find a proper shelter and these laborious efforts can even result in the victim disappearing.

5.6 Clients and Their Attitudes to Women Trafficking in the Netherlands

Clubs, brothels, windows, private houses or toleration zones operate as social arrangements for the local supply of prostitutes, while they actually constitute, together with the clients, the “demand” for trafficked women. In other words, the “demand” for trafficked women is formed by the “consumer demand” for sexual services (clients) of trafficked women and the “employer demand” that contracts, exploits or buys these women from origin countries or intermediate traders (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003: 9). This is a key distinction, as the motivations, factors and dynamics attached to consumer and employer demand for

trafficked women may follow different patterns. Do clients actively and consciously look for very vulnerable women (underage, undocumented, under coercion) to purchase sexual services, do they make any distinction between voluntary and forced prostitution, or do they actually recognize, actively avoid and/or help women considered to be victims of exploitation by pimps and “retailers”? How do they do that? What are the relationships between clients, pimps, sex entrepreneurs, women and other clients? These are some of the questions addressed in this section.

As explained by Anderson and O’Connell Davidson in their multi-country study on the demand of human trafficking, “by going into and exploring the social construction of the general demand for sexual and domestic services may help to contribute to the analysis of ‘trafficking’ and other forms of unfree labour” (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003: 12).

Although this study is primarily focused on the perceptions and practices of consumer demand (clients), we do not study them as isolated individuals but as socially embedded actors, exploring their social relations with other clients, law enforcement officials, sex entrepreneurs, pimps, prostitutes, relatives and friends. In this way, we will also present here some data on the behaviour of the “employer demand”, particularly club, sauna and brothel managers and other intermediaries.

5.6.1 Clients in the Netherlands

Systematic research on clients of prostitution in the Netherlands is very limited and fragmented. While a lot of knowledge exists at a practical level and by actors closely involved, scientific studies are almost inexistent. We can think of two probable reasons for this absence. First, despite existing taboos, buying sexual services in itself is not regarded as a social or individual problem in the Netherlands. Second, the rather mainstream and anonymous nature of the group (which includes tourists, Christian family men, respected politicians, hard working citizens, young and old, etc.) makes it difficult to penetrate and uncover. Research concentrates on “problematic” clients around other social problems: “loverboys”, HIV/AIDS, street prostitution by drug-addicted women, urban nuisance, women trafficking, etc. and is often based on quantitative methods and data-gathering instruments such as (anonymous) surveys. Leridon et al. (1998) claim that 14% of the adult male population in the Netherlands visited prostitutes in 1989.

In 2006, the Foundation SOAIDS Nederland conducted an Internet survey¹⁸ among 1988 clients, mainly to explore their views and practices around safe sex and forced prostitution. The survey shows that clients are looking for alternation, variation and the excitement of a different body in their visits to prostitutes. More than 50% had a stable relationship, and many men actually blamed their partners as responsible for their visits (different sexual needs and wishes). Having a partner had actually no

¹⁸See www.prostitutie.nl for a brief summary of the results.

effect in their prostitution visits, they usually started very young and went on after engaging in relationships (Asante and Schaapman, 2005: 21).

The reasons many men look for women working in the illegal (unlicensed) prostitution sector are price, anonymity and sexual possibilities (Mulder, 2004: 52). Korf et al. (2005) did research on street prostitution in toleration zones, interviewing many actors including clients soliciting street prostitutes. They preferred this form of prostitution as being more anonymous, easy and safer than for example window prostitution (Korf et al., 2005: 45–46). These prostitutes often had more time for clients with some handicap. Financial limitations were also given as a reason for looking in this cheaper part of the market and to bargain the price. Rich clients also make use of the sexual services of street prostitutes. For them, the kick and the excitement of getting “the commodity” as cheap as possible is more important (Blokland and Van Wijk, 2002). They feel that is easier with drug-addicted prostitutes who urgently need the money. Clients in these street areas are only interested in the women and do not interact with each other.

A different picture emerges from our own group of interviewed clients who, as explained before, are predominantly native Dutch and do not have contact with street prostitution.

We have no background information about the online clients who participate on *hookers.nl*. The anonymous nature of the Internet interactions makes it impossible to present even a superficial description of online clients. It seems obvious that most of the active and registered members of the site are male, but even that conclusion – let alone any further description – is a highly educated guess.

The 26 clients interviewed by us ranged from 24 to 61 years old, with the largest group (9) in their thirties and some in their forties (6) and fifties (6). They lived primarily in the middle and south of the country, and although slightly more than half came from outside the so-called *Randstad* (main urban areas including Rotterdam, Amsterdam, the Hague and Utrecht), they were evenly distributed in small and large municipalities. While more than half were unmarried and single, there were a second large group of men who were married and had children. Three men were divorced or separated and had children, and two men were married either with no children or “living apart together”. So a large majority (2/3) of the clients interviewed had no stable relationship at the time of the interview.

They had a wide range of educational backgrounds in terms of orientation and levels achieved. Nine men had a secondary school education, of whom two were unfinished. Six men had completed professional vocational training (MBO, midlevel professional education) and six had technical college (HBO, tertiary professional education). Finally, there were four men who followed university studies, one of whom did not complete them. One man had a Ph.D. degree.

The occupations of clients were again very heterogeneous and included unemployed, an early retiree, managers of medium and large companies, salesmen, consultants, a teacher, computer programmers and developers, (road) construction workers, doormen, employees from different types of shops, a real estate agent, a chemist, a mechanic, an Internet moderator, those doing several functions in the catering branch, a photographer and a small entrepreneur with a past in burglary

and pimping. Most men were fully employed and some earned an extra income through informal jobs.

While half of the clients always visited only one and the same form of prostitution, the other half purchased two or more types, either simultaneously or at different periods. One man claimed that he purchased all types of prostitution services. Window prostitution is the most prevalent prostitution form in our sample, frequented by 14 men. Ten men visited sex clubs and 8 were regular visitors to sauna clubs, not only in the Netherlands but also in Germany, close to the border. Other forms of prostitution purchased by clients included private houses (4), brothels (3), sex tourism in developing countries (3), Thai salons (3), massage parlours (2), call girls (2), escort services (2) and *Frei Körper Kultur* clubs in Germany (1).

Most clients started in the window prostitution sector and only later moved on to other more invisible forms of prostitution. Visitors to clubs and saunas find the windows relatively expensive and a form of prostitution that does not allow for personal contact with the women. On the contrary, clubs and saunas offer the possibility of talking to the women for free. The frequencies of the visits show great variation, from three times in all to once or twice a week. The users of saunas and clubs, as we will see later, who often went in groups or met there with other clients seem to be the most frequent users. Expenditures vary accordingly, also regarding prostitution form, and range from €50 to €700 per month. Three clients defined themselves as “sex-addicts”.

Clients with a stable relationship declared that visiting prostitutes was a form of relaxation, to fulfil needs and wishes not achieved in their relationship and for the excitement of changing sexual partner. Many speak about sexual problems with their female partners, who of course are blamed as the source of the problem. An “affaire”, lover or parallel relationship is regarded by these men as difficult, too personal and dangerous for their relationship. Befke, married with children, explains for example that “in prostitution, it is clear what each party expects from the other”.

Clients without a relationship claim that they visit prostitutes because they can easily establish contact with the women. Although some mention strong male physical urges and impulses as motivation – as if the orientation to commercial sex could be an obvious outcome of a male’s biology – most clients stress that the sexual act is just one part of the story, claiming that the personal social contact with the woman is at least as important. Leo, for example, prefers to invite prostitutes to his place to have a nice talk after sex. Frank, single in his middle thirties, explains that:

“This might sound hard to believe, but you don’t go always for the sex. You also go sometimes because you feel alone and you are looking for a so-called Girl Friend Experience”.

In some cases, clients visiting clubs and saunas do not have sex, but remain talking and drinking with other clients and prostitutes. In this sense, the motivations indicated by our respondents are in line with those found by other studies mainly based on larger samples¹⁹ (McKeganey and Bernard, 1996; Jordan, 1997; Monto, 2000; Bouamama, 2004; Soaids, 2006).

¹⁹With the exception of ‘being shy’, prominently reported in several other studies, but not mentioned by our clients.

Most clients plan their visits in advance, often taking into account the agenda of their partners. Some claim that they would never buy sexual services if they had a relationship. Koos, a client in his late forties who had been going to saunas since his divorce, said that:

“If I met a nice female tomorrow, I swear you, I would not go on Friday [to the sauna, DZ/RS]. I couldn’t. I would be unfaithful to her and myself. I wouldn’t be able to look at myself in the mirror anymore”.

Others however make a sharp ontological distinction between their partner or family (worthy of respect, affection, love, etc.) and the prostitute (purely for sex). Gustomass, also divorced a while ago, put it very clearly:

“Having sex with another woman, I don’t see as being unfaithful. What I regard as unfaithful is for example if my wife establishes a very good relationship with another man.”

This separation made between spirit and flesh probably allows many men to normalize their prostitution experience while engaging in a stable relationship. Three respondents say that they have at this stage stopped visiting prostitutes. Ewald went only few times and lost interest in commercial sex. Chris, a fanatic moral crusader and anti-women trafficking campaigner, stopped after realizing that he could not know for sure that the women were working voluntarily. Finally, Ruud used his visits to brothels to do business with other men. He does not have his business anymore and he has now a closer relationship with his wife.

5.6.2 *The Social Embeddedness of Clients*²⁰

As we explained before, the consumer “demand” for (forced) women for prostitution cannot be regarded as the aggregation of isolated client individual actions. Client actions and perceptions do not exist in a social vacuum and are not only shaped by their relations with the women. Clients establish particular relationships with their surrounding world that are important to understand the way in which they react to and perceive issues such as women trafficking.

For many clients, their lives and identities as “polar bears” is not just a marginal, secret part of their lives but an active, time-consuming, social endeavour. Several clients spend many hours a week writing on, reading, searching or even moderating the Internet sites for clients. Some of the online clients have got to know each other on *hookers.nl* and have subsequently made appointments to meet each other at bars and pubs. Participants in the *ijsberenforum* know each other personally and go together or meet at the saunas. They call themselves by their “virtual” names that they have on the Internet, and in many cases regard the others as good friends. Some have personal cards as “polar bears” that they give for self-promotion to other clients, operators and of course, women.

²⁰This section is to a large extent based on materials from the thesis *Clients of prostitutes. A research on the perceptions of the client* (Griffioen, 2007)

One client celebrates his birthday in a sauna, while another saw brothels as a work place. Bart, who for many years lived outside the Netherlands, claims to have come back to Holland due to his relationships with several prostitutes. Koos and Gustomass referred to some of their visits as “therapeutic”. Many of the clients interviewed see their prostitution visits as a “hobby”, sometimes an expensive one.

Clients share time, experiences and friendship with other clients, in many cases regarding others as a “peer-group”. Hans, for example, meets other clients outside the club, and regularly lends money to these friends to pay for the prostitutes. Many clients make regular appointments to go together to the saunas. Indeed, during our observations there, we saw most clients interacting in small groups. Leo, a client in his sixties with long experience of prostitution in places such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Gambia and Venezuela, travels with other sex tourists. Clients that only visit prostitutes in the windows have far less contact with other clients than those who go to clubs, brothels and saunas.

Clients mainly talk to each other about prostitution and far less about daily private affairs. Both on the Internet and in the saunas, men exchange personal experiences about the women and they give each other tips. Gustomass explains his contacts in the saunas:

“What you share in fact is the better and the worse. You talk a lot about what is going on there. The good experiences that you have with some women. What happens to you. That you are often amazed about how good it is. About something that does not happen in the real world.”

Bas even refers to the other clients as “brothers in crime”, and Jie understands why clients search for each other:

“Of course you don’t make a conscious choice to look for other clients as if they were actually your peers. But you can talk frankly with them about your hobby. That has indeed a social function.”

Most clients claim that they look for other clients with the same ideas on prostitution, and some say to be addressed by others about rude behaviour with the women, implying the existence of forms of informal social control.

Clients also make distinctions between different types of men, often constructing categories of the “other” as rude and disrespectful. Some clients (and also all the women interviewed) refer to some clients as “bad”, “selfish” or “assholes”, but as general qualifications regarding their treatment with all women and not specifically related to forced prostitution. Men distinguish other men regarding the setting they “stroll” (street vs. indoors), their personal situation (single vs. married), the type of women they like (common vs. exotic, older vs. younger), frequency (regular vs. sporadic) and behaviour (respectful vs. disrespectful). Some clients refer to “filthy” men with little money who look for cheap sex with young women. Others claim that disrespectful men treat women as “objects”, “pieces of meat” and “fuck machines”, focusing only on the services provided and totally ignoring the person behind. Leen, a client in his forties that exclusively visits saunas, explains:

“I see other ‘polar bears’ that work in a totally different way to me. They don’t want to have the feeling that they have made ‘contact’ with a girl. They say: that’s

my type, she looks good, I take her. The first thing they say to the girl is ‘go to get the keys’. They do it that way. That’s not my way.”

In many cases, certainly expected in this ethnically homogeneous sample of native Dutch men, the “bad” men belong to other, more “barbaric” cultures. Leo on his fellow sex tourists in Thailand:

“That was in Thailand, and there you take a girl with you. There was a group of Arabs. They’re filthy people. You know, with those dresses and lots of money. And you know what they do? All three in the same room and they take a girl, to be used by all three. I saw it myself. No, that’s... they are just dirty men.”

Hans refers to some “German bulldogs”, while a couple of other clients made some remarks about Turkish clients. Finally, some clients speak negatively about “weak” men that fall in love with the women and have the illusion that they can help them.

The construction of the “bad” man works as a way of justifying belonging to the group of the good, ethical, respectful, clean, resourceful men. Indeed, all online and interviewed clients believe that they belong to this last group, while some “respectful” men are seen as “disrespectful” by others. The discourse of the “bad or weak man” serves to normalize and justify the behaviour of the majority of men who pay for sex.

Clients also establish various social relationships with their close relatives and friends. Those who are married or have regular partners react very differently with them about their visits to prostitutes. Only a small minority tell their partners about it, of course all cases where the prostitution visits are either tolerated or stimulated by the partners. The most extreme case in this respect is Marc, whose wife, also present during the interview, not only knows but actively stimulates Marc to visit prostitutes, often helping him to choose the women. She thinks that he needs it, and prefers he buys commercial sex than engages in parallel relationships. However, they do not disclose this to others, keeping the secret within what Marc calls the “twilight zone of society”. Ruud’s wife also knows he visits brothels, but tolerates it and asks no questions. On the other hand, the large majority keeps it a secret from their partners for fear of damaging the relationship. Many think that their partners suspect or know, but keep silent. Eddy, a married client with children who visits the windows, is a very good example:

“I am sure that my wife is clever enough to realize that, hey, he is not just walking around. But I would never have the insolence and the indecency to say to my own wife: ‘Honey, I just went to the whores’. I would never, ever say it. Even if they have me on film entering the window, with the prostitute, I would say ‘I am not that one’. I would say: ‘I don’t know how they have done it, but I wasn’t there’. I told a friend once: ‘No matter how far I go, I will never admit it’. I never felt the remorse that would push me to admit it. It would only hurt her more. She would never really understand it deep inside.”

Obviously, despite the lifting of the ban on brothels seven years ago, most men feel that visiting prostitutes still belongs to the taboo sphere and many fear the possible consequences in terms of social censure and stigmatization. Besides relatives and other clients, clients of prostitutes carefully select to whom they reveal their identity as “polar bears”, and these are mainly friends who understand

them. Piet is open to his family about his visits, but his family does not want to hear or talk about it. Although clients who are open report that reactions are mostly tolerant and understanding, they also experience angry reactions or moral condemnation. In few cases they lost friends or partners, and they especially avoid telling anything to parents and children. They are especially careful with their “virtual” existence on the Internet, as everybody can read there what they write.

None of the clients interviewed had any contact with pimps or “loverboys”, and all would like to see them disappear. However, those who visited brothels and clubs had good but superficial relations with the sex operators. One client with a prominent role on the Internet forums was not welcomed in one of the saunas due to his negative reviews. On the contrary, he was very close to the owner of another one who clearly enjoyed his positive reviews. In this way, we find that client Internet sites play an important role of social control of some (legal) sex operators. Bad reviews may not only result in reputation damage, but also mobilize police checks.

We cannot say much about the role of ethnicity in bringing about the relationship between clients and prostitutes, mainly because we only interviewed Dutch men. Most men preferred their “own” European women and some explicitly excluded Africans, Asians or Latinas from their choices, but definitively appreciate the availability of foreign women. Most men had a clear preference for women from Eastern Europe, in their view the most client-friendly. Ethnic relations and choices may however take a different shape in the case of clients from ethnic minorities, for example Surinamese or Turkish men living in the Netherlands. But we have no data on those men.

Finally, clients do not seem to have or establish relationship with NGOs working in the field of prostitution, and they report no contact with the criminal justice system beyond some regular traffic fines.

5.6.3 Policies on Clients

Clients are not criminalized for buying sexual services from adult prostitutes, regardless of their characteristics in terms of nationality, residence status or working conditions. Having sex with minors under 16 years old is punishable (arts. 244, 245 and 247 Sr), as it is buying sexual services from minors between 16 and 18 years old (art. 248b Sr) or the attendance at sex shows where minors are performing (art. 248c Sr). Using the so-called General Local Regulations (APV), some municipalities that opted to close down their toleration zones (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague) have criminalized not only street prostitutes and sex operators, but also clients who try to buy sex in these areas. In a clear strategy of “naming and shaming”, the police take photos of the kerb-crawling cars and clients receive fines and warning letters at their private addresses.

In a previous section, we described how the Dutch authorities have increasingly perceived women trafficking as a severe and very serious organized crime problem.

In criminal law, women trafficking concentrates around the concepts of force, deception and exploitation, and aims at protecting the victim. Women trafficking is perceived as a serious violation of human rights. Within the National Plan of Action Human Trafficking (NAM, 2004), some attention is paid to the demand side of trafficked women. Influenced by international pressures for the further criminalization of human trafficking (mainly from the EC and UN) and local “moral” parties such as the Christian Union (now in the government coalition), official instances such as the BNRM have been trying to “open a debate” on the eventual criminalization of the conscious purchase of sexual services from persons clearly being forced or coerced. For various reasons, most actors including large political parties, municipal and police authorities, prostitutes, sex operators, NGOs and the clients themselves have successfully opposed this policy line in the direction of the Swedish model.

The clients interviewed were unanimously against *their own* criminalization, as one of the most important arguments against the measure is the impossibility of knowing for sure whether somebody is a victim of force and coercion, and the negative effects in terms of further invisibility of the most abusive practices and less cooperation from clients to spot cases of women trafficking. Fred, a client who is rather open about his sporadic visits to prostitutes, explains:

“How can I know that she is being forced? Then I am punished for something I don’t know. It is the same as if I go to a supermarket and take a pack of coffee that has been illegally harvested [...] Thus I am being punished while I don’t know where it comes from. I cannot do anything about that.”

Bas, a highly educated client in his late thirties who mainly visits clubs and saunas, shares this view:

“If I drive a car too fast, I know that I can be punished. That’s OK. If you criminalize clients who visit involuntary prostitution [DZ/RS], it has to be evident and you have to do it willingly and knowingly. But how can you know? You can’t. It cannot be done. It is very difficult to prove these things.”

However, clients unanimously favoured punishing men who purchase sexual services from minors, and several men supported the criminalization of men who solicit street prostitutes in non-tolerated zones. Willem2, who never visited women working on the street, believes that:

“If you go to the Keileweg [closed toleration zone in Rotterdam, DZ/RS] or to a place where as client you know that it is forbidden, then you should suffer the consequences”.

Current official policies on Dutch clients try to increase information and awareness and envisage clients as a source of potential information for fighting women trafficking. One example is a recent agreement between authorities and sex operators to place, between erotic advertisements in print and Internet media, texts informing clients about the advantages of purchasing sex in licensed businesses (BNRM, 2007).

The authors of the National Plan for Action Human Trafficking especially aim at “alerting employers and clients in the Netherlands of the punishability of human trafficking and of possible signs of (victims of) human trafficking” (NAM, 2004: 12).

Clients have to be “taught” about the characteristics of women trafficking before they can successfully deliver relevant information to the authorities.

In order to raise the consciousness of clients, the campaign *Appearances deceive* was started in January 2006 by the foundation *Report Crime Anonymously* and financed by the Ministry of Justice, with the aim of enabling clients and other closely involved people to recognize and report anonymously (suspicions of) forced prostitution and women trafficking. The campaign offered information on indicators of women trafficking, managed to have a high profile and was locally and nationally endorsed by many involved organizations including NGOs, the police and the local health services. It was also spread by sites such as *hookers.nl* and was supported by video spots, posters and pamphlets.

Fear, traces of physical violence such as bruises, and the obvious absence of job satisfaction are among the most prominent signals that should alert clients. The campaign lasted six months and according to the BNRM (2007) had some results in terms of prosecutions, although it seems clear that probably most reports do not lead to new prosecutions let alone convictions. The campaign was however regarded as positive by most partners involved.

So, the client of forced prostitution is not perceived as a criminal but rather as a source of information for the authorities. According to the National Coordinator of Human Trafficking and Prostitution, it is especially important to address the client because he is one of the few who is in direct contact with the trafficked prostitute.

However, this point of departure presupposes first of all that clients share the perception of Dutch authorities that women trafficking is a severe and serious crime. Secondly, it requires that clients share the same definition of women trafficking as the authorities. And third, that they as clients are able to differentiate between forced, exploited prostitutes versus those prostitutes who freely chose this occupation. Following these premises, this also implies that clients feel themselves responsible for the fight against women trafficking and are not only capable but also willing to provide the police with their actual “client-knowledge”. But are clients capable of differentiating between “forced” and “free” prostitution and are they willing to take responsibility and respond to the government appeal? We will answer these questions first of all by taking a closer look at the writings of a group of online clients and secondly, by analysing the interviews with clients.

5.6.4 Guilty Knowledge: Clients and Their Attitudes Towards Women Trafficking

After *De Volkskrant* – a respected Dutch newspaper – published in 2007 a series of in-depth articles on human trafficking, one of the readers reacted with a letter of surprise on the lack of attention paid to the clients of trafficked prostitutes who repeatedly abuse and exploit these females for their own sexual pleasures. The author continued claiming that “it should be clear to these pleasure seekers that

these women are slaves and are not participating in their pleasure. Obviously, these abusers lack compassion and feelings of guilt (Wolters, May 12, 2007).

The statement implies that it is obvious to outsiders and clients that they are dealing with trafficked and abused prostitutes. But the question is whether this is true or not. How clear is it in specific situations that the prostitutes are forced and exploited? One could also raise the question to what extent clients perceive moral constraints and if so, how do they deal with them? In this section, we will try to answer these questions: first of all by looking at the interpretations of online clients and how they discuss issues surrounding forced prostitution and women trafficking on the client sites, and secondly by focusing on the interviews with clients of prostitutes and especially with those they believe are victims of trafficking and exploitation. What kind of relationships do clients develop with the women they visit and what circumstances do they discern in order to define a prostitute as a trafficking victim?

5.6.4.1 Dutch ‘Cyber Polar Bears’²¹

The Internet with all its possibilities of communication and information has changed the lives of the clients of prostitutes. The Internet definitely breaks with the image of the lonely “whore-hopper” as it is as anonymous as one wants it to be. “As a John, I sincerely regret that I cannot share a part of my daily activities with members of my primary social network”, wrote one of the online clients on the site *hookers.nl* that was analysed for this study. On the Internet, however, it is possible to experiment by constructing different kinds of friendships, identities as well as sex (DiMarco and DiMarco, 2003). Classic taboo topics such as sexuality and prostitution that are surrounded by shame and guilt can be freely discussed on the Internet. The World Wide Web offers easy access to information on the qualities of different prostitutes, clients can discuss and exchange information and experiences.

But the Internet is more than just a place to write and read anonymously about prostitution. The Internet also offers the possibility of making appointments with prostitutes. Clients can virtually meet other clients, discuss best and worst places. Online clients can create online friendships and in the end can also encounter each other in clubs, bars or other places in the real world. For many of the online clients it has become part of their social world and life. Analysing the texts written by online clients on *hookers.nl* clearly shows that online clients know each other virtually as well as personally. The anonymity of the Internet slowly transforms into visibility and recognizability, for at least some of the clients. Online clients discuss with each other one to one and sometimes it is evident that they recognize or know each other from previous club visits. Participation in the virtual world has

²¹ This section is to a large extent based on material from the thesis *Forced prostitution and hoerenlopers. A mismatch between governmental policies and the perception of clients* (Van der Linden, 2006).

an after-effect in the social world of the clients. Online clients, for instance, make appointments to meet each other in real bars and clubs. Other online clients organize informal meetings for all members of specific discussion forums in order to meet and to really get to know each other. One of the interviewees told us that some of his closest friends are online clients who regularly meet to talk freely about their sexual activities. The impact of writing on the site goes beyond this virtual location. Some of the clients told us, for instance, that they were refused by prostitutes because of their negative online reviews of these specific ladies. According to some of the interviewees, prostitutes that regularly receive good reviews on the Internet enjoy extra status and receive more clients.

By analysing around 250 messages of approximately 40 online clients, it first becomes clear that online clients have adopted the official language to talk about women trafficking. As online clients write on the Internet sites about (forced) prostitution, they employ concepts such as force, deception and exploitation and related terms rather easily. Furthermore, the majority of the online clients also define these concepts in a way similar to the way that Dutch officials talk and write about the problem. One client, for instance, wrote in a discussion topic on trafficking that “only in those cases where force and exploitation is employed, we can speak of modern slavery”. Or, as Dutchboy48²² states: “they drag these persons into a world that they would never have chosen of their own free will”. And another client states that “the real, forced prostitution should be dealt with in a tough European way. If you read these stories about abduction and rape...horrible!” Having said this, all further similarities between the perceptions of online clients and the authorities on women trafficking end there. Online clients differ from the authorities in their appreciation of the phenomenon, as they deny not only the victims, but also the injury, as well as their own responsibility. In the end, some of the online clients even condemn the condemners (Sykes and Matza, 1957). The general attitude is that the problem of women trafficking is not as large a problem as it is portrayed by the authorities and if it is a problem it is not the responsibility of the clients.

The majority of the online clients reject the image of trafficked female prostitutes as victims. In their vision, these women cannot be labelled as victims as it is above all their own fault that they have become forced into prostitution.

“I have read with some surprise the previous messages. Of course it is pitiful that some girls are working as prostitutes against their will. [...] But many of these girls initially enjoy the fact of having a dangerous boyfriend. They do everything they can to strike a similar pose. Just look at any arbitrary shopping evening in the city and you know what I mean. So, generally speaking I don’t feel sorry at all for these ladies” (Piercasino).

Instead, online clients conclude that force is absent as the majority of these prostitutes “like their job”, “work voluntarily” and even “work with pleasure”. Some online clients claim that “by far most of the women do know that they will end up in the sex industry” (Royal Pik).

²²Codename used by the online client in the discussion topic, on <http://www hookers.nl>.

Secondly, online clients deny injury or damage with respect to the existence of women trafficking. The presence of injury is not only denied by stating that forced prostitutes enjoy their work, but also by underplaying the scale of women trafficking: “I have my doubts on forced prostitution. It does exist, for sure, but not to the extent impressed on us”. Other online clients deny the seriousness of the problem by pointing their fingers at crimes – such as for instance human smuggling or child labour – that are – at least according to their perception – more severe and have far more consequences than women trafficking.

Most popular among the online clients is the neutralization technique of denying responsibility. They deny the fact that they should be able to recognize forced prostitution (“how can I recognize forced prostitution”) and they deny the fact that they are among the forces that create a demand for trafficked prostitution. In line with these denials, these online clients also partly deny their responsibility in the fight against women trafficking (“How can I fight women trafficking if I am not able to recognize it?”).

Around twenty online clients write about the difficulties around recognizing trafficked prostitutes. Half of them claim that they face great difficulties in recognizing forced prostitution. According to these online clients, prostitutes lie about their situation or show no signs whatsoever that could hint at their status of being an exploited victim. These clients point at pimps and/or traffickers as the main culprits behind forced prostitution. In the vision of the majority of online clients, it is the government who is in charge and responsible and not the client. According to these online clients, Dutch authorities do not do their job properly and should operate much more repressively towards the traffickers or should pay more attention to informing and warning (young) girls about “dangerous boyfriends”. Simultaneously there is a comparable group of online clients who claim that they do recognize women trafficking. One online client claims that he – as an experienced “stroller” – can easily recognize forced prostitution and knows where to go for paid, free-and-easy sex. Online clients who share this perception mention many different indicators of forced prostitution. In order of frequency, they mention visible pimps, age and innocence of the prostitute, tattoos, body language, labour conditions, feeling during sex, other (extra) services, costs, relationship, club history, mastery of a language and gold jewellery.

The other half of online clients, however, say that they do recognize trafficked prostitutes. In the end, there are also some online clients who condemn the condemners. These clients – although absent on the main Internet site that has been analysed – write about politicians and other well-known people who visit (forced) prostitutes.

Only a minority of the people participating on this site do not neutralize their role in the business of women trafficking and acknowledge the existence of women trafficking and the fact that at least to some extent they are responsible for it too. They try to avoid visiting trafficked prostitutes or suggest that they would inform the authorities if they were confronted with forced prostitution. On the Internet site, they act as real moral crusaders by taking all the blame for the problem and by continuously arguing with other online clients about their “low and outrageous behaviour”.

One can conclude that online clients have adopted the central judicial concepts such as force, exploitation and deception surrounding the victimization discourse in the official debate. Online clients use these concepts and are aware of their meaning according to the authorities. Simultaneously we should also conclude that there is a mismatch between the perception and meanings of online clients versus the official discourse on women trafficking. Although the authorities view clients as a source of information in their fight against women trafficking, at least the majority of the online clients shirk this responsibility and are not inclined to participate in fighting women trafficking. It is unclear however as to how far these online clients neutralize their role due to genuine ignorance or to opportunistic rationalization. Although this distinction may seem irrelevant at first sight, it is of importance for the role of clients in official policies against women trafficking.

5.6.5 Men's Attitudes and Relations with Trafficked Women

Having described the different attitudes and meanings of online clients towards women trafficking, the question is how these images of the virtual world are related to the attitudes and meanings of the "real-life" clients of prostitutes.

Respondents tried to convince the interviewers that visiting prostitutes is a normal act in which nobody gets harmed and that their intimate circle of friends accepted their visits. Although clients have normalized their behaviour, they still struggle with their visits. As we mentioned before, some clients with a partner or stable relationship feel guilt (either for being unfaithful or for putting the relationship in jeopardy) and opt for secrecy, while others, those single but also some with partners, feel no guilt and disclose the fact that they pay for commercial sex.

For many clients the real problem starts when forced prostitution comes into the picture. Clients primarily seek out and want prostitutes who are voluntarily in the business. This is not only true for those who seek and enjoy the personal contact with the women, but also for those who primarily focus on a satisfying physical experience. Clients acknowledge that the majority of the women working as prostitutes are driven by (personal) circumstances. Simultaneously, they are often surprised by the fact that some of the prostitutes are less independent than they first thought. Bas, a rather critical consumer of prostitution, reflects that:

"That beautiful pure image of someone who explicitly chooses, completely enjoying the things she does and realizes what she is doing, is a far too pretty and coloured an image. It is not the reality and little by little you learn..."

Bas's statements reflect the ideal of the prostitute's client that can be upheld by visiting regular non-problematic prostitute. The dream, however, is immediately shattered if indicators of force and exploitation enter these images.

Almost every client is aware of the existence of forced prostitution, although they have different perspectives on the volume of women trafficking. Some clients speak of exceptions and women in exceptional circumstances. Others assume that it is widespread and a difficult-to-fight phenomenon. It is also rather obscure for

clients when to speak of trafficked women and forced prostitution. According to one of the clients this resembles the image of a prostitute chained to her bed whereas another client sees forced prostitution in cases where women start working in the business as a result of a debt. However, the majority speak of forced prostitution if a prostitute is limited in her freedom, if she is threatened and should remit an excessive part of her earnings. Clients differentiate between being forced into prostitution through circumstances or by a third person. In the latter case, many clients do not perceive it as forced prostitution as the women could have made another choice. None of the clients believed that migrants working in prostitution without a resident permit (illegal prostitutes) can be considered per se victims of women trafficking, only because they lack proper papers to work. Nobody asks for passports or residence permits, nor even makes a distinction between legal and illegal residents. Bas even has the feeling that only being an illegal prostitute is a matter of a different nature:

“I wouldn’t know how I could manage to see that. In theory, the houses [sex operators, DZ/RS] have concrete obligations. They know that it is being controlled. When a woman comes with a false passport, she is illegal. But how do you know? I don’t know. I am not going to ask the woman if she is here legally or illegally. You presuppose that the authorities control enough and that the chances of finding an illegal woman are not large. I have to say that if it is purely a technical, administrative offence, you could say, well, if the woman wants to work...., that’s the same as if they wouldn’t allow me to work in America because I don’t have a Green Card. It’s like that. But anyway there are millions of Mexicans who work in America, they are illegal.”

Fred also makes the distinction, but feels far less empathy for these illegal migrants and does not grant them the status of “victims”:

“No, you don’t know. Of course I don’t ask for the residence permit. It doesn’t matter to me if they have it or not. If tomorrow they are kicked out onto the street, bad luck. I have nothing to do with it.”

Many clients recognize the vulnerable position of illegal women in the prostitution and try to avoid them, but still define them as victims of circumstances and not as victims of “traffickers”. Willem2:

“I also didn’t do it with African or Dominican women. [*I: Why?*] Because you can be almost sure that they got their papers in a very difficult way. There you have a kind of coercion. Depending on what you want to call coercion... There is already coercion in the fact that you have to leave your country to earn money, but that doesn’t mean that they are forced. This is of course a difficult discussion. I mean, the women might not see it as coercion, but can feel it as coercion at some stage... when they have to pay back the money for those papers.”

Clients find it difficult to recognize involuntary or forced prostitution (Hopkins and Nijboer, 2001: 348) and have the same difficulties in distinguishing between “legal” and “illegal” prostitution (Asante and Schaapman, 2005: 22). Our own research confirms these findings, with a large group of clients interviewed and analysed on the Internet who claim that they cannot recognize forced prostitution. The interviewed men who denied having anything to do with forced prostitution,

claimed to know for sure that the women they visited were working voluntarily. As so many men also claim that they are unable to distinguish between voluntary and forced prostitution, we tend to believe that in most cases we are dealing with wishful thinking rather than an empirically based reality. Many for example believed that forced prostitution is concentrated in the cheaper street sector of toleration zones, which they carefully avoided. As we exposed at the beginning, research shows that street prostitution is only marginal in quantitative terms and that women trafficking cases are mainly found in the settings they visit (windows, etc.). These beliefs are in line with the findings of the SOAIDS survey (2006) where it was also concluded that clients expected to find more forced prostitution in the street toleration zones (18% of clients believe it to be the setting with more involuntary prostitution), windows in large cities (17%) and in the “illegal” and “alternative” circuits (15%). Clients were more confident with clubs (9%) and very benevolent with telephone (5%) and Internet (6%) prostitution, and windows in small municipalities (4%). With the exception of windows in large cities (many clients and probably a large share of victims of forced prostitution), clients are inclined to believe that forced prostitution is a problem of other settings rather than the ones they visit.

The possibility of paying for sex with a forced and exploited woman evokes different strategies and reactions from the clients. Among the most important are withdrawal from prostitution, avoiding the victim, denying the victim and helping the victim.

5.6.5.1 Total Withdrawal from Prostitution

Some individuals withdraw completely from interaction with prostitutes, forced or not. An example is Chris, who stopped visiting prostitutes because he could not deal with the uncertainty of not knowing.

“In the end I asked her: ‘do you have a pimp?’ But she did not know the word and answered that ‘pimp’ was absent in her dictionary. After a short silence, I just left. [...] You want to know more about it and you want to know what it is. On the Internet, you ask some prostitutes, but they don’t know really. They give different answers. Some say that there is nothing going on and that they have never seen women trafficking.”

As nobody could teach him the differences between forced and voluntary prostitution, Chris claimed in his interviews that he stopped visiting prostitutes.

5.6.5.2 Denying Responsibility and Victims

The majority of interviewed clients think that they did not meet forced prostitutes during their paid visits. Some of them claim in a rather naive way that they have never thought about it. Ewald, for instance, states that “forced prostitution, it never occurred to me that I could encounter that. Only now, it comes to mind”. Other less naive clients such as Bas comment that: “I have the illusion that I marginally

encountered forced prostitution”. Some clients stress that they cannot be held responsible for forced prostitution because they visit legal brothels and bars. Frank, who visits window prostitution, concludes:

“I don’t think that I have encountered these types [...] I think that they are hidden in a different circuit; private houses etcetera, because it is more hidden than here. Because here, everything is checked by the vice squad.”

Clients claim that they are not to blame as they assume that brothels and other legalized sectors are under strict police control. One could even think that one of the reasons why clients are so favourable of police controls is that they are released from any responsibility: women trafficking becomes a matter for policemen and sex operators. Even if they witness certain abuses, they do not translate this into action. Gustomass, a frequent client of German sauna clubs, often stays until closing time. He noticed that many pimps misbehave towards the prostitutes:

“Around midnight I noticed a couple of guys entering [the club, DZ/RS], who I had not seen before on that day. I believe they were the pimps who came to collect their ladies. They did not enter the bar, but only went into the dressing rooms. I do not understand any Polish, but I did not need to either. What was said and shouted there, was ridiculous. As if they were collecting their cows. At that time, I didn’t talk to the management. I have no contact with the management and I am not going to talk with those managers about that.”

One of the researchers also noticed during his observations that men outside the sauna club were waiting for the prostitutes after finishing work. According to one of the clients, the prostitutes are always guided to the cars by one or two of these “tough guys” who seldom enter the clubs.

In a more conclusive way we could state that by ignoring these indicators for (possible) forced prostitution in legal and formal contexts, clients shift their responsibility to the owners of the clubs and brothels as well as to authorities controlling this sector. This shift in responsibility could also be marked as one of the unintended outcomes of the legalization policies towards brothels. As a reaction, clients feel less responsible for possible abuses in the legalized sector.

5.6.5.3 Avoiding (Possible) Victims

The majority of the men want uncomplicated and carefree contact with prostitutes. Forced prostitution does not fit this ideal, so some of the clients strive to avoid trafficked prostitutes. This implies that clients must be aware of a set of indicators for forced or involuntary prostitution. In the SOAIDS survey, only 200 of the almost 2,000 were able to identify suspicious indicators of involuntary prostitution. They included, in this order, something in the attitude while working (uninterested, not playing the game, hurry), body signs (bruises, tattoos with men’s names), “friends” hanging around the working place, ignorance and a too friendly attitude (SOAIDS, 2006). Interestingly enough, things such as price, type of sexual services, ethnicity, language barriers or age were secondary or not mentioned as indicators. Perhaps it

is more important to stress that, for various possible reasons, almost 90% of the clients were unable to identify indicators of forced prostitution.

During our interviews several indicators comparable with the indicators of the SOAIDS survey were mentioned, sometimes very explicit and sometimes between the lines. Among the main indicators mentioned are features such as age, nationality but also behavioural characteristics such as the prostitute's attitude and charisma, the way in which the prostitute plays the game during the sexual encounter, and the services offered by the woman. Gustomass points out very visible signs:

"I have a feeling that forced women do not try very hard to get men. There are some who sit for hours on a chair. You see it at their faces and their attitude is that there is no desire at all. If they succeed in earning €200 and if that is enough for their friend, they will quit [...] There is no spirit involved."

