Chapter 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
“The government now spends a lot of money to tell prostitutes what not to do, and how they especially should not be victims of trafficking, but no one tells you how you can start safely in this profession.” (Source: blog from sex worker Felicia Anna) 

INTRODUCTION

In the Netherlands selling sexual services for money is accepted by law as a way to earn money. Some sex workers, however, are tricked out of their money by people using manipulation, fraud or coercion. This phenomenon, the exploitation of sex workers, constitutes human trafficking. This exploitation by means of deception, force or the abuse of a position of vulnerability is often approached as organised crime or as modern slavery. Addressing this crime of human trafficking in the sex industry is a priority of many government institutions at all levels. Several governmental and non-governmental organisations deal with this phenomenon, focusing on prevention, prosecution, and protection. A wide variety of initiatives are undertaken to address the issue of human trafficking with regard to sex work, as well as in the field of (organised) crime. Laws and regulations are constantly adjusted, awareness is raised, more and more organisations are involved in detecting signs of exploitation, special police teams are set up, multi-agency partnerships are created, specialized prosecutors and judges are trained, and more and more differentiated shelters for victims are established.