Clients also take notice of physical abuse such as bruises and timid impressions. Frank:

"You just notice that they are very detached, very quiet. They don't talk and seek no eye contact. They just do their thing."

According to some clients, tattoos are a sign of forced prostitution as well as typical settings such as the streets or illegal bars.

The interviews also offer insight that put in perspective the idea that it is possible to see the distinction between forced and voluntary prostitutes. Some clients claim that they can tell the difference, but in the *moment suprême* clients leave their objections aside and focus on their pleasure and needs. Leen, one of the clients, says:

"If I could differentiate [between forced and voluntary, DZ/RS], it would probably not influence my choice. Because if I like the girl, I would ask her to join me in the room. It is totally wrong of course".

According to Marc, clients lose their critical sense in front of the brothels: "if you enter you do not think that every girl is forced [...] you just assume that the girl is not forced." Or more cynically put by Bas: "The flesh is weak, the spirit even weaker". Jie, a client with a Chinese background, vividly explains how clients lose their critical sense while walking along the windows:

"I think that the majority of clients who visit the windows with €50 in their pockets are extremely nervous. All their perceptions are totally blocked by their nervousness. Should you then ask all [kinds of] critical questions?"

During observations in two saunas, several prostitutes seemed to be very young, certainly around 18 years old. Although there were discussions amongst clients around the age of particular women – some claiming they were minors while others arguing the contrary – these (new) young women were by far the most popular amongst clients. But in contrast with their contradicting positions on adult forced prostitutes, all interviewed clients were very negative towards minor prostitution, made more efforts to identify minors from adults or refrain in case of doubt, and strongly condemned clients who purchased sex from clearly recognizable minors. "Not able to distinguish" was indeed far more used with adults than with forced minor prostitutes.

It is clear that in many cases the distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution is not that obvious and certainly cannot be made that easily.

5.6.5.4 Helping (Possible) Victims

Some of the clients consciously decide not to withdraw from visiting prostitutes nor do they avoid (possible) trafficked women as other clients do. Hans, for example, thinks that these girls are better off with him than with other men, and is very suspicious about men who claim that they only visit voluntary prostitutes:

“I took a Rumanian girl to the room who sat in a corner and was as dead as a doornail. I tried to laugh with her and show her respect. I knew that she was forced in one way or the other, but I did it anyway. She could better go with me than with one of those German bulldogs. I have respect for her, the Germans just go on. [...] I understand that many men do not want to go with forced prostitutes, but these same men who keep coming here are also responsible, as they can’t possibly know if the women are forced or not.”

These men choose to somehow “help” the prostitutes in different ways. According to their perception, these exploited prostitutes are a fact and they (the clients) are not in the position to really alter the situation of these women. Again Hans:

“If I stop visiting the forced women in the sauna club [one just across the Dutch border in Germany], they get beaten. I take care of the money so that their pimp leaves them alone. Besides, I also give them some relaxation.”

Koos shares that point of view:

“If you don’t go, such a girl earns nothing at all. Beyond that, she runs the risk of getting smacked. Maybe it is better to go with the girl in a more sophisticated way.”

Several clients feel that, by the mere act of visiting the prostitute, by giving her a massage or lending their money – they are helping the forced prostitute to make her daily job more endurable. In this way, these clients view their actions not as wrong, or at least not completely wrong. They deny the victim and say more or less that by acting in this way they are at least trying to give the best possible answer to an unsolvable problem.

Other clients even go a step further and try to help the forced prostitutes by getting them out of the prostitution milieu. Sometimes they have fallen in love with the prostitute, like Bart or Leo. Other clients just feel sorry for the trafficked woman. Whatever the motives for support are, these clients enjoy the power that goes along with their efforts of improving the living conditions of these women. Bart tried to “save” an Albanian girl, but learned that not all trafficked women appreciate his help:

“She phoned me and told me that she had a boyfriend that she could not get rid of. I told her: ‘look, [...] I can take you with me and will find you a place to stay’. But she replied that she didn’t know whether she could trust me. But she did trust that jerk who forces her to work?! If you knew what I have done the last two years. I have given her money for holidays...I have done everything [...] In a way I should be more indifferent. Ultimately, she prefers it in this way.”

The Albanian girl refused help and in the end married her boyfriend. In another case, Marc learned the hard way:

“You think that you are actually helping the lady, but then you hear that after a couple of days or a week the woman went back to her pimp and you start thinking ‘what am I doing’? Do I have to ruin my life for somebody so stubborn? It is a pity but they don’t want to be helped.”

These clients want to do something for the forced prostitutes they meet during their visits to the brothels and clubs. They feel more important in the life of the women than they actually are, a problem also faced by well-intended police officers who try to help the victims of exploitation. These cases illustrate that there are clients who perceive themselves as moral crusaders in their efforts to save trafficked women from further exploitation. In some clients this attitude can be seen as an “appeal to higher loyalties”, in which people give more weight to the demands of and loyalties with others (Sykes and Matza, 1957).

5.6.6 *Towards a Typology of Clients*

In the Internet survey conducted by the SOAIDS Foundation in 2006, three groups of clients were identified as a result of the answers (Soaids, 2006). First, the “business-like” client who just wants sex, accepts the use of condoms and normalizes his own prostitution visits. Second, the “adventurer”, who is negative about his own needs for commercial sex and is negative about the prostitute. He has problems accepting the use of condoms and regards himself as “sex addict”. A third type can be called the “romantic”, a man looking for intimacy. He wants to forget that he is paying for sex and is using a condom. He tends to be a regular client and wants more than the standard service. He believes that he is a good client who respects the woman (Asante and Schaapman, 2005: 22).

Vanwesenbeeck et al. (1993) had already identified three somehow comparable groups of Dutch clients. They talk about the “business-like” client that regards the interaction with the prostitute as a commercial exchange, the “romantic-friendly” type that wants to build a relationship with the prostitute and the “misogynist” man that wants to control the woman and use his power during their sexual encounters. These four general categories of clients (the business-like, the adventurer, the romantic and the misogynist) emerging from both studies have also been mentioned by our own respondents when asked about the types of clients they could identify.

But we are now interested in identifying patterns of social practices and meanings of clients in relation to the issue of forced prostitution, to see if we can construct some categories of clients that go beyond simple dichotomies that do not exist. One clear outcome of this research is that the consumer demand for trafficked women is in fact composed of “mainstream” or even “critical” men who also pay for sex with non-trafficked women. This implies that the line between “good/nice/respectful” and “bad/exploitative/violent” clients is more blurred than we initially imagined. We basically found three types of clients in terms of their relations with women trafficking: the *unconcerned consumer*, the *blind conscious* and the *moral crusader*. These ideal-types are constructed around the following four issues or variables:

- (a) Abstract recognition of “voluntary” versus “forced” prostitution (problem)
- (b) Recognition of individual responsibility (feelings or sense of guilt)
- (c) Identification of or suspicion about concrete forced prostitutes (indicators)
- (d) Individual action or strategy to change the status quo (avoiding some type of women, helping women, reporting to the police, confronting pimps, etc.)

5.6.6.1 Unconcerned Consumer

The *unconcerned consumer* type of client acknowledges in general that a difference exists between voluntary and forced prostitution. Simultaneously, some of these consumers deny or heavily underscore the problem by putting the blame on the women or use arguments to deconstruct the notion of “coercion” and “force” (for example “forced” by social circumstances). Some of these clients acknowledge the problem (as a small fraction and for the cases of sexual slavery and minors) but neutralize own individual responsibility and select women according to criteria other than those broadly defining women trafficking (often esthetical but also ethical). Unconcerned consumers typically do not feel guilty about women trafficking; they are not to be blamed. They do support anti-women-trafficking efforts and more repressive measures against operators and illegal prostitution. They are against punishing clients.

5.6.6.2 Blind Conscious Client

The *blind conscious* type of client – like the *unconcerned consumer* – recognizes the full extent of the problem, but still points at the women and her circumstances as the main cause of it. This type of client takes responsibility for exploiting vulnerability or for keeping up the demand for new women, and clearly prefers to avoid them. He does feel guilty about women trafficking in general, but neutralizes his own active behaviour by three forms of denial. First, he claims the impossibility of distinguishing in practice between “voluntary” and “coerced” prostitutes. Second, they simply deny that they have sex with prostitutes working under coercion, claiming with no substantial evidence that “their” prostitutes are OK. Third, they think that the effects of taking action are negligible as women will be back with their pimps in no time, or that the effects could be negative (dangerous to report, identity disclosed, nothing to gain). The *blind conscious client* is critical about policies against clients.

5.6.6.3 Moral Crusader

The *moral crusader* type of client recognizes the problem of women trafficking and takes individual responsibility. He also feels guilty about women trafficking and forced prostitution, although he puts the main blame on traffickers and pimps. The moral crusader deploys strategies to identify trafficked women and prostitutes

working under coercion. As a consequence, some of these clients merely avoid forced prostitutes by specific selection criteria or by stopping altogether. Some of these clients go further and actively try to help or even “save” the women with money, shelter and advice, or to a lesser extent by reporting her situation to the police or confronting the pimps and “boyfriends”. Some of these men feel strong empathy towards or have fallen in love with the women. They tend to believe that they are very important for the prostitutes, and because of this they are sometimes laughed at by the men that belong to the other groups. They favour more control and law enforcement on women trafficking but less criminalization of the women (often a reason for not helping or contacting the police).

By far, most of the clients interviewed in this study belong to one of the first two groups, and only a small minority can be characterized as *moral crusaders*. In some cases it is difficult to distinguish between the *unconcerned consumer* and the *blind conscious client*. The main issue to distinguish between the two is their attitude towards individual responsibility and feelings of guilt: *unconcerned consumers* feel no guilt or responsibility, while *blind conscious clients* are aware. Other elements are shared by the two groups. We found no evidence of a “misogynist” or “bad guy” who consciously and explicitly *only* looks for women working under coercion. It might exist, but we did not manage to find them nor found any indirect evidence in our data of its existence in the Netherlands.

5.7 Conclusions and Policy Implications

In this chapter we presented the main findings of the research carried out in the Netherlands on the demand for trafficked women for prostitution. In this last section we will summarize our findings by answering the three research questions as formulated at the beginning of the chapter.

5.7.1 Formal and Informal Social Interventions

Our first question focused on the social interventions (legislation, policies, law enforcement, campaigns, etc.) on the issue of women trafficking:

5.7.1.1 What Formal and Informal Social Interventions Exist on the Supply and Demand of Trafficked Women for Prostitution?

Prostitution has never been illegal in the Netherlands as long as it was voluntary (Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). Clients are not punishable by law, unless those providing the sexual services are minors (art. 248c of the Criminal Code). Brothels and the exploitation of prostitution, however, were punishable by law after

1911, but long tolerated. In October 2000, the ban on brothels was lifted. The dominant idea at the end of the twentieth century was that regulation of the prostitution market would reduce harm and decrease undesirable consequences. With the abolition of the ban on brothels, the authorities tried to achieve several objectives among which some were directly related to women trafficking, for example to improve the fight against involuntary prostitution as well as the prostitute's position in terms of exploitation, violence and bad working conditions.²³

Along with lifting the ban on brothels, the change in 2000 introduced art. 250a into the Criminal Code which mentioned the forms in which sexual exploitation of human beings were punishable: forced bringing into or keeping of persons in prostitution, the bringing into or keeping of minors in prostitution (voluntarily or not), or bringing of persons from other countries into prostitution (voluntarily or not). In that article, a distinction was made between the legal exploitation of prostitution (voluntary and adults) and trafficking in human beings (involuntary, minors or cross-border). On 1 January 2005, article 273a replaced article 250a of 2000 expanding human trafficking beyond the realm of sexual exploitation (prostitution). As well as criminalizing the exploiting of another person for the purpose of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, article 273a also prohibits forced or compulsory labour or services, slavery, practices comparable with slavery or servitude, and trafficking in organs.

In the Netherlands, traffickers and exploiters can be prosecuted without a declaration from a victim, although a lot of effort is put into getting detailed accounts from the victims. With the so-called "B-9" regulation, victims can stay in the Netherlands for a longer period at the disposal of the public prosecutor. Its additional purpose is to offer shelter and protection to the victims. After the trial, the victim is sent back to the country of origin. Only if it is too dangerous to go back, the victim can get a permanent permit on humanitarian grounds.

As far as the Dutch authorities are concerned, the clients of forced prostitution are not criminals. Instead, they are perceived as a potential source of information. Current official policies on Dutch clients especially try to increase information and awareness and envisage clients as a source of information in the fight against women trafficking. In the National Plan for Action on Human Trafficking, the main focus is on alerting sex operators and clients about the punishability of human trafficking and about possible signs (of victims of) human trafficking. Clients, according to the Plan, have to be well-informed about the characteristics of women trafficking in order to be able to deliver relevant information to the authorities. Campaigns offering information on indicators of women trafficking were launched.

The legalization of the brothels affected trafficked prostitution, although not always as intended and anticipated. We described several forms of displacement that also had an impact on the clients. Although the owners of the legalized bars and brothels feel more controlled and regulated than before, reality also shows that the routine controls focus on "law maintenance" rather than on "investigation"

²³See section 5.4.3. for a list of all objectives.

and “law enforcement”. As a consequence, the operators are treated as customers and tax payers rather than as potential offenders. Little effort is put into concealing these visits and pimps or illegal prostitutes have opportunities to hide, flee or inform other brothels and colleagues. It is clear from our observations and interviews that the legalization and regulation of prostitution has not meant a ban on illegal practices such as the exploitation of forced and/or undocumented women. Clients who, in order to avoid forced prostitution, make use of the legalized regulated prostitution sectors such as windows or clubs, are paying for false security, as routine controls cannot guarantee that only voluntary adult legal prostitutes work there.

But if the regulated sector is a place where women trafficking still exists, even worse is the situation of the more private, invisible backstage realms (escort, saunas, telephone, etc.) towards which many women and clients have relocated. Among the most important displacements due to the legalization of brothels is the movement from (il)legal prostitution from traditional public forms of prostitution (street, windows and brothels) to more private and invisible realms (backstage) such as escort services, saunas, massage parlours, private houses, mobile phones or the Internet. Of course, this shift from front- to backstage or invisible places is also influenced by a more “autonomous” market or technological developments such as the spread of the Internet and mobile phones, new media, migration fluxes or the diversification of erotic services. Due to increased controls, a second form of displacement is the movement from one place to another location with lesser control. In line with this displacement is the movement of the brothels outside the Netherlands which has led to a kind of sex tourism to the clubs across the Dutch borders. This increase in backstage prostitution is not being mirrored in an increasing body of knowledge of and insights into these more fleeting forms of prostitution. It is according to the police not only a matter of segments that are difficult to control, but also very much a matter of *lack* or *absence* of control. In other words, there is hardly any control on for instance escort services. In those rare cases where they were controlled, it turned out that they had all committed some kind of offence related to women trafficking.

5.7.2 *The Demand for Trafficked Women*

A second question addressed by this study focused on the nature of the demand and was formulated as follows:

5.7.2.1 **What is the Nature of the Demand for Trafficked Women for Prostitution in the Netherlands and What Forces Shape That Demand?**

In contrast with other illegal markets where a direct, concrete demand exists for a particular illegal good or service (cocaine, human smuggling, underground banking, illegal gambling, etc.), consumer demand for trafficked women for the prostitution

operates only indirectly and cannot be differentiated from the general demand for commercial sex. Some clients might ask for more services for less money, some clients would demand exotic women from far away, others might want girls under 18, but no client demands trafficked women or forced prostitutes per se. Our results show in fact that clients prefer a fair transaction with motivated, healthy women, that they are not interested in their migration status, and that they prefer young adult women who do not have pimps or loverboys around.

The fact that the purchasers of sexual services deal directly with the victim of exploitation and are often interested, even for egoistic reasons, in the *person* providing the service (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson, 2003), makes clients of trafficked prostitutes more "blameworthy" but also potentially more "critical" than, for example, consumers of carpets produced by distant anonymous children or diamonds covered in blood and human right violations. We found enough evidence of "concern" among our online and real clients, and the extent of "techniques of neutralization" (Sykes and Matza, 1957) deployed by our respondents shows at least a degree of awareness about the moral issues at stake.

However, for various reasons explained in Sect. 5.6 and discussed again in the following section, even mainstream or critical clients are not prepared, with only few exceptions, to make the major step of recognizing victims of women trafficking and/or actively stopping buying their sexual services.

We claim that if there is an expansion in the Netherlands of the supply of trafficked women (especially foreigners) for prostitution – a seemingly logical expansion that has not been researched in this study – both supply and the accompanying increase in the consumer demand can be linked to, or even explained by, various factors, processes and forces that have been taking place for several years in the Netherlands and the globalizing world.

Some of the forces that shape the demand are general global developments that go beyond Dutch borders. First, the rapid development of the Internet has led to new opportunities for the supply and demand of sexual services, with an explosive increase in clients, women and sex operators navigating in the three different types of Websites, which are all expanding. Sites for prostitution offer a wider variety of sexual services, including pornography, live Webcams and various forms of non-localized prostitution such as escorts, etc. More information and advertisements are available to a wider public, including young heavy Internet users. Finally, sites for clients such as *hookers.nl* with more than 80,000 members show the rapid expansion of virtual communities of "cyber polar bears".

Developments in other fields of telecommunications, particularly the further increase of mobile telephony or full-package digital and interactive television, certainly expand the ways in which clients can solicit and prostitutes can offer their services. This invisible exchange is particularly useful for non-localized and hidden forms of prostitution, which only rely on the Internet or telephone deals. We found clients distributing their telephone numbers to women and other clients in saunas and clubs. For example, mobile phones make it possible for illegal residents to work "backstage", while a connected legal prostitute remains as visible face in the window making the connection with trusted clients.

The supply of foreign women for prostitution, with a massive increase of women from Eastern Europe, seems to respond to several factors: the breakdown of socialist regimes with the uncertainties of market reform, privatization and democratization, expansion of the EU to 27 countries, market liberalization and reforms, difficult economic situation for women, flourishing of cross-border organized crime and of course the fact that these women are popular and desired by Dutch prostitution clients. Almost all respondents were indeed very positive about women from Eastern Europe.

Another force that certainly shapes the demand and supply of women is the growing tourist industry in and from the Netherlands. On the one hand, large cities such as Amsterdam receive ever-increasing numbers of tourists every year and are now debating how to massively expand available accommodation to sustain the growth of tourists, including young male groups from neighbouring countries who come for a weekend of “vice”. On the other hand, more Dutch men are able to travel to far away destinations in poor countries where they can purchase a variety of cheap commercial services. The expansion of sex tourism is also made possible by the increase in the availability of cheap flights and packages that promote short stays in exotic destinations. Some of our respondents have experience with commercial sex in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and their stories reveal how easy they convert a holiday into a “moral” holiday. These two increasing forms of *McTourism* expand the encounters between clients and prostitutes, not only in the more visible and cheaper sections of the market, but also in more exclusive parts of the business.

With economic expansion, the Netherlands has also managed to attract more businessmen, passengers in transit, employees in all types of transport services or seamen in transit and all professional categories that purchase commercial sex.

It can be argued that cultural and economic globalization have increased “criminogenic asymmetries” (Passas, 1999) by expanding migration projects and raising the expectations of many women in peripheral areas, while migrant laws in the EU and countries such as the Netherlands contain and push these women into illegality. The migration projects, not only from far away regions, of foreign women who end up working in the Dutch sex industry are also a result of the further feminization of poverty in many countries.

As described earlier, changes in legislation, policies and interventions on prostitution and women trafficking in the Netherlands – especially the lifting of the ban of brothels from 2000 – combined with the regulation and control of a licensed sector with more repression on women trafficking and illegal migrants, have banned clients from some major toleration zones to indoor, backstage settings. Of course, new and more restrictive and criminalizing migration laws have made illegal migrant prostitutes more dependent on trafficking networks and pimps for protection, border-crossing, fake passports, housing, etc.

We also have to mention that both the consumer and employer demand for women has also been encouraged by the newer and more diversified forms of sexualization (and often *pornification*) of man–women relations visible in several social fields such as mass advertisement, leisure time, night and student life, pop culture,

holidays, Internet interactions and mainstream visual media. The commodification of sexuality goes far beyond traditional prostitution and often involves “free” exchanges and “services” between (young) men and women. The decline of the traditional brothels and the expansion of places such as massage parlours, Thai salons, saunas or erotic hair dressers can be linked to these developments.

Finally, the demand for trafficked women for prostitution has paradoxically been encouraged by the further emancipation of Dutch women, producing disrupted male identities and changes in the traditional male and female roles within relationships. By purchasing commercial sex, frightened men are trying to regain, at least as an illusion, of control as “bosses” over objectified women. This often unconscious desire is found in many of our interviews.

To conclude, the consumer demand for trafficked women for prostitution cannot be treated as an independent variable nor considered as a demand separate from a general demand for commercial sex. In the next final section we will look back at the perceptions and practices of clients regarding women trafficking, trying to see how different types of clients may be addressed.

5.7.3 The Perceptions and Practices of Clients Regarding Women Trafficking

The third research question dealt with in this study read:

5.7.3.1 What are the Perceptions and Practices of Clients Regarding Women Trafficking and What is Their Role in the Expansion or Reduction of the Demand for Trafficked Women for Prostitution?

Do clients actively and consciously look for trafficked women to purchase sexual services, do they make any distinction between voluntary and forced prostitution, or do they actually recognize, actively avoid and/or help women considered to be victims of exploitation by pimps and “retailers”? These are among the main questions we asked ourselves in the beginning of this research. By analysing a specific Dutch Internet site made by and for clients, and by interviewing clients, experts and several women, we tried to provide an answer to these questions.

The short, general answers would be that, first of all, clients do not seek actively and deliberately for vulnerable or trafficked women. They do look for foreign prostitutes, particularly from Eastern Europe, but they are not much concerned about the distinction between legal and illegal migrants. Secondly, most of the clients do try to make a distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution, at least in definitional terms. But many clients embrace a far stricter definition than the one given by the UN or the Dutch laws. While minors and slaves are granted the status of trafficked women, mild forms of coercion or voluntary illegal immigrants are less quickly defined as problematic. Thirdly, clients are rather ambiguous and foggy on

the topic of how to recognize forced prostitutes. And finally, some clients try indeed to help the prostitutes, but for several reasons the majority of clients do not feel responsible and adopt other strategies when dealing with trafficked women.

The main problem with presenting general answers to such a set of questions is that it does not do any justice to the diversity we encountered in the interviewed clients and their practices and perceptions on trafficked prostitution. Instead, we have offered a typology consisting of three ideal-typical clients: the *unconcerned consumer*, the *blind conscious client* and the *moral crusader*. This typology is based on looking at four issues: the abstract acknowledgement of voluntary versus forced prostitution, the recognition of individual responsibility, the concrete recognition of forced prostitutes and the individual strategies of dealing with forced prostitution (total withdrawal from prostitution, avoiding trafficked women, denying responsibility and/or victims, helping (perceived) victims).

All three ideal-types recognize at least in theory the difference between voluntary and forced prostitution, but they differ in the degree. *Moral crusaders* are least ambiguous as they fully acknowledge the difference between the two and feel themselves guilty as well as responsible for women trafficking. They do not only blame themselves but also the authorities for failing controls and insufficient repression. Out of guilt and love, they try to help the trafficked prostitutes, although they romanticize and amplify their role in the life of the trafficked women. Both *unconcerned consumers* and *blind conscious clients* acknowledge the existence of forced prostitution, but while the former puts the blame much more on the shoulders of the prostitutes themselves, the latter accuse the pimps and the “boyfriends”. The *unconcerned consumers* are not much bothered about the fate of the possible victim, but instead deny their individual responsibility. In contrast, *blind conscious clients* do feel guilty, but also apply several forms of denial. They deny the fact that they can make a distinction between forced and voluntary prostitutes and they simply often deny the fact that they have sex with coerced prostitutes, for instance, by claiming that they only visit licensed brothels. They also deny the usefulness of taking action, as they argue that in no time most women would be back on the streets working again for their pimps.

Most clients do have some indicators in mind when thinking of forced prostitution. These indicators refer to personal characteristics such as age and nationality, but can also be much more behavioural such as, for instance, the prostitute’s attitude and charisma, the way in which the prostitute plays the game during the sexual encounter and the services offered by the woman. Almost every client is aware of meaningful signs of physical abuses such as bruises and timid expressions. Typically, *unconcerned consumers* who are less selective in their choice of locations forget these indicators as soon as they stand in front of the prostitutes. By being more selective beforehand and by trying to avoid possible victims as much as they can, the *blind conscious client* will be less quick in this position, but in the end will also tend to lose the indicators. *The flesh is weak, the spirit even weaker*, according to one of the clients. It is typically the *moral crusader* who will try to help a possible victim or will eventually quit visiting prostitutes altogether.

With the exception of *moral crusaders*, other clients see for themselves no or only a minor contribution to the fight against women trafficking. The main solution

that clients see are focused on more restrictive policies of control on all locations, as well as more repression on the pimps. They all oppose the criminalization of clients, reject the Swedish model, but favour more controls on operators (not on the women) and on clients who make use of street prostitution in non-tolerated zones.

For most clients, visiting prostitutes is a highly social act with many encounters, asking, sharing and exchanging information and experiences. The social life of the clients manifests as much in the virtual world of client sites, discussion forums or MSN, as in the bars, restaurants, clubs or saunas where they meet prostitutes or other clients often contacted through the Internet.

According to our findings, the majority of clients should be identified as *unconcerned consumers* or *blind conscious clients*. Only a few can be characterized as *moral crusaders*. In some cases it is difficult to distinguish between the first two types of clients. The main issue to distinguish between the two is their attitude towards individual responsibility and feelings of guilt: *unconcerned consumers* feel no guilt or responsibility, while *blind conscious clients* are aware. Other elements may be shared by the two groups. We found no evidence of a “misogynist” or “bad guy” who consciously and explicitly *only* looks for women working under coercion. It might exist, but we did not manage to find him nor found any indirect evidence in our data about his existence in the Netherlands. The image of the “bad guy” could also function as another strategy to deal with the guilt experienced: by constructing and othering the “bad guy”, clients proclaim that there are others out there who are even worse.

Which further lessons can we derive from this typology? First, the typology illustrates that there is diversity within the broad category of clients, that clients perceive the issue of trafficked prostitution in various ways and that they deploy divergent coping strategies to deal with the possible victims of forced prostitution. Again, it is important to note that, according to the clients, women trafficking is less a migration issue than a topic connected with fundamental rights violations, coercion, force or sex with minors. Whereas, according to Dutch law, bringing persons from other countries into prostitution (voluntary or not) is defined as women trafficking, clients apply a much more restricted definition with little room for (il)legal status. Clients find it irrelevant whether the prostitute lacks valid residence papers or not. Within a Dutch multicultural society, the distinction between national citizens, foreigners and illegal immigrants is impossible to make unless formal documents are asked for. And even then, professionals have a hard time in differentiating between real and fake documents. Unaware of the marginalized, powerless and vulnerable position of illegal (foreign) prostitutes, “foreignness” is for the majority of the clients a favoured criterion in choosing a prostitute. This narrow perception of clients regarding foreign trafficked women is in clear conflict with official Dutch policies aimed, among other things, at protecting foreign nationals who work as illegal prostitutes in the Netherlands. Authorities and organizations should take these divergent perceptions and coping strategies into account when implementing policies and interventions.

Another important finding is that clients experience what could be defined as a reversed form of responsibilization or *irresponsibilization* (see Garland, 2001). The

legalization of brothels and the kind of routine controls performed by the Dutch authorities, instead of converting clients into partners in the fight against women trafficking, has expanded the feeling amongst clients that the legalized sector is a safe sector without exploitation, forced prostitution or women trafficking. Both primary and secondary data analysed make it clear that the legalization of brothels has not removed women trafficking from the licensed sector. One conclusion is that law enforcement should increase its capacity when controlling this sector. Secondly, it is suggested here that much greater efforts should be made to educate and inform the public, and potential clients in particular, regarding prostitution and women trafficking. This means that specific information campaigns such as *Appearances deceive* started by the foundation *Report Crime Anonymously* should be reintroduced and expanded. Campaigns like these not only effectively increase the awareness of clients about possible settings for women trafficking, but also spread information about possible indicators of women trafficking. In this way, the clients' claim that they are unable to distinguish between voluntary and forced prostitution, whether true or a justification, can be addressed. Simultaneously, the constructed typology makes it clear that not all clients can be reached with the same instruments and this, finally, implies that different, maybe more targeted strategies have to be devised in order to reach different types of "polar bears".

Chapter 6

Romania: Emerging Market for Trafficking?

Clients and Trafficked Women in Romania

Dan Alexandru Dragomirescu, Carmen Necula, and Raluca Simion

6.1 Women Trafficking in Romania

Trafficking in human beings has lately become a subject of great concern in discussions related to global criminal policies. The 90s brought with them not only the fall of communist regimes from Central and Eastern Europe, but also a lot of problems caused by the transitions these countries went through. A phenomenon of migration burst out after all border restrictions were lifted. Consequently, Romania very soon turned into an origin and transit country for trafficking in human beings due to its geographical position between two countries (Yugoslavia and the ex-Soviet Union) which were dealing with serious issues during their change into democracies.

THB is inextricably linked with prostitution, which is why we considered it extremely relevant to present the provisions referring to prostitution and pimping together with the legislation and policies in the field related to trafficking in persons. It is well known that there are self-managed sex workers, but also prostitutes run by pimps. This second category is sometimes very close to the one of victims of trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation and that is because the relationship between the pimp and the prostitute can be a contractual or a coercive one. If the first situation can be encountered in massage parlours or escort agencies, street prostitution has mostly a violent side and many women that are working on the streets become victims of this violence. The line between pimping and trafficking of human beings, between voluntary and involuntary prostitution becomes very narrow, which is why we believe that a complex approach looking at all three aspects is needed. Again, as an introductory remark, we have to say that we used several interchangeable notions, that is, sex worker, prostitute and girls involved in prostitution.¹

Prostitution has been a reality in the Romanian territories since the Middle Age, despite the very strict male domination characteristic of that period. Prostitutes were punished very severely, sometimes even by death. During the time of a Phanariot

¹We are aware of the discussions in the feminist literature regarding the terminology of prostitute. Nevertheless, in Romanian the term of sex worker was not consecrated, perhaps due to the fact that this implies a lucrative side and prostitution is still considered an offence in Romania.

ruler, Caragea, prostitution in Bucharest was so widespread that he thought of making profits from it and imposed taxes on prostitution (Radulescu, 1996). During the interwar period, institutionalized prostitution functioned in the form of brothels called *case de toleranță* (literally *houses of tolerance*). The prostitutes were under strict sanitary control and supervised by the police.

Communism put an end to legalized prostitution as the new type of moral they promoted was in total contradiction with “depraved capitalism”. That did not represent an impediment for practising prostitution more or less openly.

After 1989, the prostitution came to the surface again. There is a variety of ways of manifestation in clubs, hotels, apartments, brothels, on the streets, by means of matrimonial agencies functioning as a cover, allegedly “clean” companies seeking job applicants and more recently explicit advertisements in newspapers for adult video chat jobs.

Prostitution is a widespread phenomenon. Most of the prostitutes have backgrounds of disorganized, problematic families and are uneducated. There are also so-called high-class prostitutes (luxury prostitutes) orientated towards foreign clients (businessmen or tourists) or Romanian businessmen; these girls have a better education, sometimes even high-level education, and know foreign languages as well. Any visitor to the most expensive hotels in Bucharest can find in their hotel rooms or in the lobbies brochures with massage parlours and night clubs. This type of prostitution is very difficult to prove as one of the conditions to be fulfilled is to catch the prostitute and the client in the act.

The police know the main locations of the prostitutes, especially of the street workers that are, because of the location of their activity, the most exposed category. Many times, the police organize raids, discover the prostitutes and bring them to its headquarters and apply a fine and after that release them.² Sometimes a prostitute can collect hundreds of fines and pay none of them. The imprisonment comes for the prostitutes as an ultimate solution, only if she is caught red-handed, while the pimps are more severely punished. In 2005, 177 persons were sentenced for prostitution, most of them under conditional suspension of imprisonment and 130 for procuring, the majority being punished by imprisonment between 1 and 5 years.³

A brief history of the prostitution as a legal concept should be introduced here. The previous modern Criminal Codes (1864, 1936) did not recognize prostitution as an offence. The 1936 Criminal Code provided for some regulation regarding the health problems of the prostitutes and incriminated only instigation and favouring. The prostitute had to register and was in the possession of a special fiche. She had to undertake periodic health controls and was submitted to rules and prohibitions (such as not being in certain places at certain hours).⁴

²The prostitution has to be practiced habitually in order to be considered an offence, so most of the times when the prostitutes are caught on the streets, their deeds are considered contraventions and are punished by a fine according to a special law.

³The statistical data were provided by the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Human Resources and Relationship with the Superior Council of Magistracy.

⁴See *Cartierul rosu*, Banateanul, 20 martie 2007.

In 1957, there was a legislative change of the Criminal Code, which introduced prostitution as an offence (Academia Romana, ICJ, 2003).

Nowadays, prostitution is stipulated as an offence in art. 328 of the Romanian Criminal Code. The punishment is imprisonment from 3 months to 3 years. There are also some additional laws that may be applicable in the field.

The new draft of the Criminal Code, which has still to be presented to the Parliament, continues to include prostitution as an offence although the sanctions are a little milder (imprisonment from three months up to 1 year or fine). At the beginning of March 2007, the Minister of the Interior and Administration brought prostitution into public debate again speaking about a new legislative project aiming at making prostitution a legal business. Over the next few days, the press was already invaded by articles discussing the pros and cons of the matter.⁵ Before March 2007, in several legislative initiatives launched in the Parliament in 2000,⁶ 2002 and 2004, medical grounds were even invoked, but the negative feedback from the public and Church made the initiators drop any ideas on the matter.

Prostitution was and remains a much-debated issue. The general trend is against prostitution as a phenomenon or at least most of the people declare themselves against it. A possible explanation resides in the image of a very traditionalist and ritualistic Romanian society. A GALLUP Romania and Open Society study included questions on the matter of legalizing prostitution. Half of the respondents pronounced themselves against legalization, and 45% from the total sample of male respondents⁷ gave the same answer.

Procuring is also a crime under the Criminal Code (art. 329). The article was changed several times, last time in 2005, including in its aggravated forms of manifestation, the recruitment of a person with a view to prostitution or trafficking in human beings and the forcing into it. Another aggravated form is referring to the situation when the person recruited is a minor; in this case, the procurer is punished by up to 18 years of imprisonment.

The definition of procuring, and especially the aggravated form mentioned in Paragraph 2 of art. 329, posed difficulties for the enforcement agencies to clearly establish the legal framework for a particular deed because, as it will be seen further on, the elements provided by the second paragraph are almost identical with the elements which define the offence of trafficking in human beings (offence stipulated in a special law).

If the THB has as the purpose of the sexual exploitation of the person, the task becomes even more difficult, the differentiation criteria being almost absent.

⁵ *Blaga vrea legalizarea, politia se mai gandeste* in Gandul, 1 martie 2007, *MAI promite legalizarea prostitutiei* in 7Plus, 1 martie 2007, *Prostituatele ar putea aduce 1% din PIB* in Adevarul, 2 martie 2007.

⁶ The 2000 legislative proposal regarded institutionalized brothels. The procedure was eventually interrupted but it gave rise to a very lively public debate. The Church and some members of civil society protested vehemently against it. In 2004 the Deputy Chamber tried to bring the issue to the surface again but with the same negative outcome.

⁷ More details on the matter of the legalization of prostitution are comprised in GALLUP Romania and the Open Society Gender Barometer Romania 2000.

Then the problem of consent turns into something extremely important. If the consent of the girl was unaltered, then the offence is procuring. If the consent was obtained by use of force, threats or other non-violent means, then we have trafficking in human beings. In the first case, the girl is a prostitute and she could go to jail for practising; in the second case, the girl is a victim and according to the special law that will be discussed later on, will not be punished.

Another aspect that could solve the dilemma would be represented by the money. If the pimp and the prostitute share the money according to an agreement, it is procuring. If the profit is taken entirely by the pimp or to a very large and significant extent that proves that the girl is exploited, then the offence is trafficking in human beings.⁸ Of course, in practice, these distinctions are not so easy to ascertain and give rise to a lot of confusion.

The bill of the new Criminal Code clears up most of the problematic issues that emerged from the provisions still in force. This would be a positive fact after all the inputs of the experts who asked for an improvement in the legislation to make a clear delimitation between procuring and trafficking in persons (MJ, INC, 2004–2005).

The uncontroversial fact is that the majority of the prostitutes in Romania are Romanian citizens. Even though there are cases of foreign prostitutes, although clearly less numerous, the main countries of origin are Moldavia, Ukraine, Russia and other countries from the former Soviet Union (UNICEF, UNODHR, OSCE-ODIHR, 2003).

Romanian legislation is in accordance with the general principles of equal opportunities for both sexes and forbids gender discrimination. Despite the appropriate legislative framework, the scarce opportunity of employment and the harsh economic conditions from disadvantaged areas such as Moldavia, together with the lack of education, make women have few options and to become a vulnerable category for trafficking.⁹

6.1.1 Trafficking in Human Beings

The idea of this research was to speak about the demand for foreign prostitutes that keeps the traffic of human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation in motion. During our research, we encountered difficulties in identifying foreign prostitutes or clients of foreign prostitutes, due to the peculiar situation in Romania. International reports place Romania among the countries of origin and transit and not among the destination countries. According to a recent UN study (*Trafficking in Persons, Global Patterns: 2006*),

⁸For a clear distinction between procuring, trafficking of human beings and trafficking in minors see Steluta Lili Oprea, *Proxenetism. Trafic de persoane. Trafic de minori. Asemanari. Deosebiri. Dificultati in administrarea probatoriilor*, available at www.ministerulpublic.ro.

⁹IOM managed to sketch a profile of young Romanian girls who were vulnerable to trafficking in human beings. The economic context, unequal chances on the labour market as well as low educational background were some of the main causes. For more details, see IOM, *Who is the Next Victim? Vulnerability of Young Romanian Women to Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2003.

Romania is classified to a very high degree as country of origin, the main destinations being Albania, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Netherlands and Turkey. Romania is also a high-level transit country to western countries mostly for women coming from Moldavia, the Russian Federation and the Ukraine. As mentioned in the same report, Romania represents to a very low degree a destination for the same countries as before. The same placement one can find in the annual reports of the Department of State for the years 2006 and 2007 (TIP, 2006: 209, TIP, 2007: 175).

In 2005, there were 837 cases of trafficking of human beings investigated by the police, 472 cases solved by the Public Prosecutor and 146 persons sentenced (111 men and 35 women). There were 2,551 identified victims, of which 1,653 were women.¹⁰ In 2006, there were 780 persons prosecuted for THB and 187 convicted. 2,285 victims were identified and 175 received assistance (TIP, 2007:175). The majority of the victims were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The external traffic surpassed the internal one. Most times the trafficking was carried out by organized groups; the members are usually less than 10, the tasks of each member and the hierarchy being clearly established.

For many years now, the Romanian girls were trafficked outside the borders for the purpose of practising prostitution. There were several favourite routes. If Turkey was in fashion once, nowadays the most common destinations are without doubt Spain and Italy.

In some Italian regions, Romanians were even the majority among the other prostitutes¹¹ and some of them knew exactly where they were heading. What they were not aware of were under which terms they would be practising prostitution.

6.1.2 Migration: Legal Framework and Policies in the Field

Like many of its neighbouring countries, Romania – once a major refugee-generating country – initially became a transit country for migrants heading to Western Europe and now, gradually, is becoming a country of destination for some, including persons in need of protection.

An estimation made by UNHCR showed that until the end of 2003 there were appreciatively 1,000 refugees and persons who requested asylum.¹² At the end of

¹⁰See *Traficul de fiinte umane din perspectiva combaterii*. Directia generala de Combatere a Criminalitatii Organizate, 2005.

¹¹See *Una mappatura del fenomeno della prostituzione di donne dell'est Europa nella regione del Veneto*. Edited by the Assessorato alle Politiche della Sicurezza e dei Flussi Migratori (Executive Council of the Veneto Region), June 2004.

¹²See <http://www.cnrr.ro>. IOM offers some figures as well. According to them, 885 asylum applications were submitted in 2003 to the National Refugee Office and 206 were accepted and 608 until November 2004 and only 130 accepted (See IOM, *Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in South Eastern Europe*, 2005).

June 2006, according to a report of the National Refugees Office, 671 foreigners were registered who have been granted a form of protection in Romania, most of them coming from Iraq (49.7%) and Iran (10.7%).¹³

The data obtained during the census of 2002 refer to 27,910 foreigners in Romania of whom 29.6% are EU citizens and 32% Asian (Institutul European din Romania, 2004: 46–65). Compared to the census from 1992, there was an absolute growth of approximate 9.4 times.

The data made available by the Ministry of Administration and Interior show that in 2002 the Authority for Foreigners¹⁴ had registered 72,859 people. The numbers seem to have decreased between 2000 and 2003 when the same legal body registered only 44,760 persons.

It seems that Romania has become a destination that presents more interest than in the past, due to its recent joining the EU. Between 1 January and 31 May 2007, 60 groups of migrants (29 smugglers and 291 migrants) were discovered while trying to illegally cross the border.¹⁵ In fact, the majority of illegal migrations that have occurred is connected to persons from third countries that wish to get into the European Union and migrate first to Romania to further migrate to other EU countries (Report CoE, 2005).

The problem of immigration could become real and so governmental policy was adjusted to that end. In fact it is estimated that, without the proper securing of the frontiers, the number of migrants would have been seven to eight times larger than it already is (Institutul European din Romania, 2004).

It was estimated that until 2013–2015, due to the deficit in the labour market, around 200,000–300,000 foreigners would enter Romania. The countries that provide the largest number of migrants to Romania are for the moment Moldavia, Turkey and China. A substantial growth was noticed in marriages between Romanian citizens and foreign citizens who establish their residence in Romania.

6.1.3 International Legal Framework

Besides the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, which had already been ratified in 1974, Romania ratified the main UN human rights instruments, such as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990.

¹³ Irakienii, iranianii si palestinienii, in topul refugiatilor din Romania, in 2006, (Gardianul, 2006).

¹⁴ The Authority for Foreigners was an authority subordinated to the Ministry of Interior and the Administrative Reform which had as tasks, among others, to combat illegal migration and to keep records of foreigners who obtained permit stay in Romania.

¹⁵ Realitatea Romaneasca, Editia din 27.04.2007, available at www.realitatearomaneaca.ro.

The country became a member of the Council of Europe in October 1993, and ratified both the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1994. Romania ratified without reservation in August 1991 the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the New York Protocol of 1967.

6.1.4 Domestic Legal Framework

Section 18(2) of the Romanian Constitution of 1991, modified and completed in 2003, stipulates that “the right of asylum is granted and withdrawn under the conditions of the law, observing the international conventions and treaties to which Romania is a party”.

The *National Strategy of Romania* regarding migration pursues the elaboration of unitary policies in fields like migration, asylum and social integration of aliens. The National Strategy includes general principles and directions for the establishment of the policies of the Romanian state regarding the admission, staying, migration of labour force, protection forms and fighting illegal migration.

Romania has adopted an active and flexible policy in the field of migration control, adequate to national, regional and international conditions.

The citizens of the European Union and of the Economic European Space have a special statute. For aliens from countries with elevated migratory potential there are specific proceedings, which include international agreements and conventions.

Other policies in the field of migration refer to the prevention and fight against illegal migration, the concession of the right of asylum, the social integration of foreigners and voluntary repatriation. The implementation of this strategy is the task of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform.

Consequently, until very recently, there were two organisms that held attributions in the field: the *National Office for the Refugees*, a body subordinated to the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, which was the central authority responsible for the policy regarding asylum in Romania and the *Authority for Foreigners*, also subordinated to the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform. The latter organism’s competences were the fight against illegal residence and keeping the records of aliens who have the right to stay in Romania. Following the European model that promoted a single organism involved in immigration and asylum issues, a legislative change was voted in June 2007 and two governmental bodies merged into a new one called *The Romanian Office for Immigration*¹⁶ which has as its main responsibility

¹⁶The normative act establishing the new body is the Emergency Ordinance no.55/20.06.2007, published in the Official Gazette 424/26.06.2007.

the implementation of the policies regarding migration, asylum and integration of foreigners.

The policy concerning asylum represents an important part of migration management. The field of asylum includes all the aspects related to the procedure of granting a form of protection, the juridical regime of aliens during and after this procedure takes place, fully respecting the individual rights of the persons entitled to receive this form of protection.

Romania has ratified the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, which stipulates in art. 5 that “migrants shall not become liable to criminal prosecution under this Protocol for the fact of having been the object of conduct set forth in art. 6 of the Protocol”. The article makes it clear that no person who has been illegally smuggled should be criminalized for being the object of smuggling (Ollus: 36). Despite that, Romania considers trespassing the state border an offence, as it results from art. 70 of the above-mentioned Emergency Ordinance which mentions that the illegal entrance into the country or the exit from the country by trespassing the state border is punishable by imprisonment between 3 months and 2 years. The fourth paragraph of the article establishes an impunity clause as the victims of trafficking in human beings are not to be punished for this deed.

Another almost similar offence is mentioned in art. 1 of the Emergency Ordinance 112/30 August 2001. This time, the same punishment is established for trespassing the state border of a foreign state by a Romanian citizen or a person without citizenship who has permanent residence on Romanian soil. These two offences should be re-examined in the context of the accession of Romania to the EU, as after 1 January 2007, Romanians enjoy the right of free movement in the European Union.

The provisions should still apply to non-EU citizens who try to enter Romania without the proper documentation. This was conceived as a protective measure to discourage potential migrants to enter Romania illegally. Of course, these persons will not be imprisoned if they ask for refugee status.

Art. 71 of the same ordinance stipulates the smuggling of migrants as an offence: “recruitment and guiding of one or more persons with the purpose of trespassing the border as well as the organization of such activities is punishable by imprisonment between 2 and 7 years”. The offence has aggravated forms: if the deed could endanger the life and security of the migrants or if it could submit them to inhuman or degrading treatment, the punishment is detention from 5 up to 10 years. If these facts could cause the death or suicide of the victim, the punishment would be imprisonment between 10 and 20 years. The proceeds of crime are confiscated (art. 73).

There are police units specialized in smuggling of migrants and specialized prosecution units that have the same purpose.

Romania is a part of the Convention regulating the status of refugees, Geneva, 28 July 1951. Consequently, Sect. 2 Paragraph g of the Asylum Law defines the status of refugee in terms close to those included in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

According to art. 23 of the law, the status of refugee can be achieved by request of a foreigner who proves that he has justifiable reasons to believe that he will be persecuted in his country of origin because of his race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group or for his political opinions.

The Romanian legislation¹⁷ also aims to facilitate the social integration of aliens who are granted a form of protection in Romania by ensuring their access to the following rights: the right to work, the right to accommodation, the right to medical and social assistance, the right to education, as well as through other activities, which have as their purpose to get them accustomed to the Romanian language and culture (integration programs).

6.1.5 Trafficking in Human Beings: Legal Framework and Policies in the Field

6.1.5.1 International Legislation

Romania signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 14 December 2000 and the two additional protocols adopted in New York in 2000¹⁸ and ratified them by Law 565/2002.

Romania also signed in 2005 the Convention of the Council of Europe on trafficking in human beings and ratified it by Law 300/2006.¹⁹

The main law in the field is represented by Law no. 671/2001 regarding the prevention and combating of trafficking in human beings. It was changed several times so that the Framework Decision of the Council of the European Communities signed on 19 July 2002 could be correctly implemented in internal legislation.

6.1.5.2 Domestic Legislation

Law 671/2001 comprises provisions referring to the prevention of trafficking of human beings, relative offences, and criminal procedures applicable in the field, protection and assistance of the victims of trafficking and international cooperation.

6.1.5.3 Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings

The prevention activity is to be designed by the public authorities and the NGOs together. The Ministries involved in the prevention activities, apart from the

¹⁷ See for details Government Decision no. 44/2004 on the Social Integration of Aliens who were Granted a Form of Protection in Romania.

¹⁸ By the two protocols we mean of course the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, supplementing the same Convention.

¹⁹ The Convention was the result of the efforts undertaken by the Council of Europe in the field of THB: CoE had previously issued several other instruments, without binding effect though.

Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform and the Ministry of Justice, are the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Health and Family.

6.1.5.4 The Offences

The law refers to two categories of offences: trafficking in human beings offences and offences related to trafficking in human beings.

The first category comprises two offences: trafficking of adults and trafficking of minors. It has to be underlined from the start that the definition of the offence corresponds entirely with the provisions of the above/aforementioned Framework Decision.

Art. 12 defines trafficking as recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a person, through the use of threats or violence or the use of other forms of coercion, through abduction, fraud or deception, abuse of power or by taking advantage of that person's inability to defend herself or to express her will or by giving, accepting or receiving money or other benefits. There are three situations considered as an aggravated form of the offence:

- When the trafficking has been committed by two or three persons together
- When it caused a serious injury to the corporal integrity or the health of the victim
- If the offence has caused the death or the suicide of the victim

Art. 13 criminalizes the trafficking of minors. The modalities of committing the crime are the same, just the passive subject is qualified, in the sense that it is a minor in an age between 15 and 18. There are also aggravated forms of the offence, among them, the deed of the parent or tutor of the minor, who in return for money or other benefits agrees to the child's traffic, is punished.

One of the offences related to trafficking in human beings refers to the offence of trafficking of human beings where the victim is not a Romanian citizen. Art. 17 in fact punishes the deed of a person who allows or causes the entry or stay of a person who is not a Romanian citizen into Romanian territory with the purpose of being trafficked.

There is an extensive area dedicated to *victim protection measures*.

Protection is granted not only to the Romanian victims but also to the foreign victims that were trafficked to Romania.

Romanian victims that were trafficked to a foreign state have the right, upon request, to assistance granted by the diplomatic and consular offices that Romania has in that foreign state.

Romanian victims can, upon request, receive temporary accommodation for a period of 10 days which can be prolonged up to 3 months or for the duration of a criminal trial. To that end, several centres for the protection and assistance of victims were created in the counties of Arad, Botosani, Galati, Giurgiu, Iasi, Ilfov, Mehedinti, Satu-Mare and Timis.

Romanian authorities offer support for the repatriation of foreign citizens, victims of trafficking in human beings. The foreign victims are hosted in special centres and

are informed about the judicial and administrative procedures; they can get physical and psychological counselling, medical and social assistance. The victims have at their disposal a period of up to 90 days to reflect and recover and to take a decision regarding the cooperation with the authorities. After that, at their request, they can get a temporary stay permit.

6.1.5.5 Procedural Measures and International Cooperation

The criminal investigations are conducted by the prosecutor and undercover agents can be used to gather evidence. The competent court is the District Court (according to the Romanian judicial organization there is one district court for each county).

The law speaks about liaison officers and liaison magistrates specialized in trafficking in human beings and also contact points within the Ministry of the Interior and Administrative Reform as well as the Prosecutor Office by the High Court of Cassation and Justice. In accordance with European standards, a law for witness protection²⁰ and a law that grants protection to crime victims were adopted.²¹

The Bill of the new Criminal Code includes in Title VIII, Chap. 1, the offences of trafficking in human beings (trafficking of adults and trafficking of minors) and exploitation of persons and also smuggling of migrants and facilitating illegal stay on the Romanian territory as well as using the services of an exploited person.

6.1.5.6 Policies

Since 2001, the year when the framework law entered into force, a lot has been done in the THB field. The Police and the Frontier Police are extremely active. In the framework of the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, specialized units for combating trafficking in human beings were created. Also in 2005 a new institution started functioning – the National Agency against Trafficking in Human Beings,²² which is still a part of the Ministry of the Interior and Administrative Reform.

There is a fruitful cooperation with SECI (Southeast European Cooperative Initiative – Regional Center for Combating Trans-Border Crime), INTERPOL and Europol in the field. In 2005, a network for judges specialized in trafficking in

²⁰Law 682/2002 on witness protection stipulates that trafficking in human beings is among the serious crimes that are subject to the witness protection program.

²¹The law under discussion comprises some measures that can be applied to the victims of trafficking, such as informing them about their rights, getting psychological counseling and, under certain circumstances, juridical assistance, free of charge. See for details, Law no.211/2004 regarding certain measures for ensuring the protection of crime victims, Official Gazette no. 505/4.06.2004.

²²The Agency was founded by Decision of Government no. 1584/2005, modified and completed by Decision of Government no. 1083/2006.

human beings was set up, consisting of 56 judges (one judge per each Court of Appeal and Second Instance Court).

The NGOs are actively involved in establishing plans to combat trafficking in human beings and in prevention and victim assistance. IOM has also played a very important role in the anti-trafficking policies.²³ This is testified to by the fact that through two different decisions of government, several agreements were established between the Romanian government and IOM with the view to create shelters for victims.²⁴

Several other public institutions such as the Ministry of Education and the Orthodox Church were involved in awareness raising campaigns.

A category vulnerable to THB is children, which is why additional measures were taken at a legislative level.²⁵

In 2006, a National Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings was designed for the period 2006–2010.²⁶ This strategy tried to identify risk factors concerning trafficking in human beings at macro, micro and individual levels. All these factors are specific to THB and from this point of view Romania does not represent a special case when compared to other countries (poor living conditions, lack of cultural background, gender discrimination, a deficit on the labour market and subsequently a growth of migration outside Romania, an inferiority complex, dismembered families, etc.).

The strategy seeks to group the institutions involved on four components (prevention, combating, assistance and monitoring the assistance) and it also tries to establish certain objectives to be fulfilled. The idea of this strategy is to lead to better institutional cooperation and an improvement in the fight against this phenomenon, the final purpose being to reduce the dimensions of THB and consequently its negative effects. The strategy notes that one of the major problems is to have a complete view of the number of victims of trafficking in human beings. It should be also taken into consideration how the victims could be protected and assisted and how they could be eventually reintegrated in the society.

The strategy is accompanied by a Plan of Action for the period 2006–2010. The action plan is designed around the main institution involved in the field – that is, the National Agency against Trafficking in Human Beings. The main issues that

²³Between January 2000 and December 2004 IOM offered assistance to 1054 Romanian victims and 31 foreign victims. Both categories received the same assistance. Among the 31 foreign victims some were trafficked for sexual exploitation, and some for labour. Most of them were Moldovans. Obviously, IOM estimates that the actual number of foreign persons trafficked in Romania is higher than the assisted cases. (IOM, *Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in South Eastern Europe*, 2005).

²⁴Decision of Government no. 1226/6.12.2001 and Decision of Government no. 1282/27 Oct. 2005.

²⁵See for details the Decision of Government no. 1295/13.08.2004 regarding the approval of the National Plan of Action for the Prevention and combating of Children Traffic and the Decision of Government no. 1504/16.09.2004 concerning the Plan of Action for the Prevention and combating of the Sexual Abuse of the Child and Sexual Exploitation of the Children for Commercial Purposes.

²⁶The National Strategy, approved by Decision of Government was published in the Official Gazette, no. 967/4.12.2006.

should be considered are the monitoring and evaluation of the phenomenon, the coordination between the institutions involved in trafficking in human beings, the prevention of trafficking in human beings, the protection, assistance and social reintegration of victims, investigating and combating trafficking in human beings through international cooperation.

The Agency designs the national strategy against THB and collects statistical data on the phenomenon, carries out research and writes the national reports in the field, represents Romania in the working groups at international level and promotes its own prevention programs.²⁷

There are also other important public and private institutions, starting with some centres of assistance and protection of the victims of THB (organized by some of the County Councils) and the National Authority for Foreigners, National Office for Refugees, the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, international organizations such as IOM and several NGOs such as ADPARE, Betania, Conexiuni, Reaching Out, AIDrom, Save the Children, the Red Cross, Young Generation, Mitropolia Banatului. These NGOs undertook campaigns in the press, on TV and also at local level, including schools, especially in the areas which present potential risk of attracting new victims.

6.2 Methodology

In comparison with the other three country-studies, Romania is not for the moment a destination country but rather a transit country from the perspective of the foreign trafficked prostitution. That is why, when interviewing, we tried to take into consideration the phenomenon of prostitution in general and to grasp, when possible, internal trafficking (that is Romanian women trafficked on the Romanian soil) as well as external trafficking (Romanian women trafficked outside Romania) and eventually the cases of foreign trafficked prostitution in Romania.

As a consequence, the research concentrated on designing a profile of the clients of prostitution in general, and to a lesser extent of trafficked prostitution (Romanian or foreign). In fact, if we are to anticipate some of our conclusions, the clients interviewed did not seem to be interested whether the girls were actually there of their own will or not, or whether they were trafficked or not. We tried to compensate this by choosing some other categories to be interviewed that could add some extra information (prostitutes, pimps, police officers, facilitators). One has to underline the fact that, from now on, when speaking about the clients we will report their general attitude to sex workers whether they were trafficked or not, no matter the typology of the human traffic either foreign or domestic.

²⁷The competences of the agency are established by the two decisions of government already mentioned, by the National Strategy and the Plan of Action and more about its role and activities is available at www.anitp.mai.gov.

The first category of interviewed persons is represented by the clients. Unfortunately, getting the clients to speak proved to be the most difficult task. The clients were reluctant to answer, but our research team participated in some police raids and police interrogations. The clients caught in the act are usually brought to the police section to make statements referring to the prostitutes. These declarations are used then in court when the clients are summoned as witnesses. That is why the clients did not show too much enthusiasm when responding to our questions and most of them refused to discuss the matter. Eventually, we managed to interview four clients: one from Constanta, one from Cluj, one from Iasi who was also a taxi driver and consequently a facilitator and one from Galati. Except for the taxi driver, all the other clients were interviewed after police carried out some raids and they were brought to the police station because they were caught in the act with street workers.

Despite the fact that we managed to interview such a small number of clients, we interviewed other important categories: prostitutes, pimps/traffickers and policemen, and this brings us to the second category of investigated actors that is the prostitutes.

Referring to the prostitutes, we spoke with nine sex workers detained in two penitentiaries (Targosor and Poarta Alba) who were sentenced for having committed the offence of prostitution as it is stipulated in the Romanian Criminal Code. One of the girls had also an external experience, having worked for a certain period in Spain.

What has to be said from the very beginning is that, as their life stories unfolded, we learned that some of these girls had actually been trafficked, sold and kept in captivity, and so to a certain extent one could sketch a profile of the client of trafficked prostitution bearing in mind the information they provided.

We also had a number of interviews with street workers who were not arrested, thus girls who did not have the prison experience and among them, one person who experienced a classical situation of trafficking in human beings, not in Romania though, but in Italy. Among the four girls who were active, one was from the Republic of Moldavia. The girls arrested were not the classy prostitutes that are met in fancy clubs and discotheques but those who were working in the open and were so much easier to detect and be arrested; therefore, most of our interviews refer to street prostitution.

A third category is represented by the pimps and traffickers. We used this double terminology to take into account the difference, at least formally, our legislation makes between the two offences, though at probatory level the difference is rather blurred and causes difficulties. Furthermore, it has to be added that some of the persons interviewed had cumulative functions: prostitute and pimp or prostitute and trafficker (when speaking about the female pimps and traffickers). Again this category was interviewed in three Romanian penitentiaries (the two penitentiaries already mentioned plus the Rahova Penitentiary). There was a total of 11 persons interviewed, two of them being prostitutes and pimps at the same time.

The fourth category is made up of policemen. We benefited from the full support of many police officers from all over the country that are working in different units (21 persons). First, we contacted several units of combating THB at a territorial level. The towns were chosen after discussion with the management of the Central Unit of THB and bearing in mind the hot spots for trafficking all over the country (Bacau, Iasi, Galati, Bucharest, Timisoara, Cluj, Constanta). Then, we interviewed

policemen from the territorial units of combating prostitution and procuring which are components of the Criminal Investigation Central Unit. The towns chosen, after a previous discussion with the central management, were Bucharest and the surroundings (Ilfov, county), Iasi, Tg. Mures, Cluj, Galati, Constanta.

At the end of our research, we also interviewed a person working in a shelter which did not have among its specific tasks the fight against human trafficking, but also hosted girls who were trafficked or who used to prostitute themselves, mostly occasionally. Another important interview we managed to obtain was with a girl who had been trafficked in Italy, with the purpose of sexual exploitation and was able to return to Romania after 6 months. The total number of valid interviews is 50. For each of these categories, interview guides were outlined. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted on average one to one and a half hours per person, but there were cases when it lasted even more than 2h; in one particular case we were forced to split the interview into two parts, carrying it out over two consecutive days.

6.2.1 Clients and Their Attitudes Towards Prostituted Women in Romania

In order to draw up the profile of clients, we thought of collecting the answers of the interviewed categories separately and then to compare the similarities and disparities. Most of the answers led in the same direction, but there were also exceptions, slight differences or even bigger differences, persons who offered the overall image and persons who concentrated on details. Each and every interview helped us a lot to construct the image of the client of prostitution in Romania.

6.2.2 Clients and Their Attitudes Towards the Sex Workers

Taking into account the small number of clients who actually agreed to be interviewed, we had to analyse mostly the data offered by other categories that agreed to respond to our questions. Despite that, from the four interviews we had, we extracted some piece of information which are presented in the following lines.

Referring to the *age* of the four clients interviewed, three of them were under 40 (in their late 30s to be more precise) and one was 41. Two of them were *married*, the third was divorced and at the time of the interview he was living with another woman, the fourth had a girlfriend. Three of them had children.

As for their *educational* background, they all had medium level of education, that is high-school, and the jobs were accordingly (a sailor, a taxi driver, a mechanic and an electrician). This does not come as a surprise because those we managed to interview were the clients of street prostitution. Of course, there is no rule concerning this category of clients as, according to the statements of the girls and the information provided by the police, they come from all walks of life. But on the

other hand, the other categories we spoke with also admitted that the majority of this type of clients is represented by people with medium education.

The clients had their *first sexual experience* during their adolescence: one confesses that he actually started his sexual life with a prostitute at the age of 14. Another says he went for the first time with a prostitute at the age of 19 when he was in Greece, while the third says he had this experience at the age of 30. The first one, who is a sailor, admitted having been with hundreds of sex workers of different nationalities and skin colours, although he had three girlfriends in the meantime, the most stable relationship lasting four years. The difference this man says that exists between a prostitute and a “whore” is very interesting. According to him, a prostitute is a woman who is doing this for money while a “whore” is doing it for pleasure. Eventually, he admitted that prostitutes are doing this job but they do not like what they are doing.

Most of the interviewed men prefer to go with a prostitute than having a constant lover, in addition to their wife or girlfriend.

The main *motivation* according to the four clients is that they cannot ask at home the type of sexual services they can get from a prostitute. This is a constant in their answers. It seems that their partners are not so willing to offer them oral sex or anal sex. One of them, speaking about his wife, says that she is a bit conservative, so she is not quite willing to have oral sex with him. Moreover, his wife is ill with an operated uterus and he considers necessary to treat her with a lot of care. Other motives offered are curiosity and boredom.

Regarding their *frequency* of going with prostitutes, one, as mentioned earlier, went with hundreds of prostitutes, another admits going 2–3 times per week, while the third, between 3 and 5 times per month. Two out of four have a constant girl they are frequenting. They justify their choice because the girl is clean, young and treats them differently. The beauty criterion is not on the top of the list. Again, a common element for two of the men interviewed was that the girls under discussion reminded them of someone from the past.

Speaking about the *type of sexual services* requested, all four admit that they go with prostitutes mostly for oral sex. They are not asking exclusively this type of sexual services but rather combined-oral and anal, normal and oral, oral, normal and anal. While some of them say they use a condom while having a normal intercourse, the situation changes when they are referring to oral sex. According to the sailor, only 5% of the prostitutes with whom he had oral sex asked him to use a condom. He also confessed to getting sexual diseases several times which he had to get treated in hospitals.

6.2.3 *Who the Clients are According to the Sex Workers and What the Relationship Between Them is*

Most of the girls interviewed found it quite difficult to offer even vague information about the *profession* and *educational backgrounds* of their clients. Some of them confessed that they felt uncomfortable about asking them what they do for a living because they realized that the clients do not like that.

Several said that their clients came from all walks of life (from workers to intellectuals, even TV workers, said one of the girls working in Bucharest, or doctors). There were girls working at the borders of the cities who had mostly truck drivers as their clients. As for the *age*, there is no rule; some speak about clients being 70 years old and even more. On the other hand, a small number of prostitutes had experiences with minors. The majority of them were afraid to go with minors and refuse them.

Nevertheless, the great majority of the clients are young persons (one girl working in a small town who had actually been kept hostage for nine months by the pimp says that a third of her clients were young men and teenagers – this could be explained by the location of the house – near a high school) on average between 20 and 30 years. As mentioned earlier, the prostitutes are generally rather reluctant to accept under-aged persons as clients but all of them had amongst their clients youngsters of 17, 16, 15 and even younger.

On the other hand, each of them confessed that they had at least one client that, at the moment of the encounter, was a virgin. All of them recognized that they have regular clients (one of the girls admits that she has had a client for seven years who, at the beginning, was visiting her once every two or three days now it is once every two or three months). Their number varies from girl to girl but they are all constant in admitting that they prefer the regular clients. Some of them apply special prices for their regular clients, that is, lower prices, some even offer them sex for credit, meanwhile others said that the regular clients always offered more money than non-habitual clients. Anyway, it seems that regular clients are much more careful than the non-habitual ones and this is another reason why they are preferred by street workers.

One thing in common is also the *client in love*. They all talked about at least one client who was in love with them. One admits that the client even proposed to marry her, and when he visited her it was not only for sex but also to talk and take walks in the park. Another said that the client in love used to take her into a field and take photographs of her. The girl who worked in Spain told us that one of her clients fell in love with her and asked her to marry him. She was taking drugs during that period and was always breaking her mobile phones and the client was buying her new ones all the time. One of the girls, who was also accused of procuring, admitted that one of her clients fell in love with her, tried to convince her to renounce prostitution and took care of her and her children. She was not convinced that he will wait for her to get out of prison and confessed that she has never loved anyone and she stayed with him only for material reasons.

The girl who was kept hostage said that one of the clients felt sorry for her and wanted to save her. Somehow, this remained only at the stage of a plan.

As for the woman who was trafficked in Italy, she said that many Italian men felt sorry for her as she confessed to them immediately about her state and the fact that she was forced to prostitute herself. Some of them were constantly giving her money to give it to the pimp and avoid being beaten up, but despite that, they declared that they could not do anything to save her.

One of the active sex workers told us that an Italian man was in love with her. They stayed together for a period of eight months in which they both travelled to Italy where she practised prostitution. She separated from him and at the time of the interview he was imprisoned for procuring.

Another common feature in their answers was the *violent client*. Many of them confessed that they were battered by clients and sometimes even robbed and raped. Usually these acts were committed by a group. Not all the girls went to the police to report the incidents. Additionally, the girls who were trafficked spoke about clients who were sent by the pimps as decoys in order to see if the girls were faithful to them, or tried to expose the traffickers and ask for help. The girl trafficked in Italy also told us that she was sometimes taken by force, the clients being insensitive to her requests of being left alone and although they were aware that she was forced to practise prostitution. Some of her clients were sent by the pimp to test her to see if she spoke about her situation or not. She experienced a very traumatic episode, as she was kidnapped by some Moroccans who pretended to be potential clients and who actually threatened to kill her if she did not tell them the name of her pimp. When she eventually did that, she was left in a field in the middle of the night without her purse or mobile phone. Retrospectively, she considers this to be a test to which she was submitted by her Albanian pimp.

6.2.4 *The Foreign Client*

All the interviewed women involved in the prostitution said they had foreigners among their clients. For some of them it was natural to be so as they worked abroad: Spain, Italy, Austria. The percentage of foreigners differs. One of the girls working in Cluj had a small number of foreign clients but among them there was a sort of regular client of German origin, who used to come twice per year and he did that for four consecutive years.

The girl who worked in Austria for two years did not make any consideration related to the clients but to the whole situation, which was better because of the money she earned and the protection she got. Most of the girls preferred foreign clients because they paid better but they were unanimous in stating as a motivation for their preference the fact that the foreigners treat them better. So, according to the opinions expressed by a part of the girls, it is not a matter of money (some said that the foreigners paid the same price or even less) but of behaviour. In fact, a sex worker presented the Romanian clients in antithesis with the foreigners, saying that she never had problems with the foreigners while she had major problems with Romanians (she said she was even abducted once and raped).

The girl who worked in Spain clearly stated that Spanish clients were better than the Romanians and behaved more politely. She did have problems there with the Moroccans and with a Russian man who beat her but she admits that they were under the influence of drugs. Regarding the nationality of the foreign clients, the girls spoke about Italians, Germans, Turks and English. One of them said that

half of her clients were not Romanians. Another sex worker said she did not like to go with foreigners, although they paid more, because she could not understand their language.

6.2.5 *Who the Clients are According to the Pimps/Traffickers*

We use the term pimp for those who were accused for procuring and the term traffickers for those accused of trafficking of human beings. As we previously said the difference between procuring and trafficking is sometimes not very clear in Romanian legislation; that is why some of the interviewed persons were sentenced for both offences because some of them pretended that they were only procuring and not trafficking because they had the consent of the girls. That is why most times it was very difficult to use a juridical framework like – “this is a pimp and this is a trafficker” and so we preferred to consider them as one category. Another argument resides in the fact that in this field the typologies are sometimes blurred and difficult to distinguish, such that we encountered girls who played the role of prostitute and pimp at the same time.

The pimps and traffickers are quite consistent in their answers when it comes to the *age* of the clients. The vast majority of the clients are between 25 and 35. The age of 40 was also very much present but as the upper limit. One woman who trafficked girls externally, to Turkey to be more precise, says that she had even clients of 70. Another woman who was procuring luxury prostitutes (one of the fewest contacts that we related to another type of prostitution, than the street prostitution) confessed that the majority of the clients her girls had, were around 45. This could be explained by the fact that a classy prostitute can be afforded by a person with money and position and who is most of the time a middle-aged man. Except for this last case, all the others also had minors among their clients, some of them were virgins (one procurer that was also a prostitute said that one of her girls was the first for 6–7 virgin men, one of them of 37 years old). One noticed the fact that the youngsters usually came in groups to prostitutes. As for the *marital* status, they believe that most of the clients were married or at least involved with someone.

All the pimps said that the girls had *regular clients*. The percentage is different though from one procurer to another (some estimate 7 out of 10 were regular clients, others, around 30%). The criteria of becoming a regular client are mostly the same in the answers of this category. The relationship with the girl seems to be the most important element, but the location and the relationship with the procurer are also relevant. A legitimate question is why they choose a particular girl. The pimps were not reluctant in answering. There are many criteria: the price, the look, the competence, the age, how she is dressed, etc. This is a very important issue because they all admitted that a girl dressed in a very provocative way attracts more clients. On the other hand, one of the persons interviewed made a difference between the girls who work on the street and have to dress more provocatively and the luxury prostitutes who are not compelled to do that and who wear more subtle clothes.

The problem of the *violent client* does not appear frequently in the pimps' answers. Of course, recognizing that their girls had problems could affect their prestige and reputation. Maybe that is why only one pimp admitted that one of his girls was beaten up by a client and they managed to save her and punish the violent client. Another pimp confessed that there are violent clients and clients that refuse to pay, but did not enter into particular details.

Regarding *foreign clients*, only one pimp said their number was insignificant. Two of them who were involved mostly in the prostitution off the street estimated that the majority of their clients were foreigners. Almost all admitted that they pay better than Romanian clients. They did not provide any other considerations related to the behaviour of men as the sex workers did. For them it was rather a matter of economics rather than behavioural traits.

As concerns the nationality, again the clients proved to be really heterogeneous. Italian men were present in the majority of the answers, together with Americans, English and German. The girl, who was both a procurer and prostitute, and had among her clients mostly sailors, spoke of different nationalities than the other pimps. She also constructed a double typology: good clients – the Italians, Arabs and Chinese, and bad clients – Serbs, Russians and Albanians. Another procurer noticed that many Westerners were constantly asking for underage girls. Some appreciated that the foreigners came especially for sex to Romania (sexual tourism) while the majority consider that the main purpose of the foreign clients is to do business here.

The pimps and traffickers seem to be more aware with regards to the *profession* of clients. Their jobs differ, from simple men such as painters and decorators to intellectuals and businessmen, lawyers, even policemen. One of the girls who was both a pimp and prostitute and was working in the town of Constanta, on the Black Sea Coast, spoke about sailors, engineers, ship captains, etc. The trafficker, whose activity was in Turkey, when referring to the jobs of clients expressed herself in a plain and simple way: "There were all sort of clients from the shoe cleaners to MPs". She enumerates among her clients also football players from a local team.

The *motivation* for buying sex according to the pimps and traffickers is no different from the one offered by the clients themselves or the prostitutes: they found in the prostitutes what they could not find at home, they were curious and buying sex was a way of relaxation. "A prostitute is worth more than a wife" – one said. Another motivation is the men's need for change. Some of the pimps, although this is not a dominant point of view, consider that the choices of clients are determined by their sexual deviances.

6.2.6 The Type of Sexual Services Requested

According to the pimp that was offering luxury prostitutes, the clients were men with sexual deviations and despite the fact that most of them were asking for oral sex there were also clients asking specifically for minors, asking to go with more

girls, even three at a time, scatology²⁸ and persons that were using vibrators. Other pimp that was prostitute as well said that as long as the client was paying there were no restrictions. In the list of the oddest sexual requests, the pimps included sadomasochist practices, the use of artificial penises and a request from a lady who used to send her driver to bring two prostitutes to her house. The woman with the Turkish experience admitted that the Turkish clients preferred oral and sometimes anal sex. According to her, this situation could be explained by the fact that Turkish men had some rather strange sexual habits because Turkish women following their religious precepts have to keep their virginity until they get married. Turkish clients did not like to go more than once with the same woman but the version of one client taking with him simultaneously two/three girls was encountered.

If we leave these particular situations behind, the most requested sexual services are the oral and normal sex, but also quite often anal sex, masturbation, erotic dancing, while sex in group is more rarely requested as well as masochist practices, which is why some of the pimps consider the last two requests from the clients as among the most weird from their experience. Similar to some of the clients' confessions, the procurers also admit that oral sex is rarely protected and that the clients are usually offering more money to convince the girls to agree to unprotected sexual intercourse and most of the time they succeed in their request.

6.2.7 Who the Clients are According to Police Officers

As mentioned earlier, we interviewed two types of policemen: those working in the THB units and those working in the Criminal Investigation Units. If the last ones have among their jobs also the problematic issue of prostitution and procuring, the first category strictly follows the networks of human trafficking and during their activity have the chance to enter into contact with clients of girls who were forced to prostitute themselves. Therefore, their experience proved to be extremely valuable for the purpose of our research. In any case, the first category periodically enters into contact with the clients of prostitutes that might have been trafficked. The policemen constructed a different portrait of the client if we are to compare their answers with those of the prostitutes and the pimps and traffickers.

As regards *age*, the policemen offer a portrait of an older client than that of the prostitutes, procurers and traffickers, that is, the client is between 18 and 60 and the majority of the clients are, according to the policemen, between 30 and 40 or 45. Most of the officers said they did not encounter minors among clients. There were some exceptions though. Anyway, the minors are not as numerous as the adults among the clients discovered by the police.

²⁸ The woman confessed to us that amazed by the strange sexual request of the client set an appointment with him not in order to proceed but just to see how what he was like. She was surprised by the fact that the man seemed normal, handsome and well dressed, with a very expensive car.

Regarding the *profession* of the clients, they have various professions that are hard to specify. While at the margins of the city it is well known that the clients are mostly truck drivers, in the city the clients have all kinds of professions and include businessmen, professors, engineers etc. The educational background of the majority of clients is perceived as being medium. Of course, there are exceptions but as we said before, and as one of the police officers clearly makes the difference, street prostitution normally attracts persons with medium incomes, the highly educated men prefer inside prostitution, clubs and massage parlours.

Related to the *marital status*, most of the clients are, according to the police, married or anyway involved in a steady relationship.

The regular client, according to the police, is not encountered in such high percentages as compared to what results from the answers of the previous interviewed categories. There were two policemen who brought forward a percentage of 40 and 70, the rest said that the regular clients were between 10 and 15%. When it comes to the factors that lead a client to become a regular one, the policemen believe that the girl and the location work simultaneously to that end. Only one officer considered that the location is a determinant factor for a client to turn into a constant one. Another one was of the opinion that the pimp, the discretion of the prostitute and the price are also important. The regular client is very much appreciated by the prostitutes and this not because it offers more money (on the contrary they have special tariffs and reductions) but because the prostitute feels much safer with a customer she gets to know. Here we noticed similar answers to those of the prostitutes. According to one of the officers, among regular clients in his town would be rather older men.

Some of the police officers admitted that there are also *violent clients* who kidnap the girls, beat them and rape them but the girls are too afraid to report the offences to the police because prostitution is incriminated so they could be punished; moreover, the last thing they would want is to get to court. This subtle issue was not noticed by all the law enforcement officers because one of them based his answer on the fact that violent clients are rarely mentioned in the official figures they had (representing 4–6 cases per year).

Another policeman concentrated his answer on the idea of protection – the pimp takes care of the girl and also intervenes if the client becomes violent and refuses to pay.

If the motif of the *client in love* was recurrent in the stories of sex workers, the same did not occur with the police officers. There were though some isolated cases. According to a police officer from Bucharest, one of the clients fell in love with a trafficked girl and in order to save her he went to the police and reported about the pimp. He then agreed to participate in a police operation to catch the traffickers red-handed. The story has a happy ending because the client and the girl eventually got married.

Another case that ended well had as protagonists a Romanian girl and a French client. He managed to pull her out of the club where she was forced to prostitute herself in France and now they are married.

The motivations offered by the police workers do not differ from those of the other interviewed categories. Still, the majority considered that variety and change were the main reasons for buying sex, as well as the request for sexual services that

cannot be obtained at home. One officer said: “I don’t believe that there is such a man that did not go to a club at least once, even one married for 30 years. They go for variety and because they do not get at home everything they would desire from a sexual point of view. If men could marry every three years, I don’t think that clubs would still be in place”.

Another interviewee tried to offer us a typology: the curious client, the client with a very developed sexual appetite that cannot be satisfied by his partner, the client that is incapable of finding a new relationship and comes to the prostitute because this type of liaison does not oblige him in any way.

There was one officer who offered a different answer, which corresponds with some theories related to prostitution, that is the fact that men go with prostitutes in order to satisfy their need for power and control (e.g. Bouamama, 2004).

6.2.8 *Types of Sexual Services*

The answers of policemen are in total correspondence with those of the procurers. Oral sex is the most frequent request because the clients do not have to undress themselves, it does not take too long and it can be done in various places such as in a car, in a forest or in a street. Also at the same time the clients are very exposed by practising this type of sex, because normally they do not use protection. One of the policemen considered this to be a consequence of the education and beliefs men have, that is one cannot speak about real sex when one is using a condom. Some officers made some differences: while oral sex is usually unprotected, clients are using condoms for normal sex. There is also the opinion that youngsters usually request normal sex. Other types of sex such as anal sex, masturbation, erotic dance are also mentioned. Another similitude with the answers of pimps was that while group sex with two or more girls was encountered, one girl and two or more men was a case never encountered by the police officers.

The oddest *sexual request* was that of a client aged about 30, a well-positioned owner of a very expensive car, who paid a lot of money just to watch the prostitute while having oral sex with another client that obviously was unaware of being watched.

Referring strictly to the situation in Romania, the policemen were also asked about the number of *foreign clients*. Several of them tried to differentiate between street prostitution and the out-of-sight prostitution. In their opinion, foreign clients prefer indoor prostitution, that is, massage parlours, discotheques, hotels, etc. In these cases, the percentage of foreign citizens (Westerners to be more precise) which are preferred by the prostitutes, would be 20–30%. Others have restricted their answers to the street prostitution. The percentages offered are, though inferior, 5–10%.

We also noticed differences in percentages according to the region. For example, in Iasi which is situated in the NE of Moldavia, a region that is not very well positioned economically, the policemen estimated the percentages of foreign clients around 1–2%. In Galati, situated in the south of Moldavia, the percentages mentioned by the policemen were around 5%.

At the opposite end there are the towns of Cluj and Timisoara where the policemen estimated a high percentage of foreign clients, up to 30%, and spoke about a very significant Italian presence. Moreover, these last two cities were seen by the police officials as growing potential targets for sexual tourism.

As for the nationality of the clients, there are no rules. The foreign clients are mostly Europeans: English, Norwegians, Nordic people for indoor prostitution, and also Germans, Italians, Austrians, Turks, French, Spanish, Dutch (here no differences were observed regarding to which type of prostitution they are clients of). Sporadic answers comprised the Arabs and the Greeks also.

6.3 Factors that Push the Client to Choose/not to Choose Prostitution

6.3.1 Individual Factors that Facilitate the Demand for Prostitution

At an individual level, the reason for choosing paid sex is difficult to establish. In the previous sub-chapter we generally analysed the motivation for going to prostitutes, taking into account the interviewed categories. This time we tried to bring together the answers, no matter the category, to abstract some patterns. Despite difficulties, we managed to trace the common features regarding motivation.

The following factors have been defined and confirmed as possible motives for buying sexual services, although they are not exhaustive.

6.3.1.1 Easy Access

From the interviews with clients, prostitutes, pimps and the policemen, it emerged that the most solicited request for sexual services is that of oral sex. No matter what the prostitute's type – luxury prostitute or street prostitute, the duration of the sexual act, the frequency, oral sex is omnipresent as a solicitation coming from the client.

An analysis of the answers shows that the motivation for this choice is very often the fact that *it is quicker and easier*, together with the idea that by doing this there is a reduced risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

Some clients' answers proved that oral sex with a prostitute is for them a part of the ritual act of an ordinary day, a form of relaxation which follows a lucrative activity.

The lack of time, the additional costs of a relationship which implies affection and inconsistent choices are the main arguments for paid sex, obtained in an immediate way.

Easy access to paid sex is why some of the interviewed clients choose to start their sexual life with a prostitute. As a matter of fact, the fact that 95% of the girls stated that they had at least one client that was a virgin at the moment of the encounter has to be underlined.

6.3.1.2 Lack of Affection

One of the girls we interviewed said to us: “I had a client that came every day, he behaved nicely, sometimes we only used to talk, he told me about his ex-wife who cheated on him and about his son. He was taking me out in his car and took me to restaurants and in the end he was leaving me more than the tariff. When we were having sex, he was taking care of me more than I was taking care of him. At the beginning I didn’t pay attention, but one day he said he liked me and that he would like to get us married. I explained to him that I had a child to raise and I was not in a mood for a marriage right then. He kept calling me, he brought me gifts, a new cell phone, clothes, jewels. I got rid of him only after I moved from the place I was staying and he lost track of me”.

This is not an isolated episode, but rather the sad reality of an existence where the border between pathology and normality is sometimes blurred. All the persons involved in prostitution declared that they had at least one client who fell in love with them. As a matter of fact, from the discussions we had with the policemen, it emerged that one of the only chances of social reintegration of the prostitutes is marriage with one of the clients, the rare success stories have as a common ground this scenario.

“I started my sexual life at the age of 14 with a prostitute. Since then and until now I have been to hundreds of prostitutes. I had three girlfriends, the longest relationship lasted four years. After I separated from this girl I loved 4 years, I used to go all the time to the prostitutes and I chose those who looked like my ex-partners... with them I felt the best”. states one of the clients.

The majority of studies concerning the prostitution tend to depersonalize the client–prostitute relationship, maintaining that the unknown and sentimental non-involvement is the main attraction. Although partially correct, this vision has its own limits because it excessively uses the concept of the brutal man abusing the object woman, and it does not deeply explore the real meanings of the phenomenon.

6.3.1.3 Financial Accessibility: The Price

According to the declaration of the competent authorities and as a result of the present study, it seems that, as regards the economic dimensions of the prostitution, the 80–20 rule offered by the Pareto principle is applicable. Approximately 80% of the prostitutes working in Romania can be considered as practising street prostitution. They aim to service a great number of clients in order to obtain their revenues by asking small tariffs. At the opposite end is the 20% that are a part of luxury prostitution who are working or soliciting in clubs, discotheques, bars, massage parlours, restaurants and hotels or using advertising. They get around 80% of the total amount.

Low level prostitution costs start from 5 euro for one single sexual contact and may reach not more than 200 euro if the prostitute spends the entire night with the client. For one hour of sex, the client usually pays around 40 Euro. Given the fact that the average monthly income of the Romanian employee is around 330 Euro, it is obvious that accessing a prostitute can involve a wide basin of potential clients.

Although many interviewed clients told us that they take aesthetics and hygiene into account when choosing a sex worker, these criteria are extremely subjective and flexible. The desire for quality is not a characteristic of Romanian clients when the price is also to be considered.

“I go as long as my pockets allow me to go and, after all, what a beautiful girl does for you can be done by an ugly one as well or even better because she knows she is ugly” concluded one of the clients. On the contrary, low price is not an indicator that the girl could be a victim of trafficking in human beings. Sequestering and sexually exploiting a woman involves additional costs, this activity implying the contribution of several persons that have to be paid to a certain extent, which determines the growth of the general costs reflected in the final price. When a woman prostitutes herself willingly, without a pimp, or without facilitators, the price is lower.

6.3.1.4 The Need for Diversity and Adventure

As shown by research in the field, one of the reasons for choosing paid sex is the need for variety. This need has to be explained by establishing a reference.

The need for diversity of Romanian clients was revealed by interviewing the pimps:

“I was careful to change the girls all the time because if the client was always seeing the same women, he got bored and went elsewhere. Some of the clients used to call me and ask me if I had something new”.

The need for adventure does not imply the choice to engage in risky behaviour but is reduced to spicing up common life with sex. Some of the clients we spoke to included boredom among the reasons they buy sex.

While the girls consider as the main justification the necessity of having various partners, conferring an exploratory component to the men’s behaviour (“*they are curious to experience sex with as many women as possible*”), the clients explain their choice by the need to vary between different types of sex. The mechanism in which this desire interacts with the fundamental aspects of social life will be detailed further on, by analyzing the vicious circle created by self/imposed frustration and traditionalist vision.

6.3.1.5 The Vicious Circle Traditionalist Conception: Self-Imposed Frustration

Another reason why men buy sex as described by the literature in the field is the need to practise another kind of sex which cannot be experienced with a woman who is not a prostitute. This was confirmed in one of the interviews undertaken.

The interviewed clients perfectly summarized the vicious circle built by the traditionalist socio-cultural vision associated with the self-imposed sexual frustration of the legitimate couple.

“What I do with a prostitute I don’t do with my wife. Obviously, I do not do oral sex with my wife, she is the one I kiss, how could I kiss her if she did oral sex with

me?” states the client a little upset by the thought that his wife could be placed in a situation of this type. At the request of the interviewer, the client makes several supplementary clarifications:

“Let me explain. My wife is a good girl. I took her when she was a virgin. If she was one that did what the prostitutes do, I wouldn’t have married her, how could I marry a whore? With my wife I make love because I respect her, I don’t do crazy stuff”.

When he was asked to free his imagination a little bit and picture that his legitimate partner would be one of the prostitutes he is regularly frequenting that hypothetically would abandon this occupation, the client said:

“I could not take her out because she would make me feel ashamed, all the world would see that I am dating a prostitute”.

So the circle closes. On the one side, the legitimate partner is allowed only primary forms of sexual behaviour, the contrary being either a humiliation to which the client would unfairly submit his wife to, or, if the initiative would belong to the woman, an irrefutable evidence of her immorality. On the other side, given the fact that the satisfaction obtained by sexual diversity is a “legitimate” manly right, the prostitute perfectly fits the picture.

A typical saying for a Romanian client, a prisoner of the traditionalist mentality, would be “my wife is not allowed to try anything, since I married a respectable woman, not a whore”. Additionally, it has to be said that this type of identification with the traditional is limited to the perception of the female partners’ sexuality, valuing only superficially and declaratively the moral norms.

6.3.1.6 Lenient Legislation

As we said before, when looking into domestic laws, Romanian legislation incriminates the prostitute and not the client. Of course, there are a lot of other factors that influence the phenomenon, but the actual legal framework proves inefficient and this is known by both clients and prostitutes. We will have a closer look into these issues when speaking about policy implications.

6.3.2 Individual Factors that Hinder²⁹ the Demand for Prostitution

6.3.2.1 The Feeling of Shame

One of the main problems we were confronted with in doing our interviews was the clients’ reluctance in recognizing the act of going to prostitutes. The cause of this

²⁹ Aware that prostitution, with its various shapes, can not be impeded, eradicated or eliminated we prefer the term “hinder” that adequately describes the limited pressure that society is able to put upon the phenomenon.

reluctance resides in the fear of being stereotypically judged and at the same time in the shame of communicating aspects related to their intimate life.

With regard to the customs related to prostitution consumption, we noticed two categories:

- (a) Men that go alone to the prostitutes, this being an act kept in secrecy and who have as a main preoccupation the satisfaction of their sexual needs in a discrete way as possible
- (b) Men that solicit prostitutes only when they are accompanied by friends, especially as a rite of strengthening the group. In this case, many times the importance of the sexual act becomes secondary, while the entertainment and the building of the group's social cohesion are prevalent

6.3.2.2 The Guilt Towards the Couple Partner

Analyzing the clients' answers and also those of the pimps and prostitutes, it emerged that approximately 80% of the clients involved in a relationship experienced a feeling of guilt towards the partner immediately after they carry out the sexual act with the prostitute. The degree of manifestation of this feeling depends on the seriousness of the legitimate relationship, on the frustration accumulated in the couple, on the harmony established in this couple, as well as on the length of the relationship.

It was interesting to note that the feeling of guilt does not grow directly proportional to the duration of the relationship, but on the contrary, the time spent together and the routine are rather invoked as a justification:

"I have been with my wife for 20 years, isn't it normal to have sex with others as well? In so many years one gets bored of the woman next to him and it doesn't seem such a big deal to go from time to time to a prostitute. My wife would also go with a man, if she could" declared a client. Paid sex produces less guilt towards the partner than a hypothetical extra-conjugal relationship of other type, because it is a contractual relationship, on very short term, potentially non-repetitive, without a declarative or real sentimental involvement.

This mechanism of guilt related to the partner is used (in a questionable ethical way) by the policemen in their actions:

"We know we cannot do anything to the client. But if we catch him in the act, we take him to the police section, we talk, we explain that we could send him a letter at home or to his work and maybe like this he understands it is better to help us with a statement" explains the *modus operandi* one of the policemen.

6.3.2.3 The Macho Man Stereotype

Although hardly the object of our study, the category of men "who never have to ask" cannot be left aside when speaking about individual factors that hinder the prostitution phenomenon, through the social pressure they exercise on the affiliation groups.

“I am too manly to pay a woman to have sex with me” is the main principle when a macho man relates to prostitution, and the overwhelming feeling of self-esteem is omnipresent.

Despite that, we encountered characters of this type among the interviewed pimps, fact that confirmed our initial supposition: although they were not directly participating in the process as clients, they are extremely predisposed to the woman’s exploitation and humiliation due to the limited and stereotypical conception regarding reality:

“Women always come after me, I don’t run after them. So I got a dime out of them, but I didn’t touch them... ever. There will always be suckers who will pay for sex, because they are not able to seduce a woman” said one of the procurers.

6.3.2.4 Fear of Sexually Transmitted Diseases

According to their confessions, the prostitutes practised safe sex but nevertheless they are predisposed to contact sexually transmitted diseases. The policemen we spoke with told us about numerous cases when the prostitutes were in the records of the public health institutions, having been diagnosed with different sexually transmitted diseases.

As prostitution is illegal in Romania, a periodic medical examination is left up to the prostitute, a fact that determines greater risks in spreading the sexually transmitted diseases. The police are entitled to fine a prostitute or to send her to prison, but cannot compel her to take a medical examination.

Potential clients are extremely conscious of the danger they are exposed to if they engage in sexual contact with prostitutes and this factor significantly diminishes the request.

6.3.2.5 Police Patrolling

The prevention strategy of the Romanian police is to patrol during night in clearly marked law enforcement vehicles to discourage potential clients. This method seems to be efficient when it comes to limiting street prostitution:

“The worst situation is when the police are patrolling and they scare our clients and we die of hunger the whole night. If we realize they do not intend to leave, we return to our homes because there is no way of making any money with the police nearby”, one of the interviewed girls told us.

6.3.2.6 Price

Logic leads us to include price among the factors that impede prostitution, because people are restricted to their economic conditions in all areas of consumption. Nevertheless, we do not consider price as a determinant parameter, because the offer is flexible, it is adapted to the request, so there is a type of prostitution for each walk of life. Of course, the tariffs fluctuate approximately +/-400% depending on different variables.

6.3.3 *Network Factors that Facilitate the Demand for Prostitution*

6.3.3.1 **The Internet**

Local prostitution (which takes place on Romanian territory and has as main actors Romanian prostitutes) is influenced to a certain degree by the internet, but only in the area of luxury prostitution.

The prices solicited in the announcements posted on the net are several times higher than those for street prostitution and significantly higher than those advertised in the written press.

The internet connectivity in Romania is low and access to the internet is far from being generalized. As a consequence, the advertisement of sexual services on the internet has a limited well-defined target, which is men from big cities, with revenues over the average, aged over 30, with at least a medium education.

A typical advert is formulated something like this: *young girl/lady* (followed by the physical and seldom by psychological features of the prostitute) *I am offering styled company to a mature, generous and educated gentleman.*

Most of the adverts are written directly in English, aiming at foreign clients. This is one of them extremely suggestive in what concerns the semantics of the dissimulated prostitution discourse: *Hello, my name is Andra. I am an independent escort based in Bucharest, Romania. I'm a beautiful exotic girl, very open minded and I'm the perfect companion for you. I've been graced with deepest green eyes, utterly luscious, kissable lips and long silky smooth legs. I'll take the lead and our time together will be just like two people meeting for the same thing and becoming very close and intimate together. I am well versed in the art of erotic and sensual massage designed to fully arouse you before we engage in more personal pleasures. If you are staying in a hotel, then visiting you is very easy and discreet. I have also my location in the centre of Bucharest and I prefer to be visited by you. Discretion is assured and expected in return.* The site www.ro-models.com/ where we took this advert from, contains relevant photographs, details about the physical features of the prostitute and explicitly mentions the prices, Euros included, which take into consideration the time spent with the client.

The networks of trafficking in human beings whether national or international do not use the internet to find clients because they are at risk being more easily detected by law officers, needlessly focusing the attention on them.

6.3.3.2 **Written Press and Flyer Advertising**

Another method used for recruiting clients in luxury prostitution is publishing matrimonial adverts in the newspapers, magazines, travel guides or flyers in airports, restaurants, hotels, bars and discothèques.

This method is used mostly for foreign clients, the publicity is written in Romanian and English and most of the time only in English.

6.3.3.3 Disco Clubs, Strip Clubs, Hotels, Restaurants and Bars

Most of the medium level prostitution and upper level prostitution in Romania has as a starting point discotheques, striptease clubs or night clubs, hotels and to a lesser extent restaurants and bars.

Soliciting the clients is done directly by the prostitute or through the facilitators: bartenders, bodyguards, waiters, receptionists, night club owners, taxi drivers. Most of the time the prostitute is hired as a dancer, strip-girl or even waitress but there are also cases when the prostitutes enter the bars and restaurants as clients.

Prostitutes prefer men who by the nature of their dress and accessories (and by the supposed cost of consumed drinks) show a potentially high financial availability, foreigners mostly. As mentioned earlier, all the girls we spoke with manifested their predilection for foreigners to the detriment of the Romanians because the first “offer more money, they behave better and are easier to fool around”, as one of the girls said.

6.3.3.4 Taxi Drivers and Parking Boys

Although from the total amount of promoting activities practised by facilitators, the taxi drivers represent only 20–30%, they can be considered a distinct class, because by the nature of their occupation they have access to all levels of prostitution. A taxi driver is connected to the street prostitutes from bad areas as well as the luxury escorts from the centre of the cities.

The parking areas of the big commercial centres, hotels rated over 3 stars, clubs and trendy restaurants are populated with youngsters who get their revenues in two ways: the protection tax asked for “securing” one’s car (to the contrary the car would be vandalized) and mediating the services of the prostitutes already found in that location. The police have no criminal instrument to punish these sort of activities, the normal punishment for this kind of activities being a fine.

6.3.4 Network Factors that Hinder the Demand for Prostitution

6.3.4.1 Awareness About Connections to Organized Crime

Despite its paradoxical side, the connection of prostitution with other areas of criminality represents an inhibitor factor of the demand. This happens because the client’s awareness triggers self-defence mechanisms, inducing reluctance in admitting every kind of sex with a prostitute. The image of the gangs and clans behind street prostitution

or the broadcasted stories that implies cases of blackmails after video recording the sexual act, have as a consequence the inhibition of the demand appetite.

6.3.5 Environmental Factors that Facilitate the Demand for Prostitution

6.3.5.1 The Communication Mediated by the Internet and Specific Virtual Communities

Through its characteristics as communication environment, the internet represents the ideal place for sharing sexual experiences of any kind, including those involving a prostitute. Being above all abstract, rapid, mostly textual, the internet favours flexible identities. An identity can be totally or partially assumed, it can be forged or it can remain a secret. Anonymity usually has an un-inhibitory effect, which can act in two ways: in an abusive manner, by bringing to the surface a negative need or emotion, or positively by allowing honest conduct, open, that is almost impossible to achieve in a face-to-face interaction.

Assuming a double identity by means of the simultaneous use of issuer and receiver leads to a reconfiguration of the individuality itself. The fluid identity, potentially multiple, doubled by the safety of a presupposed anonymity allow the construction of virtual communities which share the experiences had with different prostitutes. The relativity of the geographic space intrinsic to the internet is transforming the prostitution market into a global market. Here it is a line from a forum where the prostitutes have posted their explicit adverts and the clients are speaking about the experiences they had, offering even marks for the quality of the services provided:

“In order to check your opinions I decided to travel the 250 km from Constanta to Bucharest. Gentlemen, the services are indeed superlative (I would give them the maximum vote – 10) and the girl is not at all ugly, she knows what she is doing and she does it for pleasure, a thousand words could not describe it, go and see for yourselves”, writes a client. On the same forum we found another comment that emphasizes our hypothesis:

“I have lived in the West for over 20 years. I, like any other man, do from time to time something crazy go with girls from here that I pay, of course, because I am a man and I am not a saint. I would like to say that this April I went to Romania on holiday. I had the phone number of this girl so I looked for her.”

Periodically a sex worker interferes in the clients’ discussions, trying to moderate the language excesses or trying to create controversies:

“Either he is confusing me for someone else or he is doing this just to be mean. I declare this subject closed. As regards the seriousness or other character traits, all one can do is see for himself. You know that saying: one must not believe anything until he sees it with his own eyes”, comments one of the escorts.

6.3.5.2 The Dissolution of Moral Standards

As a country that has recently emerged from a repressive regime, a communist dictatorship, Romania is confronted with an exacerbation of misinterpreted personal freedoms.

This has as a consequence the dissolution of the existing moral norms, the abandoning of the normal forms of establishing relationships, the absence of a steady couple culture and libertine behaviour. Because Romanian society did not have freedom and was subjected to a major pressure of constraint, which was suddenly removed, it is now characterized by an anomic period. It is easy to understand why from the point of view of the offer and demand, prostitution found a very fertile ground in Romania.

6.3.5.3 Poverty, Media and Wrong Role Models

For commercial reasons mostly, our press is invaded by images, subjects and productions with a pronounced and aggressive sexual content. As an example, we would like to mention that 40% of the pages of the newspaper with the highest circulation in Romania contain images of women presented in very provocative ways. Sex and stories with sexual backgrounds make medi products sell and this is the logic followed in mass communication.

Bearing in mind the fact that the media is the main source of documentation and entertainment, it is not difficult to imagine what the effects of this kind of editorial policy are. The almost obsessive presentation of some success couples made up of a rich man and a young “accessory” woman are leading to the internalization of these examples as life patterns. Poor women who become initially or simultaneously models and partners of businessmen are a very wrong role model for many young girls. The statement made by a manager of a minor centre that also hosted girls involved in prostitution, confirms our ideas. He was asked: “What is the dream of a girl from this place?” and he answered: “A prince with a hat full of money”.

According to most of the policemen we interviewed, Romania is becoming a destination for sexual tourism. This extension of the phenomenon is not a direct consequence of the networks of trafficking in human beings, but rather the result of establishing a commercial balance between the external demand and the internal offer in continuous growth.

As a matter of fact, this vision of the reality is fully exploited by the recruiters of THB. They construct an identity of people loaded with money, accompanied by a woman that presents the same features and who is considered the living example of a success story. Sometimes, the recruitment begins like a love story between the poor girl and the man with an outrageous declared fortune. These sorts of strategies are extremely efficient, because they exploit a pre-existent situation, characterized by the fascination of media-built role models, constructed on a system of values lacking in moral norms.

6.4 Policy Implications

The project tried to draw a profile of the client of prostitution in general and trafficked prostitution in particular. Foreign trafficked prostitution was not very much present in the information gathered, something that can be explained by the fact that Romania is only to a small and inconclusive extent a destination country. But when data referring to this aspect were brought to our attention we tried to discover as much as possible. Nevertheless, the girls we interviewed were not very much in touch with foreign prostitutes; it was rather a competition between them in the market when these foreign prostitutes were present. Most of them proved to be Moldovans. According to some of the girls, the clients prefer Moldovans because they are considered more attractive than Romanians and are better at their job. This was not a pre-eminent opinion though. Sporadic information was also offered by the traffickers, but they worked mostly with Romanian girls so again the information was scarce. Only one of the traffickers who worked abroad in Turkey also had foreign girls that would be Russian girls. She told us she preferred the Russians because they did not cause her any problems like the Romanians did.³⁰ The small number of clients that were actually interviewed does not allow us to reach any conclusions. The same applies to the interviews carried out with the police officers. But in the following pages we will try to bring together the scarce information we received about the Moldavian girls.

We have to say that we got almost no indication from our interviews that these foreign girls were actually trafficked. No wonder as the data we had were mediated and obtained from the Romanian girls. There was one pimp who confessed to having at a certain point a Moldavian girl: he had bought this girl from other pimps and this could be a high indicator that the girl was trafficked. This girl was according to the pimp the same price as the Romanians but offered many more diverse services and the Romanian girls used to envy her, perhaps because she was preferred by the clients. Also one of the practising prostitutes was Moldovan. But she began to practise prostitution of her own free will, because she had money problems when she came to Romania. We were not so lucky with the rest of our interviews. In any case, according to the interviewed persons, Moldavian girls were present on the streets and most of them had pimps. No details were offered by the Romanian girls; they stated that they do not know anything about their foreign colleagues or that they are in competition with the Moldovans and that they did not keep in close contact. As the gathered data related to foreign trafficked prostitution were so little, it proves to be quite difficult to propose anything regarding specific policies in the field. To speak only about trafficking in human beings generally, internal traffic and external traffic of the Romanian girls would also be a bit redundant, as we have already mentioned the essentials of the crime policies in the field undertaken by Romania and we have also tried to bring to the surface all the episodes related to

³⁰Her preference is probably not an objective one, as the Romanian girls were the ones who reported her for THB which consequently led to her imprisonment.

trafficking experienced by the Romanian girls we interviewed. Ever since the special law of 2001 regarding trafficking in human beings entered into force a lot has been done. There are periodic information campaigns and education in schools so that vulnerable categories could be aware of the potential dangers.

What is extremely important to emphasize here is that all these efforts to approach the trafficking of human beings as a human rights issue and all the policies built around this concept concentrate on the consequences rather on the causes which are, as we all know, of an economic nature. Therefore, the policies in the field cannot really be effective if the economic conditions are not taken into account.

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to separate voluntary prostitution from the coerced type. Our study proved that although the law clearly draws the line between the two, the reality is not as straightforward. If we are to admit that all prostitution is eventually sexual slavery, then separating the prostitutes into guilty and innocent proves in the end to be quite a duplicitous act.³¹ If a girl started as trafficked and continued to practise of her own free will, is it right to put her in jail? Is it right to put prostitutes behind bars? Could this be a factor that stops the demand? Our study does not have as a purpose to offer clear-cut solutions but hopes to raise some question marks related to the subject. Our research brought us face to face with the police activities undertaken in the fight against prostitution and this helps a lot in understanding what the authorities have to face.

6.4.1 The Police Activities in the Fight Against Prostitution

The participative observation showed that the police encounter major difficulties in combating prostitution as a single offence due to legislative issues but also due to lack of personnel. Fighting prostitution is definitely improved when it is associated with other offences, such as trafficking in human beings, procuring, theft, robbery, trafficking in drugs, kidnapping, forgery and so on.

As we mentioned in the introductory part, there are several types of prostitution which could be generically grouped into three categories:

- Street prostitution, where the clients are solicited directly by the prostitute
- Mediated prostitution, where the client's solicitation is mediated by taxi drivers, bartenders, club owners, receptionists
- Dissimulated prostitution which is promoted using an advertising firm for escort services or massage parlours (newspapers, magazines, websites, travel guides, flyers in restaurants, hotels, night clubs)

³¹ Interesting comments on this dichotomy, although with reference to the American legislation, is the Trafficking, Victims' Protection Act of 2000 to be seen in Wendy Chapkis, Trafficking, Migration and the Law. Protecting Innocents, Punishing Immigrants, in *Gender and Society*, Vol.17, No.6, December 2003, pp.923–937.

Street prostitution is extremely difficult to combat and we already specified several of the legislative difficulties that impede policemen to build the probatory material (it has to be proved that the prostitute is procuring her main way of living from the prostitution and that she is doing this repeatedly. She has to be caught in the act with the client, money has to be discovered in her possession and it must be money that cannot be justified, the client has to make a statement and admit he gave her the money and moreover he has to appear as a witness during the trial).

In the material dedicated to the methodology, we also mentioned the branch of the police that deals with this type of offence: the Directorate Criminal Investigations, through its local offices. Combating prostitution and pimping is not the only task they have. There are also other offences they fight against: domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, forgery, etc. That is why an officer who is part of this department has to deal with an average of five or six cases simultaneously. We encountered a situation where two officers were dealing with 15 cases.

While combating prostitution proves to be a rather delicate task, the Romanian police are concentrating on the prevention side, especially during the night. Police crews patrol the sensitive areas in order to intimidate potential clients.

Combating the phenomenon is done by conducting operations aimed at catching the criminals in the act.

The vehicles used do not carry the official sign of the police, but the plates of these cars are often known by prostitutes and members of the interlopers' world. As a consequence, police officers are sometimes forced to use their own cars during operations. The policemen involved in the operation communicate using their own mobile phones. We already spoke about the conditions that have to be met in order to consider prostitution an offence. The girls are aware of the legislative flaws and most of the time they leave the money in someone else's possession which makes the police efforts useless. The policemen have databases with the names of the girls involved in prostitution and so they manage to develop a rather "personalized" relationship. The girls are extremely cooperative when they are investigated by the police.

Mediated and dissimulated prostitution are mostly connected to other types of offences and, due to the difficulty in getting in touch with these other types of prostitution, they were not the subject of our observation. We also got information related to the other important police departments for our study, by interviewing police officers working there.

The Directorate of Combating Organized Crime, which is involved in the fight against trafficking of human beings, is in possession of very modern equipment, and is able to do video and audio recording, use undercover agents and intercept phone conversations. Due to an increased degree of complexity, a case might last between 2–3 months and 1–2 years.

The Directorate and its local offices cooperate efficiently with other similar bodies from abroad, a very good example being the cooperation with Great Britain under the REFLEX project that was mentioned during our interviews as a positive common action in the framework of the international cooperation in the field.

If we have to summarize, although the police is taking serious efforts to tackle the prostitution problem, this is a growing issue. As this problem is not going to disappear, a way to regularize has to be found.

6.4.2 *Legalization of Prostitution*

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the idea of legalization which subscribes to the regulationist orientation met with a very high degree of opposition that the last initiative in March 2007, belonging to the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reform, was not finalized. We do not want to reproduce here the arguments of the two sides – the “regulationists” and the “prohibitionists” – but wish to present what the people involved in prostitution or in the fight against it think about it. As it will be seen, the opinions are quite different, depending on the category that stated them.

The pimps see prostitution as a business and this approach comes as no surprise to anyone. They all agree with the idea of making prostitution legal. *It cannot be eradicated anyway, so why not make it a legal business?* But here come the differences: They agree to the legalization but most of them would not do it anymore, although it constitutes a legal business. The motivation is clearly offered by one of them: *it would not be a profitable business*. Paying taxes to the state is not something that a procurer would willingly do. Only one admitted that he would open a legal business although it would mean less money. Nowadays the situation is therefore extremely acceptable to the procurers as the huge sums of money they are getting out of illegal prostitution do not have to be declared to the fiscal authorities. The female procurers have a more lenient attitude towards the legalization of prostitution; maybe because some of them were pimps and prostitutes at the same time and already have a different attitude. The woman who was a trafficker in Turkey said to us that she agreed to the legalization because “it is the easiest way of making money without investing anything”.

The prostitutes also declare themselves to be in favour of legalization. Their main motivation is the idea of safety. Practising indoors means the whole thing is controlled and they cannot get into trouble. Some of them are aware that legalization would consequently result in them paying taxes to the State and eventually, that the services provided would be more expensive. But it seems that the girls are ready to earn less money if this means less risks and more hygiene. As we found out, not all of them would really and fully adhere to this idea. For example, one of the prostitutes who was active, after saying yes to the legalization of the prostitution, when she found out that this meant paying taxes to the State, said she would not practise it under these circumstances. It is not clear whether the majority of these girls are ready to sacrifice money for safety, or they are just offering some conformist answers. It is quite obvious though that some of them there are ready to embrace clandestine prostitution that offers more profits.

The policemen have different opinions on the matter. Most of them consider that the legalization of the prostitution would have as a consequence a reduction in

trafficking in human beings with the purpose of sexual exploitation and also of the crimes connected with prostitution. Some consider legalization a good idea because of the control that would exist afterwards. But a considerable number of policemen are also realistic and admit that this would not determine the end of prostitution practised illegally, nor of trafficking in human beings. There was only one police officer who expressed the opinion that punishing the clients as well, by applying fines, would diminish the phenomenon and would improve the overall situation. Anyway, the phenomenon would not be totally controlled, but it would make a difference as concerns the prevention policy.

The interviewed persons were also asked what the factor that triggers prostitution was: the demand or the offer? Most of them, no matter the category, answered it was the demand. There were only a few who believed that the offer is the one that counts while a significant number of persons consider that the demand and the offer both contribute to creating the phenomenon. As one of the girls puts it: "as a man needs a woman, so does she need money". Is it an inextricable dependence? It seems so.

What could be the solution then? Keeping prostitution illegal is surely not beneficial for Romanian society and for the prostitutes. It is very unfair to punish the sex workers for doing something amoral and leave the clients unpunished, as if the prostitutes were the ones leading them to immorality. Legalization would mean that prostitution would be a job like any other. The sex worker could complain to the police in case of ill-treatment by clients or procurers and the risks of being a victim of trafficking in human beings would diminish. She would also have the chance to practise in a safer place where the hygiene rules could be followed and she could submit herself to periodic medical controls.

On the other hand, making prostitution legal and establishing brothels would not be sufficient. As the interviews clearly showed, a subterranean market would develop. The pimps and prostitutes who would not want to share their profits with the State would choose illegal prostitution. The clients, as long as they would not be punished for choosing illegal prostitution, could prefer cheaper prices although the risks would be higher. That is why, in our opinion, a combination between legalization of prostitution and criminalizing of the clients who choose illegal prostitution could represent a valid option in the prevention policy.

Demand was mostly ignored in the research referring to prostitution. Some start, when trying to explain the motivation for buying sex, with the question why buy something that one can easily have for free? The question is erroneous because it proves that having sex with someone is not as easy as it seems... it might imply involvement and additional costs, time and money and the outcome might not be certain. Our study proves that clients are not interested if the girls are actually trafficked or not, but are rather more interested in satisfying their sexual needs. It also showed that most of the time they were not aware of the situation the girl faced, as she is indoctrinated and continuously threatened not to tell and checked by the pimp, in order to see if she keeps silent or not. Saviours exist, no doubt about it, and our interviews brought to the surface several happy endings, where girls managed to get out of their nightmares because of clients, but these were isolated cases, insignificant in comparison with the general numbers of trafficked girls that remain captive.

Although the context limited us mostly to clients of street prostitution, we received important hints related to their motivation and behaviour. As most of them are already married or involved in a serious relationship, it is not the lack of a sexual partner that leads them to resort to paid sex. We would rather say, and this was well underlined by one of the policemen, that it is a communication problem in the couple as most of them go to prostitutes for a certain type of sexual service that they cannot get at home or for one they believe is not proper to ask for at home. Here the traditionalist education that labelled some sexual acts as normal and others as deviant plays a major role in the big picture. So perhaps reconsidering the positions, roles and attitudes within Romanian couples could constitute a factor that would diminish the demand for paid sex. However, this is just one line that leaves the end open for further comments.

Chapter 7

In the Land of Prohibition?

Clients and Trafficked Women in Sweden

Johanna Hagstedt, Lars Korsell, and Alfred Skagerö

7.1 Women Trafficking in Sweden¹

7.1.1 Prostitution from the 1960s to the 1970s

The first sex clubs with pornographic films and live performances were established in Sweden in the early 1960s (Månsson, 1981). After changes were made in the legislation in 1971, pornographic performances became legal, and the number of sex clubs increased rapidly, not only in the big cities but also in smaller towns. Stripping in particular was common; however, in many cases this type of activity was a front for brothels. According to an investigation that was made into economic and organized crime in Sweden, there were more than 500 brothels in 1976, and they were often camouflaged as strip clubs or massage parlours (AMOB, 1977).

Prostitution in the 1970s from permanent premises is estimated to have involved about 2,000 women. In addition to this there were also an unknown number of street prostitutes, hotel and restaurant prostitutes and call girls. Prostitution was concentrated in Sweden's three largest cities, Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö, but existed in both permanent and temporary forms in the larger cities in most parts of the country (AMOB, 1977; Persson, 1981). According to Persson (1981), the police underestimated the number of prostitutes, especially considering that temporary prostitution and call girls also existed.

Foreign street prostitutes were quite common. The importing of women from Poland and Southeast Asia began in the 1970s (Månsson, 1981). Recruitment during

¹The authors would like to thank all the people who have contributed to the study. We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary Academy for allowing us to post an advertisement on their webpage asking for purchasers of sexual services to participate in interviews and to fill out the online survey. We would specially like to thank the 13 purchasers who took part by answering questions about their attitudes towards prostitution and trafficked prostitution, but also the police officers who kindly let us join them in their surveillance work for the participatory observations. Last but not least, we would also like to thank Eva Tiby at the Department of Criminology at Stockholm University for valuable help regarding methodological issues and professor Sven-Axel Månsson for giving his expert advice and useful comments.

this period does not seem to have been organized to any great extent. They were generally experienced prostitutes from their native countries, and had not been recruited by force or false promises. In 1977, however, there was a case in Malmö involving women from Thailand who had been lured with false promises or who had been forced into prostitution.

Prostitutes working in massage parlours were generally older than street prostitutes and 85% of the women in these parlours were Swedish. The foreign women tended to come from Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia (Persson, 1981). Forty-eight per cent of prostitutes in Stockholm lived in the municipality of Stockholm, 30% lived in nearby municipalities and 20% lived in other parts of the country or did not have a permanent residence. Some of them, for example, lived in Malmö and worked in Stockholm during the week. Commuting prostitutes also worked in Göteborg and Malmö, while living in Denmark or Norway.

Reportedly, there were 91 sex clubs in 1975, but only about 20 by the beginning of the 1980s as a result of police intervention and because the demand for sex clubs diminished (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1995: 15). The number of sex clubs also decreased substantially in the 1980s as a result of a rule introduced in 1973 requiring that permission be obtained for pornographic performances. Public pornographic performances became illegal in Sweden in 1982.

An important obstacle to prostitution and trafficking in Sweden is the strong movement for equality between men and women. One example of this is the heated discussion that went on in the 1970s concerning legislation against procurement (Persson, 1981). In 1971, a Governmental committee was formed to review the legislation on sexual offences. One important topic in the directives to the committee was that prejudices and conceptions of what was considered taboo in society was thought to hamper a natural and open-minded view of sexuality, but times were changing, and new perspectives influenced the legislation on sexual offences. The radical and sexually liberal thinking of the 1960s was behind the directives and the committee. The committee presented proposals for new legislation in a report in 1976. It suggested for example that punishment for procurement should presuppose that it was "professional". Since 1971, however, perspectives had started to change and massive criticism broke out causing two new committees to form. One was tasked with investigating prostitution and other sexual offences. The police, who had previously had quite an uninterested and relaxed attitude towards prostitution, became stricter and discovered connections between prostitution and other forms of criminality such as drug offences and fencing (Persson, 1981). As the pressure on prostitution increased, it became harder to obtain permission to run sex clubs and the control over these kinds of activities increased.

7.1.2 Prostitution from the 1980s to the Present Situation

A study from the Ministry of Justice at the beginning of the 1990s declared that prostitution had continuously decreased since the middle of the 1970s but had

started to increase again at the beginning of the 1990s (referred to in Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1995: 15). Some forms of prostitution had decreased by as much as 30–40%. In 1998, the local social authorities in 44 municipalities reported having prostitution at a local level (Socialstyrelsen, 2000). As a result of legislation concerning sexual purchases that went into effect in 1999, prostitution, which primarily existed in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö decreased temporarily between 1998 and 1999, but remained unchanged in other parts of the country. At this time, about 2,500 women were estimated to be prostitutes (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1995: 15). From an international perspective, this is a low number (Månsson, 1998) and if we compare this figure to the number of prostitutes that existed in the 1970s and early 1980s as mentioned above, current prostitution seems to be at a lower level.

Today, there are only a handful of sex clubs in Sweden, and according to a Governmental committee, prostitution exists on a small scale in Sweden (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1995: 15). The number of men who purchase sexual services are relatively few compared to many other countries (Månsson, 2001). Explanations that are commonly given for this situation are that prostitution is negatively perceived by citizens in general, that Sweden has an extensive welfare system that provides protection from poverty, that there is a long tradition of treating prostitution as a social problem and that the level of equality between men and women is high due to governmental policies and regulations. There is also a history of police and social workers actively working to stop the recruitment of young women into prostitution.

It is difficult to present any exact figures concerning the extent and structure of prostitution or the development of purchasing sexual services over the decades because no systematic measurements have been made (Månsson, 1998). One survey indicates that 0.3% of women said that they had been paid for sexual services (Månsson, 1998). This figure corresponds to responses provided in a Finnish survey conducted by Kontula and Haavio-Mannila (1995), which Månsson (1998) refers to. According to Månsson (1998), every eighth man (12.7%) has paid for sexual services. The majority of these men have paid for sexual services only once or twice (58%) and it is not unusual that the purchase was made outside Sweden during a business trip or vacation. Almost 80% of sexual services provided by prostitutes are purchased outside of Sweden (Månsson, 1998). This behaviour typically reflects the dislike of prostitution as a phenomenon in Sweden, and that it is not socially acceptable here. Men travelling outside Sweden are however exposed to other attitudes and may feel freer to buy sexual services. In Sweden, social pressure to be a “real” man seems to be associated with a strong pressure *not* to buy sex (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003: 11). In comparison to some other countries, it seems that Swedish people purchase sexual services from prostitutes when they are abroad (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003). It can be easier and less shameful to purchase sexual services in the anonymity found outside one’s normal environment. Countries with a large supply of prostitution, such as Thailand, are also common holiday destinations for Swedes.

7.1.3 *Trafficking in Sweden*

Europol points out that trafficking in persons, especially women, is one of the most serious threats for the Member States of the European Union today (Laczko et al., 2002). In Scandinavia, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of trafficked women since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Lehti (2003) claims that the majority of the women trafficked to Nordic countries today come from the former Soviet countries. The number of women from Russia and the Baltic countries engaged in Nordic prostitution has been estimated to be from 5,000 to 10,000, and the annual number of victims from 100 to 1,000 women (Lehti, 2003). It is estimated that around 120,000 human beings are traded to Europe every year.

Although the distinction can be difficult to discern in some countries, the Scandinavian countries, including Sweden, represent relatively clear-cut cases of demand countries (Lehti, 2003). As already mentioned, two of the most important, commonly identified, factors causing the supply of persons to trafficking are thought to be poverty and unemployment. These factors also distinguish Scandinavia from the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe in general. The Scandinavian countries are wealthy and have a well-developed safety net, which makes the risk of Scandinavian citizens becoming victims of trafficking relatively small. The supply that meets the demand for sexual services from Scandinavia comes instead mainly from the Baltic countries, the CIS countries and Eastern Europe (Lehti, 2003). In fact, earlier research identified the countries of North eastern and Eastern Europe as the “new” suppliers of trafficked prostitutes into Europe, and their share of trafficked persons has been increasing constantly (Moustgaard and Brun, 2001).

Governmental reports show that the main supply of women to Sweden come from Estonia, Lithuania, Russia and Poland (Lehti, 2003) and according to Lehti and Leskinen (2002, 2003) the routes of trafficking between Sweden, Finland and Estonia are some of the most well-organized, established and common routes in the region. Sweden is also, to some extent, a transit country. Research has shown that it is common that victims of trafficking from the other Baltic countries and Russia are transported through Estonia on to Finland or Sweden, and then from Finland or Sweden on to Denmark and Norway.

Although the research has increased during the recent years there is still some uncertainty regarding the actual number of women exposed to the trafficking trade in Sweden. Because of the difficulties connected to obtaining reliable data, the figures presented are estimates rather than actual numbers. The National Criminal Investigation Department estimated that in the year 2003 between 200 and 500 women were subjected to trade in Sweden (Rikskriminalpolisen, 2004). According to the same department (Rikskriminalpolisen, 2005), the number increased during 2004 when between 400 and 600 victims of trafficking for sexual purposes were estimated to have come to Sweden. There are no similar estimates for the years 2005 and 2006, but the police say that there are constantly about 120 foreign women working in the Stockholm area that are advertised on

the Internet (the most common venue for prostitutes to advertise their services). According to the police, there are no foreign male prostitutes although there are a few Swedish male prostitutes; this indicates that the trade in Sweden is one mainly of women.

Purchasing sexual services is prohibited in Sweden. As a result of this, traffickers are deterred from establishing themselves in Sweden, and so the prohibition functions as a barrier against trafficking in human beings (Rikskriminalpolisen, 2004, 2005). This is a contributing factor to levels of prostitution being low in Sweden compared to other countries. According to the National Criminal Investigation Department, it is also a contributing factor to the trafficking that does exist in Sweden being concealed and well organized.

According to the U.S State Department's Website, "Victims of sex trafficking are often found on the streets or working in establishments that offer commercial sex acts, i.e. brothels, strip clubs and pornography production houses. Such establishments may operate under the guise of massage parlours, escort services, adult bookstores, modelling studios and bars/strip clubs". It is possible that this is also the case in Sweden and as these types of businesses are not common in the country this could also be a reason why the levels of all forms of prostitution are quite low compared to other countries.

It can be stated that there is a large need for empirical knowledge on trafficking in persons to Sweden, as well as strategies for the prevention and elimination of trafficking. The police, for example, have no specific strategies against trafficking that are implemented at a national level (Borg and Nilsson, 2005).

7.2 Legislation and Policies in Sweden

7.2.1 National Legislation and Policies on Immigration

For a considerable period of time, legislation has demanded that permission be obtained in order to reside and work in Sweden. It is against the law to reside in the country without permission, with general exceptions such as tourism. The new legislation on immigration, the so-called Utlänningslag (2005: 716), Aliens Act, does not constitute an exception to this policy.

The number of people who have immigrated to Sweden has increased steadily since the middle of the 1990s. This increase especially consists of individuals from outside Europe (Migrationsverket, 2006). Some 46,849 people immigrated to Sweden in 2004: 29% from Asia, 20% from neighbouring Nordic countries, 20% from the EU (outside the Nordic countries) and 14% from other parts of Europe.

According to official figures, the number of individuals applying for asylum has decreased (Migrationsverket, 2006). However, some researchers are of the opinion that the need for asylum has not decreased, but rather that illegal immigration has increased (despite the law that prohibits the unlawful planning and organizing

of illegal immigration) (Österuropastudier, 2006). The lack of knowledge regarding illegal immigration, however, and the problem of dark figures mean that these researchers find it difficult to verify their opinions.

There is an ongoing debate in Swedish society regarding the national immigration policy. Some people claim that Sweden has become more restrictive and adopted a forbidding European policy, while others are of the opinion that immigration is extensive and that Sweden has one of the most generous immigration policies (SVT, 2005). According to one report, about 10% of the Swedish population believe that immigration is too extensive (Diaz, 2005). European policy is generally viewed as restrictive with regards to immigration, having more or less emphasized closed borders. Some believe that this type of restrictive policy may have contributed to opening the market for illegal immigration and trafficked prostitution (Rasmussen, 2005).

According to the National Criminal Investigation Department, the level of trafficking has an effect on illegal immigration. They estimate that about 20,000–23,000 people who applied for asylum in 2002 were assisted by traffickers in one way or another; examples of assistance might be receiving advice, instructions, documents or methods of transportation. Different regulatory and law enforcement agencies are collaborating to try to prevent this development.

7.3 National Legislation and Policies on Trafficking

There have been regulations against pimps (people who support or utilize prostitution for their own gain) since the sixteenth century (Brå, 2000). Even if Swedish legislation until 1999 can be classified as tolerant, the law in practice has been restrictive against prostitution (Månsson, 1981). The Swedish approach is that prostitution is a social problem, and therefore should be treated with social measures. Until 1965, prostitutes could be sentenced to forced labour (Brå, 2000) and public pornographic performances have, as already mentioned previously, been prohibited since the 1980s (Träskman, 2005).² The background to the prohibition is that pornographic clubs often serve as gateways to criminality and places to recruit young women into prostitution (Brå, 2000).

Today, in accordance with legislation that went into force on 1 January 1999, it is a punishable offence to purchase sexual services and penal legislation has been used as a tool against prostitution in addition to legislation on procurement (in 2005 minor changes were made to the law). According to the Criminal Code (Chap. 6, Sect. 11), purchasing – or attempting to purchase – sexual services constitutes a criminal offence punishable by fines or up to six months imprisonment. The most common penalty is fines, and prison sentences are rare according to criminal statistics (Brå, 2006a). It is however not punishable for a person to

²Ch. 2. Public Order Act (1993:1617), Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1981: 71.

sell sexual services, which has been an important symbolic gesture for the government in their choice of legislative measures against prostitution.

The aim of the new legislation was to emphasize equality between men and women and to underline that prostitution is not a socially accepted practice (Proposition, 1997/98: 55). The legislation was also intended to serve as a preventive measure that would decrease the demand for sexual services. There were arguments against the government motives and several important agencies did not support the legislation (Träskman, 2005). Some researchers claimed that even if the political rhetoric was about equality and keeping women safe, in reality the legislation tended to protect law and order, i.e. a desire to keep streets and town squares free from disruptive activities (Träskman, 2005).

Since the law went into force, there has been a perceptible decrease in street prostitution. Prostitution has changed character, moved inside, and become more invisible as a result of mobile phones and the Internet. Some researchers believe, however, that this is a development that would have occurred in Sweden regardless of the new legislation, simply because the use of the Internet has increased steadily in the society as a whole, and it also constitutes a more convenient way for prostitutes to market their services. As a result of the new legislation, mainly drug-addicted prostitutes have been left behind on the streets and the number of women who occasionally work as prostitutes has also decreased. Another development has been that the number of prostituted women has decreased in the big cities, although the number of prostitutes outside the cities has not changed (Socialstyrelsen, 2000, 2004). According to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, the number of men who purchase sexual services has also decreased because of legislation.

Legislation regarding prostitution in the rest of Scandinavia differs from the Swedish legislation. In Denmark, Norway and Finland it is not prohibited to either sell or buy sexual services (although Finland is currently preparing to adopt legislation similar to Sweden regarding the prohibition on buying sexual services). One claimed effect of the new law in Sweden has been that prostitutes who were previously working in the country have now moved to Denmark instead and that many of the Swedish customers from the south of Sweden have followed (Träskman, 2005; Rasmussen, 2005). Levels of prostitution are much higher in Denmark, about 2,500 foreign prostitutes are estimated to be working there and a significant proportion of these are suspected to be victims of trafficking. It is also probable that a larger proportion of buyers purchase sexual services abroad during business trips and when on vacation.

In December 2000, the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime was signed by Sweden and about 80 other countries. Two protocols in the Convention are of importance for trafficking and focus on areas of particular concern for the United Nations Member States: the “trafficking in persons” and the “smuggling of migrants” protocols.

Since July 2002, the Criminal Code (Chap. 4, Sect. 1a) states that it is an offence to traffic people for sexual purposes (Proposition, 2001/02: 124). According to the legislation, trafficking entails the perpetrator forcing or using

misleading or inappropriate measures to have a person transported to another country for sexual purposes. The legislation changed in 2004 to include abuse other than that of a sexual nature, for example forced labour, slavery or trade in human organs. The law also specified that transportation could take place within the country and still be classified as trafficking.

In 2003, the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) adopted the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. It was formed to contain a “toolkit” for the participating countries to efficiently combat trafficking in terms of providing protection to the victims, preventing these types of criminality and the prosecuting of those guilty of committing or facilitating crimes of trafficking.

Trafficking in persons has become a central issue for the European Union, and in addition to the joint ratification of the mentioned United Nations Convention, the European Union Council has adopted a Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, 2002/629/JHA, which aims to harmonize the legislation of Member States and join their political efforts concerning trafficking in persons. The Framework Decision was due for implementation in the Member States in August 2004. In November 2004, the European Council also endorsed, as a part of the Hague Program, the development of a plan in 2005 for “common standards, best practices and mechanisms to prevent and combat human trafficking and to enhance the fight against illegal immigration” (European Commission, 2005).

The Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings from the European Council was appointed in 2005. It is the first European convention of its kind. In January 2007, three countries had ratified the convention (Switzerland, Moldavia and Romania) and an additional 30 countries had signed it. Sweden signed the convention in May 2005, but it has yet to be ratified and incorporated in Swedish legislation. A committee has been appointed to investigate which measures need to be taken and which changes need to be made in the legislation in order for the convention to be ratified. The results of this investigation are due to be presented in April 2008.

In addition to the frameworks provided by the United Nations and the European Union, most European countries have their own programs to combat trafficking in persons. Norway was the first to adopt a program in 2003, and Denmark and Finland followed in 2005. The work on Sweden’s national action program against trafficking in human beings is being conducted by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality. The work began in 2004 and the results were supposed to be presented during the autumn of 2006; it has however taken longer than expected and a new date has been decided in the summer of 2007. The action program contains propositions on what can be done to limit and reduce both prostitution and trafficked prostitution among adults and children.

The Scandinavian countries have also implemented additional legislative measures beyond what is required by the European Union and the United Nations. Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland have all adopted specific legislation prohibiting trafficking in persons, which is regarded as a more serious form of prostitution

than the more “ordinary”, native prostitution. Since 2006, Sweden also has an official ambassador appointed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs who is in charge of international cooperation between Sweden and other countries regarding the trafficking of human beings.

Two other investigations are also underway that are relevant for trafficking in Sweden. The first is a new, modified version of an earlier investigation concerning pornography, trafficking and sexual exploitation related to children. The results will be presented by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs during the autumn of 2007. The other investigation is being conducted by the Ministry of Employment and will be presented at the beginning of 2008. The primary focus is to map other kinds of illegal trade with human beings for the purpose of, for example, forced labour in the building industry.

A law was passed in 2004 concerning both immigration and trafficking. The law states that time-limited residence permits may be given to plaintiffs and witnesses who are victims of trafficking in order to facilitate criminal investigations (Proposition, 2003/04: 35; Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 2002: 69; Justitiedepartementet, 2005: 24). The background to the decision was that investigations of cases involving trafficking in human beings are difficult to carry out, and that there was no legislation that permitted victims of trafficking to stay in the country during the period of the criminal investigation and trial proceedings. The people involved risked being expelled as soon as their activities were discovered. As a result of the new legislation, police who come into contact with victims of trafficking can apply for time-limited residence permits for the individuals involved in criminal investigations.

A lot of attention is paid to the situation of trafficked women in the political debate. One suggestion that has been brought forward in the debate is that trafficked women should be offered the opportunity to receive permanent residency status in Sweden. Another suggestion is that permanent residency status should only be linked to the need for the women to assist the police and to bear witness against traffickers. According to this suggestion, if the woman does not agree to bear witness she will be expelled from the country.

7.4 Clients and Their Attitudes Towards Trafficked Women in Sweden

7.4.1 Methodological Description

In our study on demand for trafficked prostitution, several methods have been used:

- Interviews with purchasers of sexual services
- Interviews with police officers who work with trafficking
- Analysis of written content on the Internet chat rooms
- Participatory observations with police working to combat trafficking

7.4.1.1 Interviews with Purchasers of Sexual Services

To get in contact with purchasers of sexual services, an advertisement was placed on the largest forum for escort services in Sweden. This method has previously been used with positive results, although this was before the prohibition of buying sexual services went into effect and the advertisements were at that time placed in newspapers³ (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1995: 15). The advertisement was formulated as follows, but in Swedish:

Do you purchase sexual services? Or do you intermediate, sell, or have knowledge of the trade in sexual services? The National Council for Crime Prevention is conducting a project aiming to explore the demand for sexual services. If you have experience of buying sex – call us anonymously and tell us about it. The interviews will take place under the framework for the project on trafficking. The conversation/interview will be used for scientific purposes only. You will be guaranteed full anonymity. Call xxx-xxxxx Mon–Fri 10 a.m.–4 p.m. You can call other times and leave a message on our answering machine with information about when you are able to call us or when we can call you.

A total of 13 interviews were conducted with buyers of sexual services. One interview was also conducted with an escort. All of the interviews were conducted by telephone. The length of the interviews varied between 15 and 90 min depending on what experience the interviewee had of issues related to trafficking, how much contact the individual had had with foreign women and how talkative the interviewee was. The interviews were conducted with the assistance of an interview guide. The questions were semi-structured, and the guide was used as a help to ensure that relevant topics were addressed. The questions concerned topics such as preferences, indicators of trafficking, obstacles and facilitators as well as methods for making contact. One relevant issue that was held in mind during the interviews was which suggestions could be made on how to reduce the demand for trafficked women with the information that the purchasers contributed with.

The clients interviewed in this study cannot be considered to be representative of the general population of purchasers for reasons explained below. Since this is a qualitative study, their representativeness is not the main concern. However, it is important to address the possibility that the group of clients who called were interested in contributing to the general view of purchasers of sexual services. They may also be unique in that they are interested in participating in research.

From the client's perspective we can conclude that ethical principles were taken into consideration: general information was provided to clients regarding purpose, confidentiality, how data would be used and that participation was voluntary. From another perspective, one might say that it is immoral to learn about people's crimes (buying sexual services), but not reporting them to the police.

³Thanks to Eva Tiby at the Department of Criminology, Stockholm University for valuable help regarding methodological issues related to contacting purchasers of sexual services.

Reporting the crimes would, of course, have been impossible, since we had to assure clients that they would be anonymous in order to gain access to them. This is a privilege generally afforded to researchers who would otherwise have great difficulties in collecting sensitive information regarding, for example, people's criminal behaviour. We can also add that interviewees mostly talked about their experience of prostitution in general terms and very rarely provided information related to a specific purchase. We believe that the benefits of the study outweigh any moral doubts related to the methods used.

7.4.1.2 Interviews with Police

There is an intelligence unit for illegal immigration at the National Criminal Investigation Department (Rikskriminalpolisen) in Sweden. Within this department there is a special unit that concentrates its work solely on trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes. Interviews were conducted with two Detective Inspectors in order to obtain information about trafficking in Sweden. The trafficking unit concentrates on intelligence rather than on investigations into trafficking. It collects and handles intelligence information, and works to support police districts in Sweden involved in trying to reduce trafficking. They are also the Government's national reporters for trafficking in human beings. The unit publishes an annual report on the situation of trafficking in Sweden.

As a result of the priority to combat crime related to trafficking in Sweden (in a project called Nova), a special group at the surveillance unit of the City Police in Stockholm was formed to combat trafficking. This group is called "Project Europe", and it works extensively with surveillance, intelligence and investigations. An interview was conducted with one of the inspectors in the group.

7.4.1.3 Chat Room Analysis

The chat room analysis had different aims; one was to determine which of the forums is the most sophisticated and might have the biggest impact in Sweden. The main aim, however, was to investigate what kind of influence the Internet, forums and chat rooms have on the demand for sexual services and trafficking and how they work. To do this, an analysis of the discussions going on in a forum was done to see what kind of information sex buyers have and exchange, and also what kinds of preferences they have that facilitate the sexual trade.

7.4.1.4 Observation Study with the Police

To obtain information regarding how the police work to combat trafficking as well as what their perceptions are of sexual services and clients, researchers participated in an observational study. The observation contributed to a lot of practical information

and understanding of the trafficking situation. Two researchers from our unit accompanied two different officers on two different days.

7.4.2 *Who are the Clients and What are Their Relations with Trafficked Women?*

7.4.2.1 The Clients

The clients who were interviewed in the study were between 28 and 54 years of age. The frequency with which the interviewees purchase sexual services varies a great deal. Some purchase just a few times a year and others a couple of times a month. Many of the clients began purchasing sex at a young age. According to a police officer that works with trafficking surveillance, the same clients are often seen during surveillance work. Some of the clients are married while others are single, some have children and some do not.

A majority of the interviewed individuals have a university degree and are employed. One can conclude that the interviewed clients in general have quite large financial resources, and are able to afford the price of prostitutes. Even though the clients cannot be considered representative of the general population, this finding corresponds to a Swedish study (Månsson, 1998), which found that men in social group 1 (upper class) are more likely to buy sex than men in social groups 2 and 3 (middle class and working class).

None of the clients report that they would feel comfortable telling their family or friends that they purchase sexual services and that in general it is not something they ever talk about with anyone who is not a purchaser. The interviewees thought it was taboo and some of the clients were ashamed of what they were doing, which corresponds to results from other studies (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson, 2002). The interviewed individuals do not however think it was more shameful to say that they had bought sex from a foreign prostitute than from a native prostitute. One person who was more open about what he did said that he thought his friends and relatives would trust his judgement if he said he was buying sexual services from prostitutes. The clients in general tended to see their behaviour as normal and unproblematic. One client said: "I would like to wash away the picture of purchasers as unsuccessful men of failure. It is just ordinary men". The shame that purchasers feel over their behaviour can be interpreted as being a result of the forbidding attitudes in society towards prostitution rather than internalized moral values. Some clients say that they periodically meet other clients, people they meet on the Internet forums where sexual services are advertised. This may indicate a need for them to talk to somebody and gain legitimacy for their actions.

According to the police, clients vary in age, from teenagers to eighty-year-old men but the majority are middle-aged or in early middle age. They are usually neatly dressed and often give the impression of being very anxious. The most usual times for visits to prostitutes are weekdays at lunchtime and after work, until eight or nine in the evening. The weekends are usually very quiet due to the sex purchasers being at home with their families.

7.4.3 *Reasons for Purchasing Sex*

International research (Weitzer, 2005) gives the following five explanations for individuals who buy sexual services:

1. They desire specific types of sexual experiences (oral sex, etc.) or more variety in their sexual experience
2. They desire sex with a person who has a certain image (sexy, raunchy, etc.) or with specific physical attributes (racial, transgender)
3. They find the illicit and risky conduct thrilling
4. They wish to avoid the obligations or emotional attachment involved in a conventional relationship
5. They have difficulty finding someone for a conventional relationship

All the explanations proposed in the international research mentioned above were found in our study except the third explanation that suggests that men buy sex because they find the illicit and risky conduct thrilling. Statements from clients that support these explanations include: “I do it because of the excitement, but also because of a sort of addiction. Meeting a prostitute doesn’t involve demands, and you get to do other stuff than in your relationship” (which can be attributed to motives 1 and 4), and: “I am not suited to fixed relationships”, “I get bored quickly, and it is very practical to buy sex” (which can be attributed to motive number 4).

Along with the motives above, Månsson (2006) also identifies six motives for men in Sweden to buy sex:

1. The “dirty whore” fantasy: Conveys expressions of contradictory feelings of curiosity, excitement and contempt. The image of the “dirty whore” adds to sexual arousal
2. Another kind of sex: Sexual frustration coupled with images of a certain kind of sex, which cannot be experienced with a woman who is not a prostitute. Typical saying: “My wife doesn’t want to try anything”
3. Image of the kind-hearted comforter: Refers to shyness, fear, advancing age, physical and mental disabilities. Typical saying: “There are no other women for me”
4. Images of sex as a consumer product: Refers to sex as a market for different tastes (“shopping for sex”) and to men’s biological need for quick sexual release. Typical saying: “It’s like going to McDonalds...”
5. Fantasies of another kind of woman: Based on images of a true and natural femininity (and masculinity). Typical saying: “She treats me like the man I am”. References to changing gender relationships and loss of power
6. Expressions of strong anti-feminist notions

According to Månsson (2006), expressions of number 5 and loss of power can be seen in sex tourism and the demand for trafficked women. The important role that sexual-racist and ethnic stereotypes play becomes clear when considering how the women are often presented. Asian women are portrayed as “loving and submissive”, African women as “wild” and Latin American women as “free and easygoing”. These stereotypes can give rise to men’s talk and fantasies about “another kind of woman”

as compensation for the reduction of masculine and sexual power in their own everyday relationship.

There are statements from various clients that support motives 2, 3 and 4. An example from our study that can be identified as motive 3 includes: “I have had just a few short relationships, and it doesn’t work, all new contacts just end up in friendship, and: I don’t like conflicts, and I’m therefore not suited for relationships”. Other clients referred to the difficulty of meeting a woman, and expressed this to be the reason for buying sex. One interviewee said that it is hard because of a physical disability and another client said: “It’s hard to meet a woman when you’re a single father with young children”.

As we can see, different kinds of explanations are given for buying sex among the interviewees. Some common explanations in general were: “For the excitement” or because “I can’t get it elsewhere” or “It’s easy”. Some also said that they did it for “self-confirmation” or because of an “addiction” whereas others said “my wife cannot do it anymore” or “you can get other kinds of sex with prostitutes”. As mentioned earlier, a few clients also said that they had problems with fixed relationships and sticking to only one woman. They also say that relations with prostitutes are not associated with any kind of commitment, which makes it easy.

The police said in the interviews conducted in the study that many clients they interrogate consider themselves to be sex addicts and feel bad about their behaviour and want help. This is something that only a few clients mentioned in our interview study. It is probable that sex addicts are at greater risk of getting caught due to purchasing sexual services more often than people who are not addicts, which may account for this difference. Another possibility is that clients that have been caught use addiction as an excuse to explain their behaviour during interrogations in order to decrease the social stigma created by buying sexual services.

7.4.4 Experience with Foreign Women and Victims of Trafficking

It is hard to speak about the relations of clients with trafficked women because all of the interviewees distance themselves from the organized sex trade and claim that they would never buy sexual services from a woman that they knew was a victim of trafficking. Because it is difficult to distinguish between normal prostitutes and trafficked prostitutes, a list has been made of possible indicators of trafficked prostitution. The list has been put together through information obtained from a seminar with the project research team, interviews with police and purchasers of sexual services, participatory observation with police and from literature.

Possible indicators of trafficked prostitution:

- The woman is foreign and does not speak the native language
- The woman seems uninterested
- The woman seems to have been mistreated (physically: bruises; psychologically: scared, depressed)

- Signs of vulnerability and exploitation
- The woman is advertised on advanced or professional-looking Websites for prostitute services. The advertisement is written in Swedish (even though the prostitute is foreign and speaks a different language)
- Advertisements that introduce the women based on their ethnicity
- Cheaper prices than for native women
- Younger women and minors
- Impressions received regarding general level of organization in terms of capital, local contacts, advanced forms of marketing, etc.
- Locality of “workplace”; an expensive flat in the city can be an indicator of organization and money

International interview data from sex buyers show that when prostitutes are ranked according to attractiveness, migrant prostitutes who are perceived as having been forced into prostitution are deemed less attractive than local women who, clients have the impression, have entered sex work voluntarily (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003).

A recurring theme throughout the interviews is that clients often say that they can sense and know whether a woman is doing business on her own or whether she has a pimp or is a victim of trafficking. Some say, however, that they choose not to seek foreign women due to the risk of meeting a trafficked woman. The clients tended to be rather unspecific when responding to the question of how they can be sure. They say they would know because the situation would be strange or they would feel if the woman was not acting voluntarily. As one client said: “it doesn’t work, you will know, the circumstances would be odd”.

A contribution to the forum gives an example of the problems related to the indicators of trafficking as well as which women should be chosen:

“The big crooks are the men who don’t care how the girls feel... For me that means I choose not to meet women who I cannot communicate with... I understand that it might imply that I say no thanks to wonderful experiences with foreign girls who have come here just to make money totally voluntarily, but it is my choice and my way of avoiding promoting trafficking...”

Another contribution on the forum regarding the subject of trafficking states:

“You have to be careful with girls who don’t want to answer the telephone themselves or those who only answer with a text message, but maybe that’s common sense”.

One can however suspect that traffickers are aware that purchasers are reluctant to buy sexual services from trafficked women and therefore tell their prostitutes that they have to pretend to be working on their own, act happy and be pleasing; the women might also be equipped with believable stories about how they came to Sweden and why. If a prostitute sees a client that rejects her for some reason, the pimp or trafficker might be angry because he is losing money. This probably contributes to the fact that it must be rather difficult for a client to judge whether the woman is trafficked or not. On the forum, one of the prostitutes emphasizes the difficulties involved in judging the situation:

“Those women who feel bad but pretend that they do not can in many cases be considered actresses of Academy Award class”.

About half of the interviewed clients had had some experiences with foreign women. Most of the clients believed that they were independent prostitutes working voluntarily. In retrospect, however, some of the clients said that one could suspect that the women might have been under the control of a pimp or a trafficker. One person said:

“When I got to the flat, there were three girls there, and the other girls had customers in other rooms when I got there. The whole thing went really fast and it seemed like it was a brothel. It was hard to stop when I was already there since it went so fast; when you get in the flat, everything goes so fast”.

Another client said that he once after purchasing sexual services had suspected that the woman was trafficked but that

“the craving was so big that it was more important at that specific moment”.

Another client that had experience of brothels says that a problem with them is the risk of being assaulted. His awareness of the fact that brothels could also be a sign of trafficking was however low. When procurement and trafficking were mentioned he said:

“Yes, these girls I really feel sorry for. I have a built-in barrier to seeing such girls”.

This example is quite telling in terms of the lack of awareness of clients of what factors are signs of trafficking. One client described that he had once met a Russian woman that spoke poor English and who was renting a flat on a daily basis:

“I didn’t suspect any organization behind this girl”.

Another client said that it was really difficult for him to make contact with prostitutes. He said that he had called, sent emails and mobile phone text messages without any results for a long time. He thought it was difficult because he had a foreign accent. Finally he got hold of one prostitute who spoke poor English. The woman he met was not the woman in the picture in the advert, and she was from the Baltic region. He met her out on the streets somewhere and paid her SEK 1,000. He decided not to proceed, but he felt sorry for her and paid her the money anyway. He didn’t think that she had a pimp or a trafficker; he got the impression that she was working voluntarily, though his description of the circumstances seem to contradict this considering previously mentioned indicators of trafficking.

According to the police, some clients have defended their purchases of sexual services from trafficked women by saying that they wanted to help the women; as the women are in such a horrible situation, they see themselves as helping them by giving them money. They were reluctant to see themselves as promoters of trafficking and organized crime through their behaviour.

Many might not recognize the nature of trafficking because it is subtle. Another explanation could be that they do not want to know too much about the women’s background (“no questions asked”). With regards to most of the clients’ unwillingness to buy sex from trafficked women, this could be a natural defence mechanism to prevent them from experiencing feelings of guilt.

Anderson and O’Connell Davidson (2003) found that clients in general perceive foreign prostitutes as low-level prostitutes. The data shows that certain groups of migrant sex workers are viewed by some clients as a “poor man’s substitute”.

Furthermore, they conclude: *In short, a reluctance to buy sex from prostitutes who work in the most visibly exploitative conditions is not necessarily grounded in any high ethical principle and even when it is, these principals may be jettisoned if the client happens to be drunk or short of cash, and may seem irrelevant if the prostitute does not conform to the client's stereotype of a victim.*

This analysis applies to our study as well. In general, the most important issue for the interviewed clients is not related to engaging a woman who is not a victim of trafficking. The most important issue is to have sex with a nice, independent woman at a reasonable cost. If their perceived indicators of what constitutes a trafficked prostitute do not match the circumstances surrounding the prostitute in question, they might nevertheless proceed with the prostitute. As we have seen, this can also be the case when the client has already come into contact with a person they suspected is a trafficked woman. In those instances, interviewed clients have excused their actions with neutralizations like “the craving was so big” or “everything went so fast” and have therefore proceeded with the act and the purchase.

7.5 Factors That Push Clients to Choose Trafficked Women: Individual Factors

There are several individual factors that affect the purchase of sexual services from trafficked women. The following factors have been identified as possible motives for buying sexual services:

- Price
- Ethnicity
- Age
- Vulnerability, exploitation, racism, feelings of control or power
- Reduced risk of meeting the woman again
- A low perceived risk of getting caught by the police
- A lack of knowledge about trafficking
- Lenient attitudes towards prostitution and prostitutes

As we see, even if most buyers do not have an explicit preference for trafficked women, implicitly they might. By preferring any of the factors mentioned above, for example low-cost prostitutes or foreign prostitutes⁴, the purchasers may favour trafficked prostitutes. In other words, it is a large problem that many of the preferences of clients can also be indicators of trafficked prostitution.

⁴The terms foreign prostitution and trafficked prostitution have been used interchangeably during the interviews. This is due to the fact that questions about trafficking are sensitive to ask about and most of the interviewed men distance themselves from trafficking. It is possible, though, that some of the interviewees may have come in contact with trafficked women when meeting foreign women without realizing it and therefore the broader term foreign prostitution has been used in order to obtain information about a group where trafficked prostitutes are common.

7.5.1 *Price*

In general, foreign women are less expensive than local women and many of the clients say that price is of importance and that they prefer inexpensive prostitutes. One client says:

“I often use price as a factor when I choose prostitutes; I prefer to pay no more than SEK 1,000”.⁵

This is something that can affect the demand for prostitutes in general but also specifically for trafficked prostitutes:

“I think that a low price can increase demand. With a low price people may think: Great, now even I can afford to buy sexual services”.

One client verifies this by saying that he usually chooses foreign women as they are cheaper and more exotic. Another client who had experience with foreign women said that he had been with a woman from the Czech Republic:

“I should have suspected that she was trafficked, but I saw her because she was cheaper”.

There are also clients who say that the price is a qualitative measure of the woman’s performance. Some clients in our study say that foreign prostitutes are not as good:

“You get what you pay for. If it costs SEK 1,000, that’s how much you can expect”.

7.5.2 *Ethnicity*

Preferences for different kinds of ethnic or national groups, for example Russians, Blacks, Asians, etc., can affect the demand for trafficked prostitution. These preferences might be linked to physical appearance or a cultural aspect such as perceptions about personality or manner (e.g. regarding the treatment of men).

In our study, none of the clients had a specific demand for foreign women although many of the clients stated that they did not have any problems with buying sexual services from them. At the same time some expressed a preference for women from other cultures. Some said that it could be exciting to purchase services from an Asian or Black woman or a woman from Thailand:

“It’s nice with a foreign woman, for example, a Black woman, that’s exciting”.

The client also said that the cultural heritage of foreign prostitutes was attractive:

“I prefer women from Central and Eastern Europe since I have been there, and I like the culture there”.

Another example of preferences for foreign women can be seen in a forum for purchasers of sexual services:

⁵ A common price level for prostitutes is SEK 1,500–2,000 in Sweden.

“I have previously tested some Black women and have had only good experiences; in my opinion, any guy who is interested in sex should test different kinds of girls in order to broaden his views”.

This also confirms a demand for different prostitutes. For a majority of the interviewed clients, it is important to choose different women every time because they are looking for new experiences. According to the police, traffickers see to it that women are switched regularly because clients do not want to see the same woman all the time.

Few clients had a preference for specifically Swedish women. One client with a foreign background had a specific preference for blond Swedish women.

7.5.3 Age

There are indicators that some of the trafficked women that come to Sweden are under the age of 18, a preference for minors is therefore something that can affect the demand, although it is difficult to estimate to what extent Swedish men prefer underage girls. A majority of the interviewees in our study preferred young women, but none expressed a preference for girls under the age of 18, even if some of them had met girls that age. The police describe that they, through telephone tapping, have heard that some clients have a preference for girls who are not yet 18. This preference for younger women also corresponds to an international report where over three quarters of all clients expressed a preference for prostitutes aged 25 or under and 22% preferred those aged 18 or below. Sweden also participated in this survey, but none of the respondents had a preference for girls under the age of 18 (Anderson and O’Connell Davidson, 2003).

7.5.4 Vulnerability, Exploitation, Racism, Feelings of Control or Power

As mentioned above, one reason for purchasing sex may be to exercise feelings of power and control over women. Choosing trafficked women may be a way of enhancing these feelings. If the motives of clients are directly related to racism and exploitation, trafficked women may in fact be targeted in order to do this.

Vulnerability, exploitation and racism as the source of demand for trafficked prostitutes is difficult to investigate. In our study none of the clients stated that this was their reason for buying sexual services, but it is not probable that a client would admit that his motives for buying sex from foreign women were due to racism or exploitation or the particularly vulnerable situation of victims if this was the case. The sentiment can be expressed subtly, but none of the interviewed clients implicitly or explicitly expressed any motives of this kind. Nevertheless, these motives may exist in some instances and are important to investigate due to the interaction of both structural and individual factors i.e. societal concepts of inequality between sexes and individual motives to feel power over other people.

In the aforementioned study on the trafficking of human beings by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Anderson and Davidson, 2003), a man from India said that he could never buy sex or exploit a woman from his own ethnic group and therefore chose foreign prostitutes. The authors write in their report that it is important to recognize that racism, xenophobia and prejudice against ethnic minority groups make it much easier for sex workers, clients and employers to convince themselves that such practices are justified. The racially or ethnically deviant worker is not perceived as an equal human being, and can thus be used and abused in ways that would be impossible with prostitutes of the same race or ethnicity.

There is an ongoing debate that focuses on whether prostitution is a voluntary action or the result of coercion. This is a debate that more or less centres around definitions and perspectives. According to some interviewees and some of the women writing on the Internet forum, the prostitutes work voluntarily. It can be presumed that the women writing on the forum are not victims of trafficking. Other sources, for example the police, say that this is a psychological defence that the prostitutes use to protect themselves and neutralize their behaviour. The police believe that these women are forced to do this work for different reasons and that they have to find ways to justify it to themselves in an attempt to feel better about it. The police mean that claiming to work voluntarily may be a way for these women to feel in control of their lives. It is probable that men who engage in sexual activities with trafficked prostitutes for the purpose of exploitation, power and control are reliant on the concept of the woman being forced into the trade and that this heightens the experience for them.

7.5.5 Reduced Risk of Meeting the Woman Again

In terms of prostitution in general, the interviewed clients find it easy and unproblematic to see prostitutes. One client said one positive aspect of foreign prostitutes is that there is very little chance of ever running into them in other settings. It is clear in this case that preferring foreign women and women that are only temporarily in the country is an advantage if one is trying to avoid meeting the women again.

7.5.6 A Low Perceived Risk of Getting Caught by the Police

Some of the interviewees point out that legislation in Sweden is an obstacle to buying sex whereas some of the clients do not. Some said that the women they meet would not pay the police any attention and that the frequency with which they purchased sex has not changed since the law forbidding sexual services went into force.

7.5.7 A Lack of Knowledge About Trafficking

Knowledge of trafficking and the importance of really knowing if a woman is trafficked or not is rather low among the clients. None of the clients say that it is in any

way easier to buy sex from foreign prostitutes. Some say that the majority of the prostitutes are foreign, therefore making it harder to distinguish between trafficked and non-trafficked prostitutes. Even if the clients seem to prefer non-victims of trafficking, they might be less careful in making sure that they specifically choose women who run their own businesses, since the supply of local women is less abundant.

The police are of the opinion that purchasers of sexual services are ignorant of the reasons why the women prostitute themselves, and that they could never know if the women are actually working voluntarily or due to coercion. As previously indicated, coercion in trafficking can be subtle and the woman does not always show signs of being coerced. This should be seen in relation to the fact that many clients have a low level of knowledge about trafficking and that their perceptions of trafficked women may be based on the stereotypic imagery portrayed by the media.

7.5.8 Lenient Attitudes Towards Prostitution and Prostitutes

A majority of the clients do not think of their activities as immoral, or that they exploit the prostitutes by purchasing sexual services from them. Some said that it was more immoral to find a woman at a bar to have sex with, a so-called one-night-stand, since this might give the woman the impression that the one-time encounter could lead to more than just sex.

7.6 Factors that Push Clients Not to Choose Trafficked Women: Individual Factors

- Price
- Importance of independent women
- Communication
- Suspicion of trafficking
- Feelings of guilt or exploitation of women
- Disapproval or negative attitudes from friends and others
- Legislation and police surveillance

7.6.1 Price

It is a fact that people are restricted by their economic conditions in all areas of consumption. As we stated earlier, the majority of the clients that called us during the study were well educated with respectable jobs and good salaries, that is, customers must be quite well off financially to afford prostitutes. It is probable that if the prices were lower more people would buy sexual services than they do today.

7.6.2 Importance of Independent Women

Some elements of the path of a client to buying sex include his awareness of indicators of trafficking and his propensity to ensure that the prostitute is acting on her own. The interviews show that price and personality matters when making a purchase but that it is also very important that the woman is working independently. This is something that is said repeatedly in the interviews by most of the clients and is illustrated by the following comment made by one of the interviewees: “The price is not important, it is important that the girl is independent. The criteria that I have set up determines the price”. With this said, though, it is difficult to say which of these components is the most important when making decisions about buying sexual services.

7.6.3 Communication

About half of the clients in our study thought it was important to be able to communicate in Swedish with the woman, and the majority thought it was an advantage if they could communicate in English *or* in Swedish. One client said: “It’s hard to have sex without talking, because if you can’t talk, you lose the feeling”. This may be the most important factor that impedes purchasing sexual services from foreign women because many do not speak Swedish or English.

7.6.4 Suspicion of Trafficking

Some clients point out that there is a great risk of foreign prostitutes being victims of trafficking. Some say that they prefer Swedish women since they are more likely to resemble a woman that could be their girlfriend. Both affect the extent to which foreign and trafficked prostitutes are favoured over native prostitutes. Overall, though, the concern for buying trafficked women in general does not seem to be the most important factor when choosing a prostitute. As mentioned above, the majority of clients primarily consider other factors that compel them not to choose foreign prostitutes, for example being able to communicate properly and choosing independent women.

As also mentioned, generally the knowledge of clients about trafficking is low and perceptions of indicators of trafficking are based on very obvious signs. This has probably to do with the way media portrays trafficked women. As is often the case with how all crime is portrayed, the media depicts an image of slavery, where women are locked up and abused, whilst in reality, being forced into trafficking can be much subtler.

The way trafficking is portrayed may have consequences for a buyer’s conceptions of trafficking, and make them less inclined to notice subtle signs of trafficking. When judging whether a prostitute is a victim of trafficking, the definitions of clients of what constitutes trafficking may be too narrow when making an assessment based on their learned and perceived indicators of trafficking. They may

believe that they are able to judge if a woman is under pressure. If the woman says that she is acting voluntarily and she does not signal any feelings of fear or have bruises on her body, then the conclusion may be that she is acting of her own accord. They might not see anyone supervising the woman, and she may be the only person in the flat. They may not see anything that indicates surveillance, control or organization, which may lead them to believe that the woman is independent. If they ask questions, they may ask in rather broad terms, such as a person might ask questions when purchasing inexpensive goods that may be stolen (cf. Brå, 2006b). The most important issue is the product and the services, not the background to the product.

As we see, it is a case of determining to what extent the purchasers go out of their way to find out if the woman is a part of the organized sex trade or not. Considering the way the interviewees distance themselves from trafficked prostitution, it is probable that if their general level of knowledge of trafficking was higher, they would also be less inclined to buy sexual services from trafficked women.

7.6.5 Feelings of Guilt or Exploitation of Women

Some clients say that they feel uncomfortable and guilty after purchasing sexual services if the woman doesn't seem to have enjoyed the act. One client said: "I have various feelings after purchasing sex; sometimes it feels wrong if the girl didn't like it or if she was uninterested. It feels better when she seems to like it". As shown, this factor can be an indicator of trafficked prostitution, and so if purchasers distance themselves from these occurrences it could be a way of reducing the demand for trafficked prostitutes.

As pointed out, some of the clients have in retrospect suspected that the woman they went to were victims of trafficking, which may influence future decisions. Learning from mistakes and being more observant can be a way to reduce the demand although it is difficult to say to what degree their experiences and perceived knowledge of trafficking functions as an obstacle during purchases.

7.6.6 Disapproval or Negative Attitudes from Friends and Society

All the purchasers spoken to in the interviews said that they were against trafficking. It is perceived as a serious crime and a horrible business. Trafficking is also described and discussed in the media and it is often described in a way that makes people feel compassion for the victims and dislike for the traffickers. These images are met by a strong dislike of all types of trafficking in society and reflect on the propensity of clients to not tell others about their purchases, but also to favour native prostitutes or not buy sexual services at all.

7.6.7 *Legislation and Police Surveillance*

Much as a result of media coverage, clients know that the police are working actively against prostitution and because of this some are extremely observant and careful. Some clients say that foreign prostitutes are more risky since the police have more surveillance on them. In view of this, one can assume from the interviews that the legislation has a deterrent effect on all, and therefore on trafficked prostitution, and also that clients choose more invisible women as a means to avoid attention from the police. Since purchasing sexual services is taboo for most of the clients, and is associated with problems for some of them, the law seems to have functioned as a deterrent to some extent. Some clients are wary about taking women to their own homes because they are aware of police surveillance, while some are wary of staying at the home of a prostitute. One client said that he never uses the apartment of a woman. "Either we go to my home, or else we drive somewhere. It's no more problematic than buying a pizza". According to the police, the act sometimes takes place outdoors somewhere in the city, but it is uncommon.

Another client said that he has taken some precautionary measures since it is illegal: "I have a mobile phone with cash card so I can remain anonymous and not be tapped".

One person described an aspect of the prohibition that served as a deterrent for him. The police had once caught him, and as a consequence had posted a letter to his home address to summon him to an interrogation. That time he saw the letter before his wife did, but he was very fearful of his wife finding out that he was purchasing sexual services as she was suicidal.

All the clients were negative towards the law that prohibits the purchase of sexual services, as they consider it a moral law, although some clients mentioned having feelings of discomfort because they were in fact breaking the law even if they did not agree with it.

7.7 Factors That Push Clients to Choose Trafficked Women: Network Factors

7.7.1 *Connections to Organized Crime*

According to the police, trafficking is connected to other kinds of organized crime such as illegal trade in drugs and weapons. As the trade needs to be organized in order to avoid discovery, professional criminal networks are in a way promoted through trafficking. The extent to which the trade is organized in individual cases varies a lot, from no organization at all to well-organized, multi-criminal business in which many people are involved. At present the police believe that the leading principal behind much of human trafficking in Sweden holds a high position in the Russian-Estonian mafia. This supports the notions that many of the networks that exist are, or are similar to, mafia organizations.

The networks consist of, or are dependent on, many people who facilitate the trade in women. It is often compatriots who facilitate the business. If the woman is Russian, for example, there are Russian compatriots (taxi drivers, restaurant owners, etc.) who help and promote the business. These people are often permanent Swedish residents with legal businesses.

The networks can be built partly because there is a lot of money to be made within the trafficking business, since large sums of money are in circulation. It is not unusual that one woman can bring in SEK 200,000 in a month. It is common that money is collected from the women many times a day and that there are many middlemen before the money is given to the principal. One part of police work is to follow the money transactions that are made. The money is very difficult to track and it is common that it ends up in other illegal economies, for example the drug and weapon trade.

In general, the trade seems to be well organized, which is necessary because there are many factors that need to collaborate for the trade to be possible. The forging of passports is one example of how organized the trafficking of the prostitutes needs to be and how it requires a large logistics apparatus. Some people get paid for arranging contracts and one person employed in the IT field was revealed in an ongoing case, to have earned extra money by posting women on the Web. A person who can photograph the women is also needed. Someone has to provide mobile telephones. There is also a criminal labour market where some people work as drivers and messengers. Some people are assigned to help the women with practical issues like where they can buy food, which buses they can take and how they can give directions to their clients and there are people who see to housing arrangements.

Other people arrange travel to and from different countries; the prostitutes often come to Sweden by boat. Sometimes it is the “old” prostitutes who bring the women into the country or see to the transfers between countries. It is common that the girls work in different countries, for instance, in both Sweden and Finland. When the girls move between different countries or different parts of the country, different procurers may be involved. Swedish procurers are rare; instead the people involved are usually people from the Baltic countries.

Transporting the women between cities and countries is an important part of the trade. Traffickers know that clients constantly want new women and therefore make sure that they circulate. They are often transported to new countries but in some cases they are sent back to their countries of origin. This is something that obstructs police investigations; they have to work quickly to build cases and document relations between individuals as it usually is not long before the women travel to another country or go back home again.

In the case of trafficking, the women are often forced to prostitute themselves. The reasons for this may be financial. They may be working in their native countries where they get into debt, and then have to go to Sweden to earn money. Some may have children or relatives at home that they need to support. The money that the women are allowed to keep is often sent abroad. Some women even get into debt when they are in Sweden because business is not good enough, even though the principals usually make good money off the women. According to the police,

the women are forced into the trade and often informed that they are in debt. Upon arriving in Sweden, they learn that they have to pay off the journey as well as for arranging false documents, etc. They must also pay rent for the flat they live in, the cost of their mobile phone, electricity for the flat and their underwear. In addition to this, many are forced to pay a “daily rent”, often about SEK 2,000, to the pimps for arranging clients for them. After all these costs, there is very little left for the women. Many of them are also drug abusers, which means that the remaining money is often spent acquiring drugs. The organized groups behind human trafficking thus control the women by making them financially dependent.

One police officer explained that it is relatively common that the pimps are women. Often they have been prostitutes themselves, and are perhaps now too old for the work (they are usually about thirty or thirty-five years old), or they work as both pimps and prostitutes at the same time. This is a natural career path for a prostitute, perhaps the only career opportunity that is open to them.

7.7.2 Network Factors that Facilitate Trafficking

Below is a list of factors that have been identified as facilitators of trafficking that are connected to the networks that are built up around the trade:

- The Internet
- Other advertising venues
- Restaurants and bars
- Taxi drivers
- Apartments and hotels
- Sex clubs and strip clubs

7.7.3 The Internet

Although some clients say that people on forums have recommended women that are not part of the Internet trade, the most common way to make contact with prostitutes is through the Internet. In fact, each of the interviewed individuals found their prostitutes via the Internet although this is perhaps not surprising since the advertisement looking for participants for the study was published on the Internet on a forum advertising sexual services.

There are constantly around 120 foreign women posted on the Internet that work in the Stockholm area. Some are posted on the Web for two weeks, others for several years. Sometimes women announce that they are back again after having spent time elsewhere, and that they will be in Stockholm until a certain date. The advertisements contain information about the women accompanied by pictures of them. Often a mobile phone number is given, but the number is seldom answered, clients are instead asked to leave a message.

A clear difference can be seen between the Internet advertising of Swedish and foreign prostitutes. Some clients say that it is sometimes possible to tell from the advertisement if the woman is being trafficked. According to these clients, the likelihood is greater if the advertisement looks professional and includes advanced pictures. The advertisements are also sometimes written in the third person. Another indication is if the advert is written in poor English or it is stated which language the woman speaks. According to a report from the police, advertisements for foreign women are often designed in a specific manner in terms of layout (often there are many adverts of the same kind showing different women), and they are often on the Internet for only a short period of time. Swedish women are often quite openly advertised and show their faces, which is not the case with foreign prostitutes. This could be a sign that Swedish women are more independent when they prostitute themselves and do not necessarily need the support of a pimp.

7.7.4 Other Advertising Venues

According to the police, another way of making contact with prostitutes (primarily foreign ones) is through information found on small handwritten notes posted around the city. The sexual services are presented under the guise of massage or striptease. The police also described a brothel that they discovered in an apartment in a town just outside of Stockholm: “They were smart since they didn’t advertise on the Internet where the police could see it”. Instead, they advertised in the neighbourhood by word-of-mouth and they also had small advert slips, which were distributed via tobacconists and taxi drivers. They charged half the price of other brothels, which created long queues. The brothel was discovered when a fight broke out one evening in the queue, and the neighbours called the police because of the disturbance. There have also been other known cases where people have handed out flyers about prostitutes at hotels, bars and restaurants.

7.7.5 Restaurants and Bars

Restaurants and bars have also been known to facilitate trafficking. One way that this was done was described in the interviews. According to the purchaser, a “secret” number from the menu implies a prostitute service at some pizza restaurants. Another client describes another facilitator: “There are restaurants (in a neighbouring country to Sweden) where there are prostitutes. These women have to pay an extra fee in addition to the entrance charge, and because of this, the restaurants profit from the prostitutes. The prostitutes are foreign women”. The police provide a third example: “Then there was a Macedonian pizza baker who in addition to selling pizza also offered women to his customers and also to his friends in a big Yugoslavian mafia syndicate that had connections with organized crime in Russia”.

7.7.6 Taxi Drivers

As mentioned above, another promoter of trafficking can be taxi drivers. Many taxi drivers are involved in prostitution insofar as they tip off their customers about brothels and women. This applies to established taxi companies as well. The police give an example: “For instance we had a Russian taxi driver who promoted Russian speaking Estonian women. He drove them in his taxi, picked them up and dropped them off, and that was a good way to camouflage activities”. The taxi drivers earn money by doing this, receiving regular customers and large tips.

7.7.7 Apartments and Hotels

The prostitutes live in either apartments or hotels. This creates a market for letting flats which is a very profitable business. It is not unusual that a relatively small two-room flat is let for a monthly rent of about SEK 20,000–30,000. The flats are sometimes used only as a workplace and sometimes lived in.

Landlords do not always know that the flat is being let for prostitution. Sometimes they understand or ought to know this when the rents are unreasonably high. Usually though, it is a case of them not knowing and the reason for this is that it is common that second-hand tenants sublet to third-hand tenants.

The people who let flats are often Swedes although some brokers may also be involved in the business. According to the police, the market is gigantic and there is not much competition in Sweden. Letting flats to prostitutes is not, however, done without risk. Rental contracts are cancelled if landlords find out that the flat is being used for prostitution and the people who sublet flats are brought in for questioning when the police make a bust. It is often difficult to prove that they knew what was going on in the flat in spite of the fact that they often receive large sums of money every month.

Some women stay at hotels. Not all hotels have personnel on the job around the clock and for this reason prostitution can take place at times when there is no supervision. This is something that traffickers are aware of and so the choice of which hotel that is to be used is often a strategic one. The women often stay only a couple of days in a hotel room, whereas they can stay for a few weeks or up to a couple of months in a flat.

7.7.8 Sex Clubs and Strip Clubs

Other places where sex can be purchased that are often taken for granted are the strip clubs and sex clubs found in the big cities of Sweden. During an interview, a policeman said that they suspect that some strip clubs also function as brothels, but that everything is run so discreetly that they are not easily discovered and therefore they cannot even be certain that these activities go on. One interviewed sex buyer who had experience of strip clubs said that “you could choose a service called

“Jacuzzi”, and then you get to take a bath with the women and that costs about 7–8,000 Swedish kronor (around 800 euro)”. When asked if that includes sex he said: “of course you get sex, who would pay that kind of money and not get sex?”

7.8 Factors that Push Clients Not to Choose Trafficked Women: Network Factors that Impede Trafficking

7.8.1 Legislation and Police Surveillance

As already mentioned, Swedish legislation is probably the primary reason for there not being a larger number of trafficked women in Sweden. The laws that exist have a deterrent effect on the networks as well as the police having appointed resources for investigating and preventing these activities. This complicates the trade and forces traffickers to take precautionary measures to avoid being discovered. These measures include moving women from one hotel to another at regular intervals, involving middlemen to collect money, changing mobile phones often, etc. and may be so costly that the trade may become unprofitable for some traffickers.

7.9 Factors That Push Clients to Choose Trafficked Women: Environmental Factors

- The Internet
- Proximity to Eastern Europe
- Cultural aspects
- Price

7.9.1 The Internet

Over the last ten years, development in terms of mobile communication and the Internet as a massive channel for information has rapidly increased. This means that prostitutes and pimps and other facilitators in the prostitution industry have been provided with additional opportunities to market their services. *Sweden has the world’s highest penetration of Internet access (75%), the highest usage of mobile phones, and a very high level of Internet and computer skills among business managers* (Rane, 2005). This leads to a large number of people having potential access to advertisements and Web pages that offer prostitutes.

Street prostitution in Sweden is no longer very widespread, especially since the prohibition of buying sexual services went into effect. As street prostitution has declined, the Internet has come to play a greater role in Sweden than in other countries in terms of how contact with prostitutes is mediated. It is now the most natural,

easy and common way for potential buyers to make contact with prostitutes and most of the interviewees support this by saying that the Internet and mobile phones make buying sex easier.

A new report from the National Criminal Investigation Department (Rikskriminalpolisen, 2006) describes how contact with prostitutes over the Internet has changed lately. Clients can now buy a service from a woman outside Sweden, who will then come to Sweden to deliver the service. The client typically pays half of the agreed amount of money in advance and the rest when the service has been rendered. This might represent a growing luxury prostitution for wealthy clients. A well-known embezzlement case in Sweden had a background in luxury prostitution. In this case, the perpetrator met prostitutes from other countries in hotel rooms in Swedish cities.

There are several Websites that mediate escorts⁶ in Sweden. The level of organization differs from site to site. Advertisements on some of the Websites are simple, without any pictures or other information. The advertiser writes a couple of sentences and provides an email address or a telephone number. There are also sites that collect the personal Websites of prostitutes and then direct the buyer to the specific Website of each prostitute. These Websites are often rather advanced, and there is lot of information about the woman. It is even more common for the woman to publish an advertisement on a community forum for sexual services. In a report from Prostitutionsenheten (a unit working for the decrease of prostitution in Stockholm) in 2006, the following four ways are identified as marketing methods for prostitution on the Internet: flyers, forum contributions, selling advertisements and Web pages.

There are also sites that officially function as meeting places for men and women to meet a sex partner without any money being involved. According to buyers of sexual services, prostitutes often publish advertisements here, which require clients to read between the lines. Certain codes refer to certain services and indicate that the matter regards a purchase of sexual services. This is something that potential purchasers learn in time.

On the biggest community sites for prostitutes and sex buyers in Sweden, the *selling advert* is one part that works in a rather sophisticated manner, where the purchaser is given a lot of options and choices. On the link to escorts, the potential buyer first chooses country, and then city depending on locality or where the buyer would like to meet the woman. He can then click on pictures of prostitutes to access the advertisement. The advertisement contains information about the woman such as height, weight, age and nationality. There is also typically a text about the woman that appears to be written by the woman herself. This is, however, not always the case, especially for victims of trafficking, as various sources in our study have mentioned. The advertisement provides information about what the woman likes and what sexual services she provides, if she allows intercourses without a condom, etc. Information related to the cost for various services is also often provided.

⁶The women on the Internet choose not to present themselves as prostitutes, but rather seem to prefer the term escorts. The term is traditionally associated with a service related to a wealthy man engaging a woman to accompany him for example at dinners and on business trips as a partner. The term is used in a broader sense on the Internet, and includes women who purely offer sexual services.

In addition to this service, there is an ongoing chat that enables discussions between sex buyers. Prostitutes are also active on the forum and use it as a means to market themselves. As some of the prostitutes are rather active in discussions, the clients get to know the prostitutes before they meet them (at least to the extent that the prostitute chooses). Purchasers use the forum to discuss different women: what is good to know about them and whether other buyers have experience and information about other women. An example of a contribution in the forum is:

“Is there anyone who knows of any nice Thai girls that are slim, please let me know”.

Such comments about preferences are common as well as discussions on the women’s appearances. Some also write long reviews about the women and special trips, for example to Latvia, where they have gone for the specific purpose of meeting prostitutes.

New, potential and interested purchasers can also get tips through the forum. One client was worried about getting caught by the police and wondered how big the risk is of getting caught. The answer he received from one user of the forum was:

“It might reduce the risk if you use a mobile phone with a cash card and if you don’t use your own email address. You might also avoid contacting the most newly registered English-speaking girls on the secret adverts”.

Pimps use the forum to market their prostitutes. They publish professional advertisements to capture the interest of potential clients, and it is the most common method used by pimps and traffickers. Pimps are also active on the forum when looking for help from potential promoters. An example might be when looking for help in housing prostitutes. A request might look like this: *Hi! Would anyone like to rent a flat to a prostitute for 3–5 days in Stockholm? I’m very discreet and quiet, I don’t smoke or use alcohol. I can pay SEK 1,000 a day.* Profiteers can also publish this type of advertisement: *There is a flat for rent (in a large city in Sweden) for shorter or longer periods. Fully furnished.*

As illustrated, the possibilities offered on the Internet are extensive, and it therefore functions as a very important facilitator for trafficking.

7.9.2 Proximity to Eastern Europe

One factor that affects the trade is the proximity of Sweden to some of the most common countries of origin for trafficking such as Latvia, Estonia and Poland (The European Parliament, 2005); for example, there are ferry lines between Stockholm and Tallinn, which makes it easy and cheap to transport women. As these countries are new members of EU, border controls are also more relaxed. Control is now primarily focused on checking passports, and the previous right to routinely ask questions related to the purpose for travelling and amount of money for the stay has now disappeared (Rikskriminalpolisen, 2006). Sweden is also a wealthy country, which makes it attractive since the Baltic countries are poorer and benefit from the high prices in Sweden. These factors facilitate the trade of women to Sweden.

7.9.3 Cultural Aspects

According to the police, there are some cultural factors that make Sweden attractive for trafficking. From the perspective of prostitutes, Swedish men treat them nicely, never bargain and want services to be rendered quickly and discreetly. This makes it easier to influence women to begin working in Sweden. From the perspective of pimps, Sweden is also a rather unexploited market compared to Denmark and Norway.

7.9.4 Price

Because the trafficking market in Sweden is not very large, prices are a lot higher than in other countries. This serves as an incitement and makes Sweden attractive to traffickers. Traffickers know that they can earn a lot of money in a short period of time by letting their women work in Sweden and they can also obtain many clients by charging lower prices than those charged by local women as a means of competing. High prices and the lack of legal meeting places also lead to a market for profiteers, for example people who let out their flats and taxi drivers, which is also an incitement.

7.10 Factors that Push Clients Not to Choose Trafficked Women: Environmental Factors

- The Internet
- Negative attitudes towards prostitution and trafficking
- Equality between sexes
- Legislation and police surveillance
- Price

7.10.1 The Internet

The police say that advertisements on the Internet help them find clients and traffickers in their work: “The advertisements are the pimp’s and trafficker’s weak link; they have to present their women somewhere, and the Internet is the natural venue. Therefore the police are able to track them”. Part of the surveillance work includes calling prostitutes pretending to be purchasers to find out more information about the women. The Internet therefore functions both as a facilitator and as an obstacle in that it helps the police combat trafficking.

7.10.2 Negative Attitudes Towards Prostitution and Trafficking

General opinions about prostitution and trafficking can be a factor that impedes trafficking. As mentioned above, the media often depicts an image of slavery and of women forced into prostitution to earn money to support their drug addictions. This has a great impact on how prostitution and trafficking are viewed by the general public, which creates an environment in which it is not acceptable to buy, or speak about buying, sexual services. It is probable that this is the reason why a large number of men never consider buying these services.

7.10.3 Equality Between Sexes

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Sweden is a country where equality between sexes is regarded as being very important, which is also one of the reasons why the legislation concerning prostitution is quite restrictive. This way of thinking permeates a large part of society and contributes to the negative attitudes that exist towards prostitution.

7.10.4 Legislation and Police Surveillance

The police believe that legislation contributes a great deal to the fact that Sweden has relatively minor problems with trafficking. This type of business is rather difficult to establish and maintain in Sweden because buying sexual services in the country is illegal and because the police work rather extensively to combat trafficking. Many buyers think twice before they engage a prostitute, due to the fact that it is illegal and also because of the risk of getting caught.

Some of the clients perceived the risk of getting caught by the police to be low, and fear of getting caught was not something that deterred them from buying. However, the police can be considered an obstacle as buyers must be more cautious, and some clients said that the frequency with which they buy sex had decreased since the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services went into force. Interviews with police officers also indicate that many purchasers are on their guard, and have adopted a cautious attitude.

7.10.5 Price

The prohibition on buying sexual services in Sweden and intensive work by the police to combat trafficking is thought to have resulted in higher prices for purchasers.

As we have seen from our interviews, the buyers often have well-paid jobs, which is a result of this. It is probable that more men would buy sexual services if they were less expensive.

As previously mentioned, Swedish legislation presupposes a high level of organization for the business of trafficking because activities have to be carried out carefully. Being careful often involves great expenses for traffickers, for example they must periodically switch flats, mobile phones, cars and even the women themselves and since they are only able to rent flats for short periods of time, rent is also high. They must work to protect their activities in an advanced manner that is costly and this is therefore a factor that impedes the trade.

7.11 Policy Implications

The aim of this project has been to investigate the demand for trafficked prostitution and the factors that promote or constrain the business of trafficking. Interviewing buyers of sexual services was the primary method utilized. Other methods included a questionnaire, participatory observation, an Internet analysis and interviews with key informants at the police authorities.

Based on the interviews, the following conclusions can be drawn about the clients, their purchases and their relations to trafficked women:

- The typical buyer is well educated with good financial resources. The buyer can in general afford to purchase high-priced sexual services
- Some common explanations given for buying sex are that it is practical and easy, that it does not involve obligations, that it is exciting and that it is possible to receive special sexual services. Some also say that the reason is due to addiction
- Contact is almost exclusively made via the Internet although some get tips about other women who are not part of the Internet trade through the online forums
- A majority think that price is important and they prefer young women, although not under-aged girls. Many also think that being able to communicate with the prostitute is important
- All of the clients think that it is taboo to tell friends and relatives that they buy sexual services, regardless of whether the purchase is from a foreign or a Swedish prostitute. Even so, most of the clients do not think that it is immoral to purchase sexual services in any way, since they believe that the prostitutes work voluntarily
- A majority of the interviewed clients have had experiences with foreign prostitutes, but most of the clients believed that these women were independent prostitutes
- Most of the interviewed clients do not have an explicit preference for foreign prostitutes, but some of them have such a preference implicitly. One says that foreign women have an interesting cultural heritage and some think that it would be exciting to be with a Black woman or a woman from Thailand

- All of the clients say that they think trafficking is a terrible business and that they would never buy sexual services from a woman that they knew was a victim of trafficking
- Clients say that it is sometimes possible to tell from advertisements whether the woman in question is trafficked or not. In some cases, it is obvious that the woman hasn't written the advert herself. In other cases, the same layout is used in many adverts, which can also be a sign of an organized sex trade
- Most of the clients think that they would know if a woman was paying money to somebody else or if she was a victim of trafficking. Others say that you can never know. The interviewees have their own ways of knowing how women who are not independent act. If the woman they are with does not show signs that match this view, they judge that the woman is acting on her own

When considering how to reduce the demand for trafficking, it is important to consider what facilitates the trade and what obstacles exist to the trade and buyers. We can formulate strategies that focus on obstacles to buying sex from foreign prostitutes, as well as on preventive measures to impede the promoters who increase demand.

Based on the analysis that was made on the importance of the Internet, we can conclude that it has a huge impact on demand and that it facilitates the business of trafficking in sophisticated ways. There are plenty of Websites and communities that make it easy to sell, procure and buy sex. There are advanced advertisements with professional pictures and information about prices as well as what kind of services are offered. The chat rooms allow purchasers to share their experiences and recommend various women. The chat rooms are also used, for example, to let and search for flats for prostitution.

There are also structural factors that make Sweden attractive to traffickers. It is a wealthy country, and it is geographically close to some of the countries where the women involved originate; this makes transporting the women cheap and easy, which facilitates the trade. Also, some of the countries from which trafficked women come to Sweden are new members in the EU and so border controls have become more relaxed.

Participatory observation indicates that the police work extensively with trafficking surveillance. Efforts are focused on surveillance of foreign women and buyers. This is often done in connection with the meeting of a client with the prostitute, often at the apartment or hotel of the prostitute. The main target is not the purchaser but the purchaser is used to prove the crimes of procuring and trafficking. Placing microphones in apartments as a means to prove that a crime has been committed is illegal in Sweden. Instead, the police use camera surveillance and wiretapping. The police describe various promoters and profiteers in the trafficking business such as taxi drivers, although no specific surveillance is put on them.

In Sweden, the business of trafficking is rather hard to establish and maintain because the purchase of sexual services is illegal and because the police work hard to combat the problem. These factors are thought to lead to a lower supply of women and higher prices. Because of the obstacles faced by traffickers, a high level of organization and sophisticated working methods are required for traffickers to escape notice of the police, which is costly. Since the traffickers and profiteers take great risks, but

prostitutes do not (selling is not criminalized), they take a large amount of the money earned by the prostitutes. Customers must have quite a high income to afford prostitutes, at least if they want to purchase sexual services on a regular basis. Clients are also aware of police surveillance and the current legislation, which does not deter them from purchasing sexual services but often makes them more cautious.

7.11.1 Preventative Methods: How Can the Demand for Foreign/Trafficked Prostitution be Reduced?

The police state that Sweden has come a long way in preventing all types of prostitution by criminalizing the purchase of sexual services. They are of the opinion that the prohibition deters traffickers from establishing businesses in Sweden, and that it functions as a barrier against trafficking. As we have seen from the results, motivated purchasers buy sex anyway but take precautionary measures to avoid discovery by the police. For example, they use mobile phones with cash cards, do not utilize street prostitution and are careful about the location of the act.

Legislation that reduces demand is not the only way to prevent trafficking. A representative from the police says that another measure that could be taken by society is to inform the general population of the consequences of prostitution and trafficking for the women involved. It is also important to disseminate information about the connection between prostitution, trafficking and other organized crimes. Another representative from the police says that it is important to have a debate among men about buying sexual services from a woman: "It's an issue of equality between the sexes, and it's a man's problem. It requires a discussion that has to be held by men. As long as they don't see the connection between serious organized crime and the purchase of sex, then they might even see themselves as helping the women".

7.11.2 Purchasers

Purchasers fuel the demand for trafficked prostitution, and if this demand can be reduced, trafficking will be reduced. As we have seen from the results, buyers have little knowledge about trafficking. Many believe that they can identify victims of trafficking, and can choose women who are working independently without a pimp or organization. Other sources say that this is in fact very difficult to do, and that it is not always as obvious as the purchasers claim. This may have to do with the fact that they sometimes have a narrow view of what constitutes trafficking or are not as aware of the signs of trafficking as they think.

It is important to raise awareness of the fact that foreign women often have pimps, and that they are used and exploited and that buying sexual services from prostitutes, especially foreign ones, may mean that the purchasers also contribute,

promote and give legitimacy to other types of criminality involving drugs and weapons as well as trafficking. Different types of campaigns and debates may be able to raise awareness of these circumstances.

The results of a study referred to earlier (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson, 2003) indicate that the older a person is when buying sex for the first time, the less likely he is to continue doing so. From a preventive approach, the study indicates that if the findings were replicated with a larger and more representative sample of clients, the results would suggest the fruitfulness of concentrating educational efforts and preventive work on teenage boys. Many of the clients interviewed in our study began purchasing sex at a young age.

When the police interrogate sex purchasers, many say that they want help, that they are sex abusers and feel bad about buying sex. In these cases, the police are not allowed to refer clients to care institutions and many of the clients relapse into buying sex. If steps could be taken to ensure that these clients get help right away, perhaps a number of relapses could be prevented, which is necessary in order to reduce the purchasing of sexual services from both trafficked and non-trafficked women. While it is true that many sex purchasers have high salaries and can afford to buy sex, some purchasers have large debts too. It sometimes happens that the indebted sex purchasers, who are often sex abusers, are allowed to "help out" in the business and act as pimps, transport money or other things and receive either sex or money as payment. This is something that could also be prevented if purchasers could be referred to care institutions and would also prevent indebted purchasers from additionally fuelling the trade.

7.11.3 *Traffickers*

Preventive measures against trafficking in general will make it more difficult for traffickers and pimps to establish their organizations in Sweden, making it more expensive for them to run their businesses. Traffickers are, of course, dependent on buyers, but they are also dependent on various kinds of promoters. If strategies to raise awareness among these groups are successful, this will probably be the most effective way of impeding the trade. As in other types of organized crime, it is also important to focus efforts on brokers who have many contacts and information that are crucial to the criminal network (Brå, 2005).

7.11.4 *Promoters and Profiteers*

The traffickers need help from various actors to make the business work. The results of the study show that promoters, for example taxi drivers or people who rent out their apartments, often work in legal businesses. These are people who facilitate the trade and benefit financially by doing so. Different preventive measures can be made in this area to raise awareness of trafficking in taxi companies, organizations that let out apartments, sex clubs and other possible actors. Providers of Internet space for prostitute

advertisements need also be targeted as the Internet is a huge facilitator and because marketing can be seen as procurement. Other actors could be personnel at hotels. As we have seen from different sources, hotel rooms are a common venue for the sexual act. Even if hotel staff do not deliberately facilitate trafficking, knowledge is important to raise awareness of possible signs of trafficking. The same applies to property owners and ordinary people living in buildings where prostitution may take place.

One suggestion is to encourage and make it easier for people to report suspected cases of trafficking to the police. If awareness of trafficking and the importance of reporting suspected cases is increased, it will become harder for traffickers to establish businesses. Another measure that could be taken by the police is to place surveillance on relevant promoters, like taxi drivers or sex club owners, something which is not done at present.

7.11.5 The Women

Considering the vulnerable position in which trafficked women are placed, one preventative measure that could be taken is enabling the police to offer prostitutes effective police protection and permanent residence permits if they agree to provide evidence or testify in court cases concerning trafficking. According to one of the interviews conducted with the police, Sweden is very poor at providing victims of trafficking with protection at the present time.

Some attempts have been made to increase the awareness of trafficking in Sweden (Fig. 7.1). During the European Athletic Championships which took place in the summer of 2006, “Samverkan mot trafficking”⁷ carried out a campaign

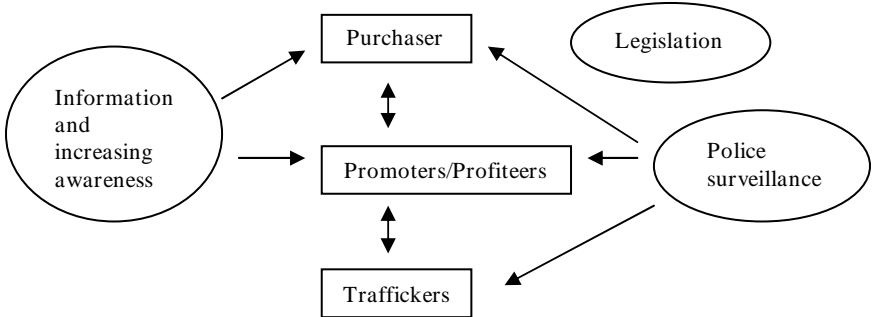


Fig. 7.1 Analytical model for preventive measures to reduce demand. Examples of strategies that have been used to raise awareness of trafficking in Sweden

⁷“Samverkan mot trafficking” (cooperation against trafficking) is a EU sponsored network consisting of various organizations working against trafficking (www.trafficking.nu).

against trafficking. In an interview, the person responsible for the campaign stated that the aim of the project was to increase awareness and propensity of people to report suspected cases of trafficking as well as investigating what kind of measures should be taken to prevent trafficking. Flyers were handed out to visitors with information about trafficking as well as a telephone number to the police officers working against trafficking. Most of the people working at the event were volunteers.

The theme of the campaign was: “Sports events – yes, Trafficking – no”. This slogan was printed on the T-shirt of every volunteer. The slogan was also shown in the sports arena on a big screen. As a complement to the flyer, another card was handed out where visitors could read how it is possible to discover suspected cases of trafficking, for example if an older man checks into a hotel with a younger woman. The flyers were also available at hotels and in taxis and from the ferry company Stena Line.

Another example of a campaign that aimed to raise awareness was an exhibition on trafficking in Gothenburg. The aim of the project was formulated as “With the exhibition Trafficking, the museum of world culture wishes to raise public awareness of human trafficking, to make people realize that it is going on among us, here and now, and that we by our actions can make a difference”. The Exhibition was part of the activities within “Samverkan mot trafficking”.

7.11.6 Example of Police Efforts Implemented to Combat Trafficking

The police have specific units in Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö that focus on trafficking. According to the observation study performed in this project, the police have allocated extensive resources to combat trafficking.

One team working in one of the biggest cities of Sweden is a surveillance team that collects large amounts of information on the trafficking situation in the city, mapping relationships and connections between different actors. The police group is divided into three subdivisions (Central Surveillance Division, County Group and City Group) that conduct continuous surveillance in two shifts. This means that surveillance is underway every day of the week from morning to midnight. There are six detectives and one group leader in each surveillance group out at the same time during the shift. Sometimes they split up to cover different areas during the shift, and sometimes they work together to investigate the same target.

During a typical shift, they gather evidence by driving around the city to different brothels, hotels and apartments being used for sexual services, following money transactions that take place between the prostitutes, couriers and pimps, making notes of registration numbers on cars, etc. and documenting contacts between the women, middlemen and the pimps, which often occurs at the time of payment.

The police use different methods of surveillance. Common methods include renting rooms across from where trafficked prostitution is taking place, using cameras and wiretapping telephones.

There are also investigators that are attached to the reconnaissance groups who, unlike the detectives, work indoors. For example, one person has the task of pretending to be a potential client. He gathers information from the Internet and other sources in order to contact the women and direct the detectives to addresses where suspected cases of trafficking take place.

The police also cooperate with other countries; an investigation that is initiated in Sweden may continue to another country when prostitutes or pimps leave Sweden.

Part III
Perspectives on the Clients Through
an Internet Survey

Chapter 8

An Internet Survey to Understand Clients

Marco Lombardi and Chiara Fonio

8.1 Introduction

Besides the interviews with clients, police forces and prostitutes, the research fore-saw an internet survey to collect further details on/by clients. For this purpose, a Web questionnaire was created and put online from 1 November 2006 to 7 May 2007. It was available on the ISMU site¹ in five languages (Dutch, English, Italian, Romanian and Swedish) and it was “advertised” by banners on specific forums in each of the four countries of the study.² It should be noted that in Italy the survey was both posted on a forum³ by the administrator and posted by one of the team’s researchers.⁴ Moreover, in one specific case, while criticizing the questionnaire, one administrator mentioned it on his Website.⁵

8.2 Structure of the Questionnaire⁶

This tool was developed from examination of the extant literature and by employ-ing both the proxy indicators and the push factors described above (Chap. 3). The purpose of this instrument was to improve knowledge about clients in regard both their characteristics and the push factors inducing them to use trafficked prostitutes. It was decided to target the advertisement for the questionnaire on the forums stud-ied, the purpose being to collect data from the group of clients already studied. In

¹<http://www.ismu.org>.

²In particular, in Italy: <http://questionemaschile.forumfree.net/>; in Sweden: <http://www.secretary-academy.net/>; in the Netherlands: <http://hookers.nl/default.php>; in Romania: <http://www.fetite.net/> and <http://www.escort-romania.ro>.

³<http://www.forumfree.net/?f=123384>.

⁴<http://www.escortforum.com>.

⁵<http://www.forumfree.net/?f=123384>.

⁶This section was written by Andrea Cauduro.

addition, the questionnaire was also proposed to the Webmasters of the Internet escort services and other adult Websites, but they generally refused, fearing an undercover operation by police.

The questionnaire was divided into a general part and two (alternative) special parts. The purpose of the first part was to profile the client, while the second part examined the role of the push factors in the choice (or non-choice) of foreign prostitutes. The sections of the questionnaire are now explained.

8.2.1 General Part

The first questions put to clients had two main purposes: collect information on their features and divide them between potential and non-potential clients of trafficked prostitutes. In order to structure the instrument better, this part was divided into four subsections, as described below:

General information: questions 1–7 collected preliminary data on the client and sought to identify recurrent features (e.g. the presence of a wife/partner, similar level of education, etc.). Table 8.1 illustrates questions nos. 1–7 in detail.

Table 8.1 Internet questionnaire: General part questions nos. 1–7

Question	Value
1. Have you ever paid for sex?	Yes No
2. How old are you?	Years
3. What is your nationality?	(list opens)
4. Please indicate your marital status	Married Unmarried Divorced Actually divorced Widower Living together
5. Do you have children?	Number
6. What do you do for a living?	Student Unoccupied Retired Apprentice Worker Employee Manager Businessman
7. What is your education?	Professional No education Primary school Secondary/high school University or higher

Frequency of contacts with foreign prostitutes: question no. 8 was based on the consideration that the market for trafficked sex is almost entirely made up of foreign

prostitutes. For this reason, a client who did not have (or very rarely had) sex with foreign women was considered a non-client of trafficked prostitution and directed to the appropriate special part (i.e. for clients of local prostitutes) in order to investigate the reasons for his choice. Table 8.2 illustrates question no. 8 in detail.

Probability of having had sex with trafficked prostitutes: questions 9–11. Although the trafficked sex market is made up of non-nationals, the sole fact of meeting a foreign prostitute was not considered to be a sufficient marker of a high probability of having had sex with trafficking victim. For this reason, other indicators were used to assess the probability of sex with trafficking victims. In other words, the label “client of trafficked prostitutes” was the combination of four elements: rendezvous with *foreign prostitutes* with *scarce knowledge of the local language*, showing *signs of violence* and charging *lower prices* than local prostitutes. A specific “weight” was assigned to each variable, and if the result from the questions on language, violence and price exceeded 50%, the client was considered to have a *medium/high* probability of having had sex with trafficked prostitutes. By contrast, if the result was 50% or lower, the client was considered to have a *medium/low* probability of having entered into contact with this side of the market. As can be seen below (Table 8.3), a greater “weight” was given to the variable “price”. This distinction was made in light of the finding in the literature and the analysis of the Internet forums that foreign prostitutes are generally cheaper than locals.⁷

Sexual activities with foreign prostitutes: questions 12–16. The last portion of the general part collected further details on the clients of foreign prostitutes: frequency of intercourse, recurrent place of rendezvous, mode of contact, use of condoms and sexual services requested. Table 8.4 illustrates questions nos. 12–16 in detail.

8.2.2 Special Parts

The second part of the questionnaire focused on factors inducing/not inducing clients to choose foreign prostitutes. According to the replies given to questions 9–11, two alternative special parts were designed.

Table 8.2 Internet questionnaire: General part question no. 8

Question	Value
8. Out of 4 prostitutes with whom you have had sex, how many were foreigners?	4 out of 4 (100%)
	3 out of 4 (75%)
	2 out of 4 (50%)
	1 out of 4 (25%)
	0 out of 4 (0%)

⁷ See e.g. Brooks-Gordon, 2006: 94–134; Campbell, 1998; Savona, Decarli and Di Nicola, 2002: 184–192.

Table 8.3 Index of probability for a client of having entered into contact with a victim of trafficking

Indicators/Questions	Modalities	Values assigned to modalities	Total value of the indicator
9. What was the level of knowledge of your language among these foreign prostitutes?	None	25	25
	Little	18.75	
	Good	12.5	
	Very good	6.25	
	Excellent	0	
10. Have you ever perceived that these foreign prostitutes have been mistreated (bruises, scared, depressed)?	Always	25	25
	Often	18.75	
	Half the cases	12.5	
	Seldom	6.25	
	Never	0	
11. Compared to local prostitutes the prices of these foreign prostitutes were?	Much lower	50	50
	Lower	37.5	
	The same	25	
	Higher	12.5	
	Much higher	0	

Table 8.4 Internet questionnaire: General part questions nos. 12–16

Question	Value	
12. What is the frequency of your sexual intercourse with foreign prostitutes?	Less than once every 6 months	
	Once every 2 months	
	Once every month	
	Once a week	
	More than once a week	
13. Where did sex mainly take place with these foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers: indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice</i>	Apartment	Apartment
	Brothel	Brothel
	Hotel/motel	Hotel/motel
	Night club/club privé	Night club/club privé
	Pub/disco	Pub/disco
	Sauna/massage parlour	Sauna/massage parlour
14. How did you get in contact with these foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers: indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice</i>	Street (car, truck, parks, etc.)	Street (car, truck, parks, etc.)
	The Internet	The Internet
	Taxi drivers	Taxi drivers
	Personnel of licensed premises (hotels, restaurants, bars, etc.)	Personnel of licensed premises (hotels, restaurants, bars, etc.)
	Brothels	Brothels
15. Did you use condoms with these foreign prostitutes?	Friends	Friends
	Personal contact with prostitutes	Personal contact with prostitutes
	Yes	
	No	
	Sometimes	
16. Which kind of sex acts did you mainly request from these foreign prostitutes?	Vaginal sex	
	Anal sex	
	Oral sex	
	Erotic massage	

The first one (questions 17A–19A) was directed at men who did not (or very rarely) had sex with foreign prostitutes. It examined individual, network and/or environmental factors that affected clients’ choices. Table 8.5 illustrates questions nos. 17A–19A in detail.

The second special part (questions 17B–21B) was instead directed at clients who had sex with foreign prostitutes and consequently were more likely to have hired trafficked women. In this case too, the aim was to determine individual, network and/or environmental factors inducing the respondents to choose this segment of the market. Table 8.6 illustrates questions nos. 17B–21B in detail.

Table 8.5 Internet questionnaire: Special part questions nos. 17A–19A

Question	Value	
Individual factors	I am afraid of sexual diseases	I am afraid of sexual diseases
17A. Which of these factors push you <i>not</i> to choose foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers</i> : indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice	I do not like foreign prostitutes	I do not like foreign prostitutes
	Foreign prostitutes do not speak my language	Foreign prostitutes do not speak my language
	Foreign prostitutes work in unattractive or dangerous places	Foreign prostitutes work in unattractive or dangerous places
	Foreign prostitutes are more exploited than national ones	Foreign prostitutes are more exploited than national ones
	Foreign prostitutes do not offer the services I like	Foreign prostitutes do not offer the services I like
	Other: _____	I like Other: _____
	I perceive criminals behind foreign prostitutes	I perceive criminals behind foreign prostitutes
Network factors		
18A. Which of these factors push you <i>not</i> to choose foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers</i> : indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice	Blame by friends and acquaintances	Blame by friends and acquaintances
	This form of prostitution is little advertised	This form of prostitution is little advertised
	This form of prostitution is little visible	This form of prostitution is little visible
	Other: _____	Other: _____
Environmental factors		
19A. Which of these factors push you <i>not</i> to choose foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers</i> : indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice	National policy on prostitution	National policy on prostitution
	Police control	Police control
	Religion	Religion
	Media	Media
	Social/cultural influence	Social/cultural influence
	Other: _____	Other: _____

Table 8.6 Internet questionnaire: Special part questions nos. 17B–21B

Question	Value	
17B. Which of these factors push you to choose foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers:</i> indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice	Foreign prostitutes are cheaper Foreign prostitutes are more accommodating I like trying something daring Foreign prostitutes perform better I prefer the features of foreign prostitutes Foreign prostitutes do not speak my language Foreign prostitutes make me feel more comfortable Other: _____	Foreign prostitutes are cheaper Foreign prostitutes are more accommodating I like trying something daring Foreign prostitutes perform better I prefer the features of foreign prostitutes Foreign prostitutes do not speak my language Foreign prostitutes make me feel more comfortable Other: _____
18B. Which of these factors push you to choose foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers:</i> indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice	Friends' experiences with foreign prostitutes Foreign prostitutes are more numerous than local ones This form of prostitution is well advertised This form of prostitution is very visible Other: _____	Friends' experiences with foreign prostitutes Foreign prostitutes are more numerous than local ones This form of prostitution is well advertised This form of prostitution is very visible Other: _____
19B. Which of these factors push you to choose foreign prostitutes? <i>maximum 2 answers:</i> indicate in the first column your best choice, and, in case, in the second column your second best choice	National policy on prostitution Low/absent police control Media Social/cultural influence Other: _____	National policy on prostitution Low/absent police control Media Social/cultural influence Other: _____
20B. Would it be possible (only for research purposes) to have a further, <i>fully anonymous</i> , interview by phone?	Yes No	
21B. If yes, please give a contact phone number	Number	

8.3 The Results

According to the answers provided by clients, it was possible to assess:

- The frequency with which a person chose foreign prostitution
- If a person chose foreign prostitution, the likelihood of him of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking

We finally ended up with different categories of clients, as Box 8.1 below synthesizes.

Box 8.1 Categories of clients of foreign prostitutes and probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Clients who do not choose foreign prostitution (<i>Qst.: Out of 4 prostitutes with whom you had sex, how many were foreigners? Answ.: None</i>)</p> | |
| <p>2. Clients who choose foreign prostitution rarely (<i>Qst.: Out of 4 prostitutes with whom you had sex, how many were foreigners? Answ.: 1 out of 4</i>)</p> | <p>2A. with a low/medium probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking</p> <p>2B. with a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking</p> |
| <p>3. Clients who choose foreign prostitution often (<i>Qst.: Out of 4 prostitutes with whom you had sex, how many were foreigners? Answ.: 2 out of 4</i>)</p> | <p>3A. with a low/medium probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking</p> <p>3B. with a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking</p> |
| <p>4. Clients who choose foreign prostitution very often or always (<i>Qst.: Out of 4 prostitutes with whom you had sex, how many were foreigners? Answ.: all/3 out of 4</i>)</p> | <p>4A. with a low/medium probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking</p> <p>4B. with a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking</p> |

Replies to questions 9, 10 and 11 were used to distinguish (a) clients with a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking, and (b) clients with a medium/low probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking according to Table 8.3.

It should be noted that the people who left because they have never been clients of prostitutes were browsing Websites focused on the issue of both street and apartment prostitution. The latter result is certainly singular, even though we could not label these people as “diffident clients” unwilling to disclose their attitudes. Finally, among the people who filled in the entire questionnaire, only 11.4% of the respondents (35 out of 726 people) agreed to be further interviewed anonymously by phone. For a synthesis of the global figures of the questionnaire, see Table 8.7.

In statistical terms, the findings are not representative of each country, since 77.5% of the respondents were Swedish. Due to this reason, we cannot develop a comparative analysis among different countries and we should emphasize that the overall results are driven by the Swedish answers. As mentioned above, the questionnaires were in the four native languages of the countries involved in the project: Italian, Dutch, Romanian and Swedish. To have a common international idiom, an

Table 8.7 The results of the questionnaire

People who hit the questionnaire	1,395		
		→	People who left because they declared “never to have been a client of prostitution”
			455
People asked to fill in the questionnaire	940		
		→	People who left (missing)
			214
People who filled in the questionnaire	726		

Table 8.8 Nationality of clients (area) (missing 15; 2.1%)

Nationality	a.v. ⁸	%
Sweden	551	77.5
Finland	51	7.2
Italy	37	5.2
Europe (other/not only EU)	33	4.6
Asia (ME incl.)	22	3.1
Americas	9	1.3
Africa	4	0.6
The Netherlands	2	0.3
Romania	2	0.3
Total	711	100.0

Table 8.9 Language used by clients to fill in the questionnaire

Language	a.v.	%
Swedish	611	84.2
English	68	9.4
Italian	35	4.8
Dutch	9	1.2
Romanian	3	0.4
Total	726	100.0

English version of the survey was prepared. English was in fact used by 9.4% of the respondents who were not included in the previously mentioned nationalities (such as Finnish and Asian). However, most of the respondents (84.2%) used Swedish followed by English (9.4%), Italian (4.8%) and Dutch (1.2%). Nationality and language of the respondents are summarized in Tables 8.8 and 8.9.

As previously mentioned, we aimed to assess both the *frequency* with which a person chose foreign prostitution and when a person chose foreign prostitution, the *probability* of him of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking.

⁸ Absolute value.

The first result suggests that the large majority of clients chose foreign prostitutes. In fact, 63.7% of them met at least 3 foreign prostitutes out of 4, while only 10.6% did not prefer foreigners as Table 8.10 illustrates.

As pointed out in Sect. 8.1 above, the sole fact of using *foreign* prostitutes does automatically not mean using a *victim of trafficking*. For this reason, other three variables (knowledge of local language, price, signs of violence) were crossed, in order to create an index of probability of having entered in contact with *foreign* and *trafficked* prostitutes.

According to this index, 73.6% of clients who used foreign prostitutes had a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking, as Table 8.11 indicates.

In particular, the data indicate that 44.6% of all clients of prostitution who filled in the questionnaire use to meet *very often/always* foreign prostitutes and have a *medium/high* probability of entering into contact with victims of trafficking, as Table 8.12 illustrates.

Table 8.10 Number of foreign prostitutes usually met out of 4

Number of foreign prostitutes	a.v.	%
4 out of 4	261	36.0
3 out of 4	201	27.7
2 out of 4	136	18.7
1 out of 4	51	7.0
None	77	10.6
Total	726	100.0

Table 8.11 Index of probability for a client of having entered into contact with a victim of trafficking (missing 294; 40.5%)

Probability	a.v.	%
Medium/high	318	73.6
Medium/low	114	26.4
Total	432	100.0

Table 8.12 Different categories of clients by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking (missing 217; 29.9%)

Clients			
Frequency	Probability	a.v.	%
Very often/always	Medium/high	227	44.6
Very often/always	Medium/low	77	15.1
Often	Medium/high	70	13.8
Often	Medium/low	26	5.1
Rarely	Medium/high	21	4.1
Rarely	Medium/low	11	2.2
Never	Not applicable	77	15.1
Total		509	100.0

As mentioned earlier, knowledge of the client's language, perception of abuses and prices of foreign prostitutes compared to local ones are the most important indicators here. If we consider these elements separately, we notice that 56.5% of the respondents declared that the foreign prostitutes they used either did not speak or spoke only a little of their language, 44.0% spotted signs of mistreatment and 67.2% respondents said that foreign prostitutes were much cheaper or cheaper in comparison to local ones. We would thus argue that clients seem to be conscious of single factors but they miss the "whole picture". To put it simply, they do not have a holistic approach rather they seem likely to have a very reductive view of the issue of trafficking. While all factors are relevant to the problem of trafficking, the respondents are either *not willing* to gain deeper knowledge or they *just failed* to comprehend the issue as a whole. Table 8.13 synthesizes the variables "knowledge of the local language", "signs of mistreatment" and "price".

8.3.1 Clients' Personal Data

The data illustrated in Table 8.14 indicate that 59.9% of the clients are between 30 and 49 years old and half of them are not married. If we compare these data with the typology of punters, we notice that the age of those who often and very often use foreign prostitutes with a high probability of trafficking raises by nearly 10–15 years (over 50). In addition, 59% of the respondents do not have children.

As far as the occupation is concerned, the employment activities are quite diversified: from employees (31.0%) to workers (17.1%) and managers (15.5%). The level of education illustrates that 48.8% of the clients hold a university (or higher) degree, as Table 8.15 indicates.

An analysis of marital status is not very significant for the typology of clients. As a matter of fact, if we do not take account of widowers who are only 1.1% of

Table 8.13 Knowledge of local language among foreign prostitutes, perception that foreign prostitutes have been mistreated, prices of foreign prostitutes compared to local ones (missing 294; 40.5%)

Language	a.v.		Perception of mistreatment		a.v.		Prices	a.v.	
	a.v.	%	a.v.	%	a.v.	%			
None	92	21.3	Never	108	25.0	Much lower	113	26.2	
Little	152	35.2	Seldom	134	31.0	Lower	177	41.0	
Good	130	30.1	Half the cases	94	21.8	The same	112	25.9	
Very good	54	12.5	Often	73	16.9	Higher	29	6.7	
Excellent	4	0.9	Always	23	5.3	Much higher	1	0.2	
Total	432	100.0	Total	432	100.0	Total	432	100.0	

Table 8.14 Age and marital status of clients

Age (missing 16; 2.2%)			Marital status (missing 12; 1.7%)		
	a.v.	%		a.v.	%
Up to 19	8	1.1	Unmarried	354	49.6
20–29	141	19.9	Married	172	24.1
30–39	252	35.5	Living together	88	12.3
40–49	173	24.4	Divorced	57	8.0
50–59	95	13.4	Separated	35	4.9
60–69	33	4.6	Widower	8	1.1
Over 70	8	1.1			
Total	710	100.0	Total	714	100.0

Table 8.15 Occupation and education of clients

Table: Occupation (missing 12; 1.7%)			Table: Education (missing 11; 1.5%)		
	a.v.	%		a.v.	%
Employee	221	31.0	University or higher	349	48.8
Worker	122	17.1	Secondary/high school	276	38.6
Manager	111	15.5	Primary school	68	9.5
Businessman	69	9.7	No education	22	3.1
Professional	53	7.4			
Student	47	6.6			
Retired	45	6.3			
Unemployed	40	5.6			
Apprentice	6	0.8			
Total	714	100.0	Total	715	100.0

the total, the other statuses vary from 42% to 52% among clients who *often* or *very often/always* use foreign prostitutes. The unmarried, who correspond to the lowest value in this category (42%), represents a slight difference. We might therefore conclude that the choice of foreign prostitutes is transversal to all the statuses. Similar conclusions can be drawn by correlating occupation and the choice of foreign prostitution: employment does not play a major role in the choice, with the exception of workers. The latter are in fact reluctant to choose foreigners and nearly 90% state they do not look for this kind of prostitution.

By contrast, the same correlation analysis shows us a value of Cramer’s V equal to 0.28 demonstrating a good correlation between education and our typology. In other words, the higher the level of education the greater the probability for them having met trafficked prostitutes, since 57.1% of clients with a university degree or higher had a *medium/high* probability of entering into contact with victims of trafficking when meeting foreign prostitutes (Table 8.16).

Table 8.16 Different education of clients by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability		No education	Primary school	Secondary/High school	University or higher	Total
Never	Not applicable	a.v.	12	6	21	31	70
		%	66.7	12.8	11.2	12.7	14.1
Rarely	Medium/low	a.v.	1	3	3	4	11
		%	5.6	6.4	1.6	1.6	2.2
Rarely	Medium/high	a.v.	1	8	5	7	21
		%	5.6	17.0	2.7	2.9	4.2
Often	Medium/low	a.v.	0	5	16	5	26
		%	0.0	10.6	8.5	2.0	5.2
Often	Medium/high	a.v.	2	12	36	16	66
		%	11.1	25.5	19.1	6.5	13.3
Very often/ always	Medium/low	a.v.	0	3	32	42	77
		%	0.0	6.4	17.0	17.1	15.5
Very often/ always	Medium/high	a.v.	2	10	75	140	227
		%	11.1	21.3	39.9	57.1	45.6
	Total	a.v.	18	47	188	245	498
		%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

8.3.2 Sexual Activities with Foreign Prostitutes

Before analysing the sexual activities of clients, it should be mentioned that we are concerned here with the respondents who at least *sometimes* met foreign prostitutes. In detail, Table 8.17 shows the distribution of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes among clients who at least once every six months purchased sexual services from foreigners.

As for the location, “indoor prostitution” in apartments, brothels, motels, club privé and saunas is more common than “outdoor” which is very rare (0.3%), as Table 8.18 indicates. There is a blurred difference between brothels and apartments, since the latter are private houses that operate as de facto brothels. In this regard, it shall be noted that 45.4% of clients who *very often/always* meet foreign prostitutes have a medium/high probability of entering into contact with victims of trafficking, as Table 8.19 summarizes. We believe that these attitudes are linked to the national policies on trafficking. In fact, as we have seen before, the large majority of the respondents come from Sweden, where the national policy on prostitution draws on a restrictive law (see Chap. 7). In detail, the 1999 legislation stated that purchasing sexual services constitutes a criminal offence punishable by fines or imprisonment. It is thus not surprising that there has been a significant shift: from outdoor to indoor prostitution and the law is likely to have had an impact on the preference of clients for “indoor” sexual meetings.

The main type of contact with foreign prostitutes is via “personal relationships”, either personal contacts (27.7%) or taxi drivers (21.4%), as Table 8.20 underlines.

Table 8.17 Frequency of sexual intercourses with foreign prostitutes

Frequency	a.v.	%
Once in 2 months	180	41.7
Once a month	146	33.8
Once a week	56	13.0
Less than once every 6 months	39	9.0
More than once a week	11	2.5
Total	432	100.0

Table 8.18 Location for sex with foreign prostitutes: multiple answers

Location	a.v.	%
Apartment	175	27.0
Brothel	154	23.7
Hotel/motel	139	21.4
Sauna/massage	129	19.9
Night club/privé	93	14.3
Pub/disco	40	6.2
Street/car/truck	2	0.3

Table 8.19 Different location for sex by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	% Apartment	% Brothel	% Hotel/motel	% Night club/privé	% Pub/disco	% Sauna/massage	% Street/car/truck
Very often/always	Medium/high	45.4	32.6	28.6	23.3	11.0	28.2	0.0
Very often/always	Medium/low	32.5	37.7	36.4	23.4	7.8	29.9	1.3
Often	Medium/high	38.6	38.6	34.3	15.7	8.6	35.7	0.0
Often	Medium/low	30.8	42.3	38.5	23.1	0.0	34.6	0.0
Rarely	Medium/high	33.3	42.9	33.3	19.0	9.5	33.3	0.0
Rarely	Medium/low	45.5	36.4	45.5	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1

In fact, along with the Internet, taxi drivers may be considered as “filters”, especially when clients go abroad. During the analysis of Websites focused on prostitutions, we noticed that clients active on the Web use specific forums (such as the well-known World Sex Guide) to obtain information about street workers and escorts in foreign countries. It would seem that, once in a foreign country, the clients contact taxi drivers to find prostitutes.

The general data exposed above in Table 8.20 seem to be confirmed also when disaggregating it according to the *frequency* and *probability* of using foreigners who have undergone trafficking dynamics as Table 8.21 stresses. In fact, the personal

Table 8.20 Type of contact with foreign prostitutes: all answers

Type of contact	a.v.	%
Personal contact	180	27.7
Taxi drivers	139	21.4
The Internet	126	19.4
Personnel of hotels/bars/restaurants	103	15.9
Brothels	81	12.5
Friends	71	10.9

Table 8.21 Different type of contact by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	% The Internet	% Taxi drivers	% Personnel of hotels/bars/restaurants	% Brothels	% Friends	% Personal contact
Very often/always	Medium/high	27.3	33.9	22.0	19.8	16.7	38.3
Very often/always	Medium/low	33.8	26.0	28.6	18.2	15.6	48.1
Often	Medium/high	28.6	34.3	21.4	15.7	20.0	47.1
Often	Medium/low	34.6	38.5	26.9	15.4	15.4	38.5
Rarely	Medium/high	23.8	33.3	28.6	28.6	9.5	42.9
Rarely	Medium/low	36.4	9.1	27.3	9.1	9.1	36.4

contact and the role of taxi drivers is pre-eminent in all categories and underlines how the direct client–prostitute relationship is fundamental in the choice of commercial sex.

The use of condoms is another significant indicator of the behaviour of clients: only 45% of the respondents regularly used condoms (195 people). Moreover, the use of this device during sexual intercourses varies according to the probability of entering into contact with a victim of trafficking. In particular, clients with a medium/low probability of having met trafficked prostitutes use condoms in *at least half of the cases*; in contrast, those with a medium/high probability use them *less than half of the times*. The correlation with the typology does not show any links with the type of sexual service. Table 8.22 summarizes these findings.

Confirming the most recent literature,⁹ 43.1% of the men who answered the questionnaire stressed their preference for “straight” sex, followed by anal and oral sex, as shown in Table 8.23.

⁹E.g. Campbell, 1998; Bouamama, 2004; Monto, 1999; Månsson and Proveyer Cervantes, 2005.

Table 8.22 Different use of condom by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	Use of condom with foreign prostitutes %
Very often/always	Medium/high	45.4
Very often/always	Medium/low	55.8
Often	Medium/high	32.9
Often	Medium/low	50.0
Rarely	Medium/high	33.3
Rarely	Medium/low	54.5

Table 8.23 Type of sexual performances with foreign prostitutes

Type of sexual performances	a.v.	%
Vaginal	186	43.1
Anal	118	27.3
Oral	90	20.8
Erotic Massage	38	8.8
Total	432	100.0

8.3.3 Individual, Environmental and Network Factors That Push Not to Choose Foreign Prostitution

The next group of variables concerns clients who either never or rarely choose foreign prostitutes. The number of expected responses, thus, is a maximum of 109 cases.

In reference to the individual push factors, we can identify two different dimensions: the *relational* aspect and what we can consider as a *functional* reason. While relational issues are embedded both in language barriers (“foreign prostitutes don’t speak my language”) and in personal evaluations (“foreign prostitutes are more exploited”), functional reasons are connected to more practical motivations (e.g. “sex diseases”). The data illustrate a relational approach to the issue of foreign prostitution: about 50% of the clients, in fact, declared that they did not choose this kind of prostitution precisely because of language difficulties and ethical reasons.

The previously stated dimensions also seem to be helpful in analysing both network and environmental push factors. If we consider the network ones, for instance, the relational aspect is exemplified in the blaming of the social network and the functional is epitomized in potential risks, such as the presence of a criminal organization. In addition, the data suggest that functional reasons play a crucial role in orienting the choices of clients. In this regard, 41.4% of the respondents considered the presence of unlawful organizations as a reason for not choosing foreign prostitution.

Finally, the environmental push factors seem to confirm the functional approach: 31.3% of the clients fear police controls. Furthermore, the socio-cultural influence should not be underestimated, hindering in 23.4% of cases the choice of foreign prostitution. In addition, it is important to stress that the police are perceived as a powerful deterrent by those with a medium/low and a medium/high probability of having entered into contact with victims of trafficking. All this information is synthesized in Table 8.24.

Turning to closer examination of the factors that hinder the choice for foreign prostitution, Tables 8.25a–c illustrate the relevant individual, network and environmental factors.

The last group of variables concerns clients who *very often/always* or often chose foreign prostitutes. The number of responses, thus, is at most 400 cases.

As for the individual factors, the relational dimension seems to be prevalent. 16.9% of the respondents preferred foreign prostitutes because of their features and 14.5% chose them because they felt more comfortable with them. Low rates, which can be classified as functional reasons (e.g. sex diseases), are not as central as aesthetic and personal issues.

Network aspects that push the choice of foreign prostitutes are closely linked to the supply: not only are foreign prostitutes more numerous, but they are also well advertised and consequently more visible. The social network of friends, which is the relational aspect, is quite irrelevant.

In the environmental push factors, there are two items that seem to be in contradiction with the previously analysed trends (see: environmental push factors for not

Table 8.24 Push factors for not choosing foreign prostitutes (Multiple answers)

Individual	a.v.	%	Network	a.v.	%	Environmental	a.v.	%
Foreign prostitutes more exploited	38	29.7	Presence of criminal network	53	41.4	Police control	40	31.3
Foreign prostitutes don't speak my language	28	21.9	Foreign prostitutes little visible	27	21.1	Social/cultural influence	30	23.4
Foreign prostitutes work in dangerous places	25	19.5	Foreign prostitutes little advertised	17	13.3	National policy on prostitution	16	12.5
Sex diseases	19	14.8	Blaming of my network	10	7.8	Religion	7	5.5
Don't like foreign prostitutes	12	9.4				Media	6	4.7
Foreign prostitutes expensive	8	6.3						
Foreign prostitutes' low performances	5	3.9						

Table 8.25a Different individual push factors not to choose foreign prostitutes by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	Sex diseases %	Don't like foreign prostitutes %	Foreign prostitutes don't speak my language %	Foreign prostitutes work in dangerous places %	Foreign prostitutes more exploited %	Foreign prostitutes low performances %	Foreign prostitutes expensive %
Never	Not applicable	16.9	13.0	23.4	23.4	33.8	2.6	9.1
Rarely	Medium/low	27.3	9.1	27.3	27.3	36.4	0.0	9.1
Rarely	Medium/high	14.3	4.8	33.3	19.0	38.1	14.3	0.0

Table 8.25b Different network push factors not to choose foreign prostitutes by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	Presence criminal network	Blaming of my network	Foreign prostitutes little advertised	Foreign prostitutes little visible
Never	Not applicable	50.6	7.8	14.3	26.0
Rarely	Medium/low	45.5	18.2	9.1	18.2
Rarely	Medium/high	42.9	9.5	23.8	23.8

Table 8.25c Different environmental push factors not to choose foreign prostitutes by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	National policy on prostitution %	Police control %	Religion %	Media %	Social/cultural influence %
Never	Not applicable	11.7	29.9	7.8	6.5	29.9
Rarely	Medium/low	27.3	54.5	9.1	0.0	9.1
Rarely	Medium/high	19.0	52.4	0.0	4.8	28.6

choosing foreign prostitutes). Either national policies on prostitution or socio-cultural influence push clients towards foreign prostitution. It is difficult to explain the first factor. Possibly, it is linked to one individual reason: the attitudes of clients to go beyond general accepted boundaries (“it is transgressive”). As for the socio-cultural influence, we would suggest an explanation which could be tested by further research. A latent racist approach emerges and seems to push clients to choose foreign prostitutes instead of native ones because it is a “less socially stigmatized” behaviour. Table 8.26 shows the individual, network and environmental push factors for the choice of foreign prostitution.

The general findings exposed above are confirmed when looking in detail at the frequency of contacts with foreign prostitutes and the probability of meeting victims of trafficking, as Tables 8.27a–c summarize.

In particular, it is hardly surprising that habitual clients are mainly driven by relational reasons. Aesthetic preferences and the “comfort issue” are essential and transversal to all the different categories. It is not a matter of price, but rather one of regular sexual meetings that seems to have a certain amount of “emotional” attachment. In other words, the relation with a prostitute becomes regular on an affective basis. In addition, looking at the network dimension, clients stress that foreign prostitutes are far more numerous and thus more “pleasing”.

8.4 Conclusions

In reference to the push factors, we identified two different dimensions: the *relational* aspect and a more *functional* reason. As we claimed before, while relational issues are embedded both in language barriers (“foreign prostitutes don’t speak my language”)

Table 8.26 Push factors for choosing foreign prostitutes (multiple answers)

Individual	a.v.	%	Network	a.v.	%	Environmental	a.v.	%
Features preferred	101	16.9	More numerous	163	27.3	National policy on prostitution	142	23.7
Make me more comfortable	87	14.5	Well advertised	127	21.2	Social/cultural influence	106	17.7
Cheaper	85	14.2	Very visible	109	18.2	Few police controls	88	14.7
It is transgressive	77	12.9	Friends	58	9.7	Media	41	6.9
Better performances	75	12.5						
More accommodating	74	12.4						
Don’t speak my language	8	1.3						

Table 8.27a Different individual push factors to choose foreign prostitutes by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	Cheaper %	More accommodating %	It is transgressive %	Better performances %	Features preferred %	Don't speak my language %	Make me more comfortable %
Often	Medium/low	19.2	19.2	30.8	15.4	26.9	3.8	26.9
Often	Medium/high	28.6	18.6	12.9	18.6	25.7	1.4	14.3
Very often/ always	Medium/low	14.3	19.5	18.2	14.3	31.2	2.6	24.7
Very often/ always	Medium/high	21.6	18.1	20.3	20.7	22.9	1.8	22.5

Table 8.27b Different network push factors to choose foreign prostitutes by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	Friends %	More numerous %	Well advertised %	Very visible %
Often	Medium/low	19.2	30.8	23.1	26.9
Often	Medium/high	17.1	41.4	32.9	14.3
Very often/always	Medium/low	16.9	42.9	35.1	22.1
Very often/always	Medium/high	12.3	41.0	31.3	33.0

Table 8.27c Different environmental push factors to choose foreign prostitutes by frequency of rendezvous with foreign prostitutes and probability of contact with victims of trafficking

Frequency	Probability	National policy on prostitution %	Few police controls %	Media %	Social/cultural influence %
Often	Medium/low	30.8	30.8	3.8	30.8
Often	Medium/high	30.0	20.0	14.3	28.6
Very often/always	Medium/low	40.3	10.4	7.8	27.3
Very often/always	Medium/high	36.1	25.6	10.6	25.1

and in personal evaluations (“foreign prostitutes are more exploited”), functional reasons are connected to practical motivations (“sex diseases”).

The data illustrate a relational approach to the issue of foreign prostitution: the relational and emotional dimensions (“features preferred” and “make me more comfortable”) seem to be the main push factors, whereas practical motivations (foreign prostitutes are cheaper and they are more visible) are less central. In particular, the relational dimension favours the strengthening of the relationship in terms of frequency, because men tend to become “habitual clients” and use the same prostitutes several times, thus creating a “simulacrum” of an affective relationship. On the contrary, the functional aspect is a “starting factor”, because lower rates are likely to foster the first contact with foreign prostitutes.

The dimension of control, exemplified by the police, is conceived as a “counter push” and feared for its potential consequences as well.

If we cannot assume that all the people meeting on the monitored Websites consider themselves “friends” we can assume a “friendly relation” among them. For that reason, in contrast to the Internet analysis, the questionnaire analysis shows that individual understanding of foreign prostitution is not related to the influence of social networks. The role of friends, in fact, is not relevant as a push factor. The “word of mouth” is not linked to friends rather it seems to be tied to the experiences of other clients.

As we previously explained, we identified three “objective factors” which are closely connected to mistreated prostitutes. They are: the knowledge of the client’s language, signs of violence and the level of price compared to local prostitutes. We would argue that, while clients are conscious of single factors, they miss the “whole picture”. They do not have a holistic approach rather they are likely to have a simplistic view of the issue of trafficking. They are either *not willing* to gain a deeper knowledge (a sort of psychological removal) or they *just fail* to comprehend the issue as a whole. They seem to be selfish consumers, either from a relational or from a hedonistic viewpoint.

As a consequence, it seems that there are only two possible strategies. First, at a cultural level (long-term approach), one might work on the socio cultural influences by showing the same consideration for both foreign and native prostitutes.

Second, at a policy level, one might propose a repressive approach through more police control. However, this could be a powerful deterrent for new sex consumers, but not for habitual clients. If prostitution is conceived as inevitable, it could be controlled through the introduction of regulations and through the formal prohibition of any “exploitation of prostitution”, in that only forced prostitution would be considered in breach of the law.

Part IV

Conclusions

Chapter 9

Learning from Clients

Andrea Di Nicola and Paolo Ruspini¹

9.1 Analysing Convergences and Divergences Between Countries

This work resulted in a brand new research experience that allowed some good comparative efforts on trafficking for sexual exploitation as well as a first-hand investigation into the type, habits and preferences of clients of prostitution in selected European countries. The choice of these EU countries made it possible to compare legislative and policy models to manage or tackle prostitution as well as its undesirable violent component.

There are clearly some limits in the research findings deriving both from the different geographic and historical contexts and from the slightly different methodological approach adopted by the research teams involved. The samples of intercepted clients show differences in cultural and economic background while their social networks are also divergent, representing the socio-cultural specificities of their countries of origin. The investigation of these networks was particularly useful in some country studies to frame the background where forced prostitution takes place and to analyse the different levels of criminal involvement of actors in the sex industry. At the same time, there are also similarities among the countries concerning the ethnic background of the involved prostitutes and the profiles of the exploitation actors such as pimps.

The extraordinary historical events that have taken place in the European continent since 1989 with the fall of the Berlin wall, the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the political and economical transition that followed in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region accelerated and transformed the migration flows from the East as well as its dramatic smuggling and trafficking components. Later, the 2004 eastward enlargement involving eight CEE countries from the former Soviet bloc and its late stage in 2007 that gave EU membership to Romanian and Bulgarian citizens by sanctioning their full travel mobility provided again migration dynamism to the continent while widening the gap between the New Europe

¹The various sections of the present Chapter can be attributed to their authors as follows: Paolo Ruspini 9.1; Andrea Di Nicola 9.2.

and the countries beyond. These overall processes opened up new unexplored markets and possible areas of exploitation to the prostitution industry.

Factors of inclusion and exclusion shape what someone has named “Fortress Europe” and its enlarged borders and as yet undefined identity. This lack of political clarity resulted in wider divisions between rich and poor, included and excluded people, losers and winners in the transition process towards democracy and market economy. It is certainly not only a question of an East–West divide causing and facilitating the social phenomena and their criminal component under investigation but also of an emerging gap between North and South with stronger economic inequalities between the two sides of the Mediterranean as well as between developed and developing countries. In any case, it is not by chance that the demand for prostitution and its trafficking component suddenly increased in its Eastern European component. It seems that European policymakers working on social policy as well as on shaping common policy for tackling illegal migration and trafficking in human beings failed to understand in advance the epochal upheavals on the ground and the resulting reorientation of the smuggling and trafficking flows provided by the availability of cheap transportation and by the criminal exploitation of new technology.

In this historical framework, clients of prostitution seem to show similar preferences resulting from the available offer on the market, but also slightly different characteristics deriving from their cultural and social background.

9.1.1 Clients on the Net, Clients on the Streets

We made great efforts to profile these European clients to understand their behaviour and their perceptions of the extent of the trafficking chain. This research goal was not easy and not always possible. For instance, the Romanian context did not allow much inquiry into the criminal component because of the difficulties in intercepting and interviewing clients of prostitution. Differences in the use of communication technologies like the Internet among European countries as well as the divergent cultural attitudes towards this media explains the resulting divergences affecting either the breadth and magnitude across countries of this growing and sophisticated electronic market or the quality of research results originating from the analysis of online questionnaires and Web forum.

In the latter context, there are clearly similarities in the dialogic aspect and attitudes of Web punters in the sex forums of Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden, though originating from dissimilar cultural and policy reasons. The Italian Web punters are dominated more by a sort of psychological insecurity originating from the ever more equalitarian Italian society which seems to affect the extent and quality of the sexual relationships of this sample and push them to look either for dominion or for derivative forms of love and affection in their meetings with forum escorts. The Dutch clients, frequenting the Web, seem more oriented towards getting some sort of group socialization out of their encounters with prostitutes in a free market that offers window shopping and saunas at will. The Swedish clients

might have found in the Web a possible hidden and secretive way to search for something forbidden in their home country as a result of the strong equality legislation and the related criminalization of clients of prostitution. It is, in fact, not by chance that many of them are either ready to cross the Baltic Sea in search of commercial sex or they are skilled users of technology to turn around the ruling prohibitions at home and being able to cultivate their dreams for lust with Baltic sex workers commuting through open sea borders. In Romania, in contrast, the habitual users of these technological commodities are mainly foreigners and the Websites seem definitely addressed either in the language options or in the available facilities to this segment of the market. Though the number of young, urban and highly skilled Romanian people taking wide advantage of any available electronic device is certainly widespread, they are not representative of the average Romanian client of prostitution who is still looking for street walkers and who probably feels insecure in sharing thoughts. This might be the result of the current prohibitionist policy towards prostitution as well as a heritage of the recent dictatorial past of this country when silence was more a rule than an option for communication.

As far as the illustrated approaches on prostitution in the four countries under investigation is concerned, street prostitution mainly takes place in Italy and, as far as sex windows is concerned, it is found in the Netherlands. Regarding the latter country, it is a peculiar form of prostitution since while the so-called polar bears walk all over the red districts, the consumption of sexual service always take place indoors and never in cars as can happen in Italy. Here the more visible “drive and buy” market sometimes creates traffic jams and urban turmoil involving clients, prostitution actors, the police and the local population. For instance, while doing our fieldwork, we clearly recorded the complaints and fears generated by these kinds of urban conflicts when, at night, we talked to an elderly lady through the shutter of her fishing tackle shop facing a parking place where the “sex circus” takes place every night. As far as Romania and Sweden are concerned, the research findings demonstrate that the legislative constraints and the socio-cultural background seem to generate mainly indoor prostitution. Finally, the comparison of results between country studies and a further analysis of research findings show the relatively younger age (30–40 years old compared to 40 onwards) and higher level of education (at least a secondary school diploma or a university degree) of the Web surfers compared to the street buyers of prostitution.

9.1.2 Innocent When you dream? Clients of Prostitution and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation

The epochal upheavals that took place in the European continent during the last two decades and the resulting social anomy affecting several Eastern European and post-Soviet countries well explain the dimension and extent of changes that occurred in the prostitution market all over Europe. The historical ethnic mixing up of the CEE region further contributed by putting onto the Western market of

prostitution, fascinating young ladies from the urban as well as rural areas of often patriarchal societies, who sometimes by choice and sometimes by force, joined the ranks of this fertile and growing industry.

The question is about the self-understanding and extent of the exploitation behind and its rationale. Our work attempted to address this problem in a comparative fashion. There are no definitive answers, but the research tools were aimed at detecting several indicators of trafficking to explain whether there is demand for this segment in the overall prostitution market. While there is no argument concerning the preferences of the Western European clients under investigation for Eastern European girls, the rationale behind this preference is definitely slightly different from country to country. More generally we can say that the Swedish and Dutch clients seem more interested in “a beautiful girl at a reasonable price”. As a consequence, the Eastern European girls are much welcomed for their personal skills and attractive physical features. The same can be said for the Italian clients, though this rational choice implies that the Eastern Europeans also show “affection” and “comprehension” by offering these men a simulacrum of a real relationship that is sometimes missing in their real life. The quest for care thus becomes part of the Italian picture. Furthermore, there are no remarkable differences between the Italian punters of “Web escorts” and those of street prostitutes concerning this specific point. Age, language, the desire for dominion or the desire for an exotic experience are less comparable elements in the profiling picture of the overall sample of European clients. Only the Romanian punters seem mostly intent on looking for some sexual performance or specific sexual practices that they would never ask of their wives and therefore they make a clear distinction between what they mean by a “lady” and a “whore”. This seems once more to be the heritage of a traditional society where the gender roles are strictly defined.

What is instead difficult to define is the border between the consciousness and unconsciousness of the level of exploitation in the answers and confessions of the clients. Several mechanisms of “neutralization” play a role in this regard making the task of the researcher rather difficult. In this context, the anonymity of the Internet does not help as, for instance, most of the Italian clients on the Web believe that forced prostitution is an exception, far from reality. In contrast, all the interviewed clients during the meetings were aware of the exploitation of the girls. Some of them believed that buying sexual services might have helped them. Still the extent of this phenomenon is difficult to measure apart from single impressions originating from the observations of clients on the physical appearance and psychological behaviour of these foreign girls. The reported observations, matched up with the research tools, might have unexpectedly created some “superstructure” in these findings not easy to discriminate. The Dutch work argues for an “abstract” recognition, from the clients’ perspective, between “forced” and “voluntary” prostitution and again it reports that many of these clients are not concerned about the residence status of the sex workers and they underplay the phenomenon of forced prostitution through the same neutralization techniques. Perhaps, it is the illusion of intimacy together with desire and sexual fantasies that obscure the recognition of the victims, notwithstanding any possible physical marks or specific behavioural characteristics. For the Swedish and Dutch clients it is, however, important that the women are working voluntarily and they claim to refuse trafficked women and minors.

In the end, this comparative effort seems to demonstrate that in all the four countries under investigation the consumer demand operates indirectly and cannot be differentiated by the demand for commercial sex as well as that, notwithstanding any adopted research indicator, is difficult even for the client to recognize whether the girl is trafficked or not.

We can however argue that in all the country studies concerned, though at different stages and to a different extent, a similar factor that encourages the demand for prostitution is the emancipation of Italian women, the further emancipation of the Dutch women, the high level of equality between sexes in Swedish legislation and the clash between old and new habits in the Romanian couples. It is a sign of the times and a progressive process that cannot be debated. Besides, in at least three out of the four Western European countries under investigation, this demand has been mainly satisfied by foreign women. How many of these foreign women are forced or voluntary prostitutes is still an open question. This comparative research might eventually raise some further reflections on the responsibility in the diversity of attitudes towards the clients of politicians, media and public opinion in the four countries of this pilot research. In this regard, the national legislative regimes regulating prostitution and their national and international tools to tackle its trafficking component certainly play an important role. Whereas the level of acceptance of buying sexual services is rather high in the Netherlands and clients are seen as potential partners against women trafficking, it is not the same in Sweden where, since 1999, it is illegal to purchase sexual services and special anti-trafficking units are employed to combat the industry as a whole. As far as Italy is concerned, before any further legislative intervention, there is probably an urgent need for a critical analysis of the needs and multi-faceted motivations of the clients in conjunction with ongoing support for the victims. As a matter of fact, according to some Italian NGO operators, sometimes the “legislative provisions are available but not fully applicable”. Finally, an “eyes wide open” investigation into social and sentimental relationships as well as a deeper look into the life of couples, its changing status, revolving needs, desires and aspirations might be eventually useful in Romania or in the other countries under investigation. In the end, the clients of prostitution whether trafficked or not, are human beings with the same many vices and few virtues (or perhaps many virtues and few vices compared to some political actors) like all other human beings. A more correct and multidimensional approach to their (and our) inner world might be useful to unmask the hypocrisies versus the possible virtues, the clients versus the traffickers thus further assisting the victims while severely punishing the offenders.

9.2 Addressing the Demand to Reduce the Trafficking in Women

The study presented in this book revealed many similarities among clients in the selected countries. These convergences appear particularly significant for the search of common strategies against trafficking in human beings.

In particular, what is more striking is the shared search for a “beautiful girl at a reasonable price”, the need for dominance and/or affection, the preference for Eastern European women, the (at least partial) awareness of exploitation and the related neutralization techniques. This is testified in many interviews, as reported in these explanatory excerpts:

“All of them are exploited. However, they also have good incomes. They can have good clothes and can send money home to their families. Of course they don’t like the life, but they also get some benefits” (Italian client).

“No, you don’t know. Of course I don’t ask for the residence permit. It doesn’t matter to me if they have it or not. If tomorrow they are kicked out onto the street, bad luck. I have nothing to do with it” (Dutch client).

“If I could differentiate [between forced and voluntary, DZ/RS], it would probably not influence my choice. Because if I like the girl, I would ask her to join me in the room. It is totally wrong of course” (Dutch client).

“I do it because of the excitement, but also because of a sort of addiction. Meeting a prostitute doesn’t involve demands, and you get to do other stuff than in your relationship” (Swedish client).

“I am not suited to fixed relationships, I get bored quickly, and it is very practical to buy sex” (Swedish client).

“The big crooks are the men who don’t care how the girls feel... For me that means I choose not to meet women who I cannot communicate with... I understand that it might imply that I say no thanks to wonderful experiences with foreign girls who have come here just to make money totally voluntarily, but it is my choice and my way of avoiding promoting trafficking” (Swedish client).

What can be done to address these issues? More specifically, which kind of interventions can be designed and implemented to avoid exploitation and trafficking? The results of the national teams’ activities allow us to put forward some conclusive remarks.

9.2.1 Which Policies for What Prostitution?

The research in Italy, Netherlands, Romania and Sweden has shown that neither abolitionism, nor regulationism or prohibitionism have eradicated trafficked prostitution. In some cases (perhaps) they may have reduced the magnitude of the phenomenon; however, current analyses do not permit one to understand the effectiveness of such measures and neither is this volume able to give a final answer. Nevertheless, some reflections can be made concerning the core question: Which policy on prostitution is more effective in reducing trafficking in human beings?

Over the past few years in this area, a great debate has arisen in order to support (often ideologically) one model “against” another. However, very few analyses have been made to evaluate costs and benefits of each approach. Therefore, it is almost impossible to identify an objectively “better” model on prostitution able to tackle the exploitation of victims of trafficking.

From the results of the research activity, it is clear that commercial sex is far from being eliminated, because of client attitudes towards women, for their long histories as punters, and so on. Therefore, it seems more effective to implement policies able to *minimize social costs and respond to the needs of the various actors involved in this market*. In detail, the present research addressed towards investigating the customers of trafficked prostitution denotes an ambivalent attitude: on one side there is some awareness of the exploitation behind prostitution (often neutralized by denial or sentences like “I do not care, it is not my business”). On the other side, however, the vast majority of punters prefer “free” women because they are considered warmer, more participative and do not put on them a sense of blame for their exploitation.

Considering this ambivalent attitude, different kinds of interventions concerning clients are important, regardless of a specific model of prostitution, in order to make them able to *clearly distinguish between trafficked and non-trafficked prostitution*. In this sense, the chance of getting free and non-exploited commercial sex could represent a strong tool against trafficking. In addition, in such a system, one could also imagine harsher penalties for clients who consciously buy sexual performances from victims of human trade.

9.2.2 Which Criminal Policies, Which Investigations?

As pointed out, a policy on prostitution that makes punters better able to distinguish between trafficked and voluntary prostitution could also foresee *stricter sanctions* for punters of this segment of the market. In this regard, our research has found that sanctions do not seem to discourage punters from looking for commercial sex, apart from the case of easy identification of trafficked women. Linked to this point one may argue that the more a policy makes it easier to identify voluntary/trafficked prostitution the more severe the sanctions can be for transgressors.

The Dutch experience has made some steps in this direction because punters of regular prostitutes are “employed” as *allies in the fight and identification* of clients of trafficked prostitutes due to their privileged point of observation. Furthermore, attention should be paid to the *investigations on facilitators* who operate in the trafficking chain such as brothel owners, taxi drivers, *passeurs*, etc., in order to dismantle the criminal networks behind the phenomenon (Surtees, 2008).

9.2.3 Information Campaigns and Responsabilization of Clients

What should be done then? It seems clear that punters are selfish and not scared of sanctions: they look for their pleasure though they are aware of exploitation and trafficking. Nevertheless, they are ordinary men and not monsters who are often compassionate with victims. This is also the reason why a number of them are in

favour of penalties for “crooks” who mistreat women and consciously choose exploited ones.

Following this reasoning, a good tool could be *focused awareness-raising campaigns* that would try to create a debate on trafficking and exploitation among clients. However, from our research, some fundamental points have emerged in this sense:

- (a) If campaigns just try to *educate the client to give up going with prostitutes they are likely to fail*, especially if addressed to adult clients with a medium–long-term experience of prostitution, because they look indifferently upon sanctions and are reluctant to change their lifestyles
- (b) Campaigns should be based upon *studies on clients* in order to be *suitable to the audience* they are directed to. In particular, they should be attentive to the different typologies of clients and change accordingly
- (c) Campaigns should be able to *intervene on neutralization techniques* in order to make them ineffective and therefore do not give “alibis” to clients of trafficked prostitutes
- (d) Campaigns should elaborate some indicators for the *identification of trafficked prostitution*; in other words, they should provide punters with the appropriate *tools* to distinguish between the “legal” and illegal sex markets
- (e) Clients, like the majority of citizens, are sensitive to the themes of security. For this reason, campaigns should try to *broaden knowledge on organized crime* linked to trafficking and make people understand that the victims of exploited sex are often *reemployed* in other illicit activities such as drug dealing
- (f) Campaigns should be also provided for minors according to the “*invest early*” principle

9.2.4 Final Remarks

It is now time to make some final remarks about the research activity carried out for this volume.

If we analyse the demand for commercial sex from a cost benefit point of view, we can notice that the benefits of going with prostitutes are practically the same regardless of the exploitation behind it: i.e. a guaranteed sexual performance in exchange for money. In fact, even if in this regard, a number of men contacted in our research stressed that victims of trafficking tend to be cold and disinterested, thus less attractive than voluntary prostitutes, a bulk of clients reported “extra-benefits” such as affection, comprehension and beauty of the foreign girls that are often trafficked.

Also costs continue to be practically the same between trafficked/non trafficked prostitution: i.e. penalties, risk of sexual diseases, etc.; therefore, there seems not to be outstanding rational reasons to prefer the “legal” market. Starting from this point, policies and the above-illustrated awareness campaigns should focus on *environmental modifications aimed at increasing risks for the purchase*

of trafficked sex, thus making it uncompetitive compared to possible forms of “legal” commercial sex.

In particular, such counter-policies should be also focused on traffickers, facilitators and places where prostitution takes place. In fact, stricter controls and tackling interventions actions could make the cost of trafficked prostitution rise and consequently discourage men from looking for this segment of the market.

Finally, from our research it was possible to notice both from the Internet and in the semi-structured interviews that clients tend to *reinforce their opinions* in the peer group, confirming for example the findings by Bouamama (2004). In detail, this mechanism often leads to the denial/minimization of the extent of trafficked prostitution and/or to consider kerb-crawling as a common activity to carry out among peers. This *moral cost* (Pizzorno, 1993: 66–70) is another important point for possible actions: focused policies on the peer group could eventually *raise a moral cost* on the status of client of victims of trafficking. In fact, in such a difficult and hidden area of life, norms and repressive measures could be less effective than the moral cost of exclusion from the peer group.

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Index

A

Abella, M.I., 229
Abolitionism, 24, 232
Academia Romana, 229
Adreijavic, R. 67n1, 229
Adventurer, 111
Aesthetics, 50, 148, 220, 222
Affection, 12, 16, 43, 49, 52, 55, 56, 58, 63, 64, 146, 147, 228, 230, 232, 234
Aghatise, E. 31n2
AGIS
Aliens Act, 79n13, 167
Alteri, G., 41, 240
Altink, S., 86, 89–91
AMOB, 163, 229
Anderson, S., 18, 67n2, 92, 93, 118, 165, 174, 177, 178, 182, 199, 229
Andreani, A., 25n2, 33n4
Another kind of woman, 13, 175
Anti-feminist, 13, 49, 175
Apartment, 34, 40, 53, 57, 58, 188–190, 197, 199, 201, 216, 217
Arooma, K., 25n2
Aronowitz, A., 67n1, 237
Article, 18, 39
Asante, A. 72, 73, 87, 88, 92, 94, 106, 111, 237
Asylum law, 130
Atchinson, 7–9, 19, 20
Attitude, 4, 48, 60, 64, 78, 82, 92, 101, 105, 108, 109, 111, 113, 119, 120, 137, 159, 163–165, 171, 174, 179, 183, 185, 194, 195, 211, 216, 222, 228, 231, 233
Awareness, 44, 45, 60, 65, 100, 114, 116, 121, 133, 134, 153, 178, 184, 198–201

B

Bar, 54, 87, 108, 183
Barjaba, K., 25n2, 32n3, 33n4

Barnard, M. 11, 14n15, 16, 47n18, 239
Bedin, 34
Belarmino, 17
Belser, 18
Benefits, 24, 39, 63, 65, 66, 81, 90, 132, 173, 232, 234
Ben-Israel, 13–16, 18
Bernieri, 25n2
Bess, 11
Benzi, D.O., 63
Biffi, C., 31n2, 34
Bindel, J., 62n30
Biological theory, 13, 16
Blanchard, 11, 13, 16
Blangiardo, G.C., 35, 36, 36n10
Blind conscious, 111–113, 119, 120
Blokland, A., 94
BNRM, 25n2, 67n1, 74n11, 74–76, 80, 80n14, 81, 83, 100, 101
Bokelman, S., 86, 89–91, 229
Borg, D., 25n2, 167
Bossi-Fini law, 36, 37
Bossi-Fini-Prestigiacomo bill, 40
Bouamama, S., 8, 11, 12, 14n15, 16, 95, 145, 218n9, 235
Boutellier, H., 82, 88
Bovenkerk, F., 77
Brå Brottsförebyggande Rådet, 68, 185, 199
Brooks-Gordon, B., 6n2, 46n16, 207n7
Brothel, 7, 15, 33, 39, 40, 43–46, 62, 68, 70, 72, 73, 75, 81–88, 90–99, 108, 109, 111, 113–115, 117–119, 121, 124, 160, 163, 167, 178, 189, 190, 201, 208, 216–218, 233
Brucker, R.A., 46n16
Bruinsma, G.J.N., 25n2
Brun, H., 166
Brunovskis, A., 25n2
b-9 temporary stay permit, 35, 52, 133

- Bureau Nationaal Rapporteur Mensenhandel, 25n2
- Burt, M.R., 47n17
- Bush, N.B., 46n15
- Business-like, 111
- C**
- Campani, G., 31n2, 33n6
- Campbell, R., 7, 11, 207n7, 218n9
- Car, 40, 45, 53, 62, 75, 87, 100, 143, 145, 147, 153, 208, 217
- Carchedi, F., 31n2, 33n6
- Caritas, 35, 38
- Case de tolerantia*, 124
- Cauduro, A., 19n19, 20, 25n2, 31n1, 31n2, 33n6, 33n7, 34, 39n13, 61n28, 205n6
- CBS, 73
- Chaloff, J., 38
- Chat room, 173
- Cheap, 10, 17, 78, 94, 97, 117, 193, 197, 228
- Church, S., 47n18, 239
- Ciconte, E., 25n2, 31n2, 32n2, 33n4, 33n6, 33n7
- Client
- active on the web (CAWs), 42, 46, 48, 57, 59, 61, 62, 64, 217
 - habitual, 6, 9, 11, 12, 42, 43, 45, 46, 49, 52, 124, 139, 222, 224, 229
 - in love, 12, 98, 110, 113, 139, 140, 144, 147
 - non-habitual, 42, 45, 46, 139
 - online, 11, 50, 59, 60, 71, 72, 94, 96, 98, 101–105, 163, 196, 205, 228
 - profile, 4, 7, 11, 19, 21, 46, 56, 57, 64, 73, 101, 126, 135–137, 156, 206, 227, 228
 - regular, 6, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 32, 35–38, 40, 45, 48, 51, 54, 64, 80, 84, 88, 95, 97–99, 103, 105, 111, 139–141, 144, 149, 159, 181, 191, 198, 218, 222, 223
 - violent, 17, 47, 111, 123, 126, 140, 142, 144, 217
- Comprehension, 16, 43, 46, 52, 55, 64, 230, 234
- Conci, N., 19n19, 20, 25n2, 31n1, 31n2, 33n6, 33n7, 34, 39n13, 61n28, 205n6
- Condom, 9, 15, 18, 40, 82, 111, 138, 140, 145, 192, 207, 208, 218, 219
- Conti Nibali, M., 41, 240
- Cornelius, W., 80
- Cost-benefit, 232, 233
- Costs, 17, 40, 65, 66, 78, 104, 146–148, 160, 180, 188, 191, 232, 233
- Council of the Baltic States, 25n2
- Criminal policies, 123, 133
- Customer, 4, 6, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 25, 26, 32, 42–45, 50, 85, 115, 144, 169, 178, 183, 189, 190, 198, 233
- Cyber-polar bears, 102, 116
- D**
- Daalder, A., 73, 82, 84, 84n15, 85–88, 92
- Dalla, R.L., 47n18
- Danna, D., 31n2, 44, 62n29
- Debt bonding, 76
- de Cock, 18
- Decarli, S., 25n2, 31n2, 33n5, 34, 207n7
- Della Vecchia, R., 49n21
- Demirdek, 77
- Deviant, 3, 7, 11
- Diana, 11
- Diaz, 168
- DiMarco, A., DiMarco H., 102
- Dirty whore, 12–14, 175
- Di Nicola, A., 19n19, 20, 25n2, 31n1, 31n2, 33n6, 33n7, 34, 39n13, 61n28, 205n6, 207n7
- Divorced, 8, 65, 94, 96, 137, 206, 215
- Doezema, J., 67n1
- Donadel, 34
- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 73, 81, 83, 84, 89, 113
- Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings, 74, 80
- Dütting, G., 82, 90, 92
- Dzuhayatin, 17
- E**
- Easy access, 84, 88, 102, 146
- ECPAT, 75
- Emancipation, 54, 55, 64, 118, 231
- Entzinger, H., 78
- Environmental factors, 23, 54, 55, 61, 64, 91, 94, 154, 209, 220
- Episodes of violence, 18
- Erasmus University
- Escortforum, 59, 60, 205
- European Commission, 170, v
- European Union, 3, 5, 24, 37, 80, 128–130, 166, 170, 238, 239, 243–245
- Exotic, 14, 17, 50, 55, 97, 116, 117, 152, 180, 230
- Exploitation, 3, 15, 17, 19, 23, 24, 32–35, 39–4, 43–45, 48, 57, 60–62, 64–68, 73, 77, 81, 82, 84, 85, 87, 90, 91, 93, 100, 102, 103, 105, 111, 113–116, 118, 121, 123, 125–127, 133, 134, 137, 151, 160,

- 171, 177, 179, 181–183, 185, 224,
227–230, 232–234, 240–244
- F**
- Fachile, S., 41, 240
Farina, P., 35, 36, 36n10
Feeling of shame, 149–150
Fellatio, 9, 10, 13, 16, 58, 59
Field, 7, 8n6, 9, 11n14
Finstad, 11
Foundation ISMU, 36, 205
Foundation Against Women Trafficking
(STV), 74, 75
Fraser, 7–9, 19, 20
Frequency of intercourse, 207
Friend, 53, 86, 95, 98, 109
Functional reason, 219, 220, 222, 224
- G**
- Gagnon, 6, 7, 9
GALLUP, 125
Gargasole, G., 33
Garland, D., 120
Gastarbeiter, 78
Gatekeeper, 32, 42
Gelsthorpe, L., 6n2, 46n16, 207n7
German bulldogs, 98, 110
Goderie, M., 82, 83, 86, 88
Gomez, 15, 18
Grauerholz, L., 46n16
Griffioen, M., 69n4, 96n20
Grubman Black, 11, 14n15, 16
Guilt, 12, 101, 102, 105, 112, 113, 119, 120,
150, 157, 170, 178, 183, 185
- H**
- Hagan, F.E.,
Harras, R.M., 46n16
Harris, N., 79
Hart, G., 47n18, 239
Henderson, M., 47n18, 239
Hidden population, 25
Hinds, J.D., 46n16
Hogarth, J., 74
Høigard, 11
Holzman, 11
Hookers.nl, 71, 94, 96, 101, 102, 103n,
116, 195n
Hopkins, R., 77, 81–83, 106
Hotaling, N., 46n15
- Hotel, 14, 17, 51, 72, 73, 90, 124, 145, 147,
152, 153, 157, 163, 188–192, 197, 200,
201, 208, 217, 218
House of tolerance, 4, 78, 124
Hughes, D.M., 15, 15n17
Hynes, 18
- I**
- Ignacio, 17
Ijsbeer, 68n
Ijsberenforum, 96
Ill-treatment, 160
Illegal entry, 32, 33, 36, 79
Illegal practices, 90–91, 115
Immigration, 35–40, 68, 77–80, 83, 128, 129,
167, 168, 170, 171, 173, 237–239,
241–246
Impossibility of getting non-commercial sex,
16, 55
Individual factors, 23, 50, 55, 57, 64, 146, 149,
150, 179, 181, 183, 209, 220
Indoor prostitution, 39, 145, 146, 216, 229
Initiation rite, 19
Institutul European din Romania, 128
International Organization for
Migration, 182
Internet, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 26, 31, 41–43, 46–49,
57, 59, 61, 62, 65, 69, 70, 72, 73,
86–88, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100,
102–104, 106, 107, 111, 115, 116,
118, 120, 152, 154, 167, 169, 171,
173, 174, 182, 188, 189, 191–194,
196, 197, 199, 200, 202, 203, 205–211,
213, 215, 217–219, 221, 223, 224,
228, 230, 235
Interview, 32, 43–46, 50–56, 94, 98, 136,
137, 140, 172, 173, 176, 177, 190,
201, 210
Investigation, 26, 47, 48, 59, 62, 65, 66, 81,
83, 85, 114, 137, 143, 163, 166–168,
170, 171, 183, 192, 202
IOM, 18, 25n2, 31n2, 32n3, 126n9, 127n12,
134, 134n23, 135, 182
Italy, 4, 18, 24, 29, 31–39, 41, 42, 44, 45, 51,
54, 56, 62, 64, 65, 127, 136, 137, 139,
140, 205, 212, 228, 239, 241, 242
- J**
- Janus, 11
Johnson, 7, 8n6, 9, 11n14
Jordan, J., 95

K

Kangaspunta, K., 25n2
 Kelly, L., 62n30
 Kempadoo, K.J., 67n1
 Kennedy, H., 47n18
 Kinnell, H., 11, 47n18
 Kinsey, 6, 9, 10, 10n13, 16
 Kinsie, 6
 Kiss (impossible), 12
 Kleemans, E.R., 75, 76
 Knox, 7, 9, 11n14
 Kolata, 7, 9
 Korf, D.J., 77

L

Lack of affection, 147
 Laczko, F., 166
 Lady, 143, 152, 229, 230
 Lao-Melendez, 8, 9
 Laumann, 7, 9
 Lehti, M., 25n2, 166
 Legalization, 37, 38, 40, 62, 85–90,
 92, 108, 114, 115, 121, 125, 159,
 160, 237
 Legalization of prostitution, 85, 88, 125,
 159, 160
 Legislation, 26, 35, 36, 38, 39, 62, 67–69, 77,
 80–83, 89, 90, 113, 117, 123, 126, 131,
 136, 141, 149, 157, 163–165, 167–171,
 182, 183, 186, 191, 194–196, 198, 200,
 216, 229, 231, 240
 Lenient legislation, 149
 Le pouvoir de l'argent, 12
 Leridon, H., 8n7, 9, 93
 Leskinen, J., 166
 Levenkron, 13–16, 18
 Linares Gonzales, 17
 Local language, 207, 213, 214
 Loverboy, 77
 Lower price, 25, 55, 58, 64
 Lowman, 7–9, 19, 20
 Luykx, F., 73

M

MacArther, 7
 Macho man, 150, 151
 Macleod
 Male-bashing, 49
 Månsson, S.A., 8, 12, 13, 14n15, 16, 163,
 163n1, 165, 168, 174, 175, 218n9
 Married, 3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 18, 43, 45–48, 51, 54,
 56, 64, 65, 76, 94, 95, 97, 98, 110 137,

141, 143–145, 147, 149, 161, 174, 206,
 214, 215
 Martin, P., 6, 8, 9, 10, 10n13, 16, 31n2,
 33n4, 34
 Martini, E.R., 31n2, 33n4, 33n7, 34
 Marttila, 10
 Massage, 7, 15, 72, 85–87, 95, 110, 115, 118,
 123, 124, 144, 145, 147, 152, 157, 163,
 164, 167, 189, 208, 217, 219
 Masturbation manual, 9, 10, 15n17, 143, 145
 Mazda, 65
 McIntosh, 14
 McKeganey, N., 11, 14n15, 16, 95
 Media, 14, 16, 39, 49, 54, 55, 62, 63, 67, 68,
 71, 73, 77, 86, 100, 115, 118, 155,
 183–186, 195, 209, 210, 220–223, 227,
 228, 231
 Meershoek, G., 25n2
 Mehran, 18
 Merlin Law, 39, 40
 Metz, M.E., 46n16
 Michael, 7, 9
 Migration Information Programme, 25n2,
 32n3
 Migrationsverket, 167
 Military bases, 15
 Minors, 10, 33, 41, 49, 74, 75, 81, 82, 99, 100,
 109, 112–114, 118, 120, 126, 132, 133,
 139, 141–143, 177, 181, 230, 234
 Misogynist, 111, 113, 120
 Modus operandi, 32, 150
 Money, 3, 12, 16, 18, 44, 49, 51, 52, 54, 56,
 58, 72, 76, 83, 85, 91, 94, 97, 98, 106,
 110, 113, 116, 126, 132, 138–140,
 143–145, 151, 153, 155, 156, 158–160,
 177, 178, 187, 188, 190–195, 197–199,
 201, 232, 234
 Monto, M.A., 8, 9, 10n11, 11, 13, 19, 20, 46,
 46n16, 47n18, 58n24, 95, 218n9
 Monzini, 25n2, 32n3, 33n4, 67n1
 Moral crusader, 96, 111, 112, 119
 Moral standards, 155
 Motel, 208, 217
 Mottura, G., 31n2, 33n6
 Moustgaard, U., 166
 Mulder, A., 94
 Muus, P., 77

N

NAM, 100
 National Institute of Criminology
 National Plan for Action on Human
 Trafficking, 114

- National Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings, 134
 Need for affection and comprehension, 62
 Need for domination, 12, 14
 Need for dominion, 16, 64, 228, 230
 Network factors, 152–154
 NGO, 75, 231
 No other women, 13, 175
- O**
 Opinon leaders, 48, 61, 63, 65
 Orfano, I., 19n19, 20, 25n2, 31n1, 31n2, 33n6, 33n7, 34, 39n13, 61n28, 205n6
 OSCE-ODIHR, 126
 Österuropastudier, 168
- P**
 Parking, 229
 Parking boys, 153
 Participant observation, 26
 Particular sex acts, 11
 Particular sexual acts and/or chance to have many sexual partners, 16
 Passas, N., 117
 Pastore, F., 25, 32n3, 33n4
 Patriarchy, 58
 Peer group, 12, 14, 16, 53, 55, 64, 97, 235
 Perrone, L., 25n2, 32n3, 33n4
 Persson, L.G.W., 163, 164
 Picciolini, A., 31n2, 36n6
 Pieters, B., 83
 Pimp, 17, 26, 33, 44–46, 53, 62, 68, 71, 76, 77, 81, 85, 87, 88, 91, 93, 95, 99, 104, 107, 108, 110–113, 115–120, 123, 124, 126, 135, 136, 139–148, 150, 151, 156, 159, 160, 168, 177, 178, 187–189, 91, 93, 96, 98, 99, 201, 202, 227
 Pines, 11
 Pizzorno, A., 235
 Polar bears, 68, 68n3, 96–97, 102, 116, 121, 229
 Polchi, W., 38
 Police patrolling, 151
 Policies, 4, 15, 24, 35, 36, 38, 39, 61, 65, 66, 68, 71, 74, 77–84, 99, 100, 102, 105, 108, 112–114, 117, 120, 123, 127, 129–131, 133, 134, 156, 157, 165, 177, 178, 216, 232–235
 Policy implications, 24, 64–66, 68, 113, 149, 156–161
 Pomeroy, 6, 9, 10, 10n13, 16
 Pornification, 117
 Pornography, 13, 16, 54, 116, 167, 171
- Power of money, 12, 16
 Price, 6, 15, 25, 43, 44, 51, 52, 55, 57–59, 61, 62, 64, 87, 94, 108, 139–141, 144, 147, 148, 151, 152, 156, 160, 174, 177, 179, 180, 183, 184, 189, 91, 93–97, 207, 208, 213, 214, 222, 224, 230, 232
 Prieur, 6, 7, 9
 Prohibition, 4, 5, 20, 24, 65, 66, 81, 89, 124, 159, 163, 165, 167–169, 171–173, 175, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197–199, 201, 224, 229, 232
 Prohibitionist approach, 4, 20
 Prostitution
 policies, 39–41, 77–83, 99–101, 133–135
 trafficked, 3–5, 15, 18, 20, 21, 23–27, 31–33, 42, 44, 46, 48, 49, 51, 53–55, 60, 64, 66, 70, 104, 114, 119, 120, 135, 136, 156, 163, 168, 170, 171, 176, 179, 180, 185, 186, 196, 198, 201, 207, 232–235
 Proxy indicators, 25, 205
 Psychological theories, 16
 Pub, 85, 208, 217
 Punters, 24, 26, 27, 31, 41–43, 52, 65, 214, 228, 230, 233, 234
 Purchase, 6, 10–12, 15, 47, 64, 93, 100, 117, 118, 165, 168–169, 172–174, 179, 180, 186, 192, 195–198, 231, 234
 Purchaser, 174, 189, 192, 197, 200
 Push factors, 13, 54, 64, 65, 75, 205, 206, 219–224
 Pushing factors, 21, 23, 41, 55, 64
- Q**
 Qualitative methods, 20
 Quantitative data, 19
 Questionnaire structure
 general part, 206–207
 special part, 207–210
- R**
 Radulescu, S.M., 124
 Rahmani, L., 25n2, 33n4
 Ramirez Rodriguez, 17
 Rape, 47, 76, 103, 144
 Rasmussen, N., 168, 169
 Raviv, T., 25n2, 33n4
 Raymond, 15, 15n17
 Regularization, 37, 45
 Regulation, 24, 66, 80, 82–84, 89, 92, 114, 115, 117, 124
 Regulationist approach, 20

- Relational aspect, 219, 220, 222
 Report CoE, 128
 Residence permit, 36, 37, 39, 72, 73, 78, 82,
 83, 87, 91, 92, 106, 171, 200, 232
 Restaurant, 17, 87, 120, 147, 152, 153, 157,
 163, 187–189, 208, 218
 Rikskriminalpolisen, 166, 167, 173, 192, 193
 Romania, 123–161
 Romantic, 111
 Rotondo, R., 33
 Routes, 3, 5, 32, 33, 67, 127, 166
 Rusakova, 18
 Ruspini, P., 31*n*1, 35*n*8, 39, 227*n*1
- S**
- Salt, J., 74
 Saltus, 11
 Sample, 7, 8, 10, 25, 42, 57, 70, 90, 95, 98,
 125, 199, 227, 228, 230
 Sanchez, T., 8, 9
 Santos, 17
 Santos, O., 8, 9
 Sauna, 70, 72, 85–87, 89, 90, 91, 93, 95–97, 99,
 100, 108–110, 115, 116, 120, 216, 228
 Savona, E.U., 25*n*2, 31*n*2, 33*n*5, 34, 207*n*7
 Sawyer, S., 46*n*16
 Scalon, R., 36
 Schaapmans, K., 72, 73, 87, 88, 92, 94, 106,
 111, 237
 Sciortino, G., 25*n*2, 32*n*3, 33*n*4, 36
 Sex
 - addicts, 95, 176
 - anal, 10, 17, 18, 59, 138, 143, 145, 218
 - another kind of, 13, 148, 175
 - market, 5, 6, 7, 15, 19–21, 23, 27, 31–33,
 43, 54, 58, 207
 - normal, 12, 17, 89, 90, 105, 138, 143, 145,
 150, 153, 155, 161, 165, 174, 176
 - oral, 10, 17, 18, 138, 142, 143, 145, 146,
 148, 218
 - physiological need, 51, 55, 61
 - sadistic, 15, 17
 - shopping for, 13, 16, 175
 - slaves, 41, 49, 56, 102, 118
 - unprotected, 15, 18, 143, 145
 - vaginal, 9, 10, 219
 Sexual
 - assault, 15
 - transmitted diseases (stds), 62, 66, 146,
 151
 Silawati, 17
 Simon, 6, 10*n*13
 Simons, 7, 9, 11*n*14
- Simulacrum, 224, 230
 Single, 3, 8, 33, 38, 39, 43, 46, 56, 59, 76, 94,
 97, 105, 129, 147, 157, 174, 176, 214,
 224, 230
 Sion, 14
 Sipaviëienë, A., 25*n*2
 Snow-ball sampling, 25, 26
 SOAIDS, 93, 107–109, 111
 Socialstyrelsen, 165, 169
 Social theories, 14–16
 Sparenberg, S., 89
 Special part, 206–210
 Stanley, 6, 9
 Staring, R., 76, 78, 79, 79*n*13
 Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 164, 165,
 168*n*2, 171, 172
 Statistics Netherlands, 78
 Stoller, 11
 Street prostitution, 7, 9, 40, 45, 93, 94, 107,
 120, 123, 136, 137, 141, 144, 145, 147,
 151–153, 157, 158, 161, 169, 191, 198,
 229
 Strip
 - bar, 54, 87, 108, 183
 - club, 93, 97, 102, 104, 108, 110, 144, 145,
 153, 157, 200, 216
 STV, 74, 75
 Supply, 3, 5, 6, 18, 19, 31, 33–35, 67–69, 92,
 113, 116, 117, 165, 166, 183, 197, 220
 SVT, 168
 Sweden, 4, 8, 18, 20, 24, 163–173, 175, 177,
 181, 182, 186–188–195, 197–202, 216,
 228, 229, 231, 232
 Sykes, G., 18*n*18, 65, 103, 111, 116
- T**
- Taboo, 10, 98, 102, 164, 174, 186, 196
 Taksdal, 6, 7, 9
 Tampep International Foundation, 25*n*2, 33*n*4,
 34, 40, 62*n*30
 Taxes, 45, 62, 65, 81, 85, 89, 90, 124, 159
 Taxi driver, 136, 137, 153, 190
 Temporary stay permit, 133
 The red thread, 73
 Toppelzones, 238
 Traditionalist conception, 148–149
 Trafficker, 3, 5, 18, 32, 33, 34, 56, 72, 74–76,
 81, 83, 104, 106, 112, 114, 136,
 140–143, 156, 159, 167, 168, 177, 178,
 181, 185, 190, 191, 193, 194, 196–198,
 200, 231, 235
 Träskman, P.O., 168, 169
 Transversal, 3, 215, 222

Truck, 32, 139, 144
 Turco-napolitano law, 36
 Tureikyt?, D., 25n2
 Tyldum, G., 25n2

U

Unconcerned consumer, 111–113, 119, 120
 UNICEF, 126
 UNODHR, 126
 Unusual sex practices, 58–59
 www.uomini3000.it, 49n21
 U.S. State Department of State, 25n2
 Utlänningslag, 167

V

Van der Helm, Th., 72, 88
 Van der Leun, J., 78, 79, 79n13
 Van der Naald, N., 92
 Van Dijk, D.M.H., 81
 Van Duin, R., 88
 Vaginal, 9, 10
 Van Mens, L., 72, 88
 Van Soest, S., 73
 Vanwesenbeeck, I., 111
 Van Wijk, A., 94
 Venues, 188, 189
 Victim protection measures, 132
 Viero, P., 32
 Visser, J., 73

Violence

physical, 13, 15, 41, 49, 59, 61, 78, 83, 95,
 101, 105, 109, 119, 133, 152, 175, 176,
 180, 230
 signs of, 25, 42, 44, 84, 100, 114, 119, 224
 Virtual ethnography, 3, 4, 25, 26, 31
 Vocks, J., 67n1, 75, 76

W

Wadsworth, 7, 8n6, 9, 11n14
 Web, 4, 26, 31, 42, 46–49, 57, 59, 61, 62, 64, 102,
 187, 188, 191, 192, 205, 217, 228–230
 Web forums, 4, 31, 42, 64
 Weitzer, R., 175
 Wellings, 7, 8n6, 9, 11n14
 Western Europe, 127
 Whore, 12–14, 102, 138, 149, 175, 230
 Windows, 73, 81, 82, 85, 90, 91, 92, 95, 97,
 98, 107, 109, 115, 229
 Winick, C., 6, 10, 11
 Withholding money, 76
 Wolters, 102

X

Xia, Y., 47n18

Z

Zincone, G., 38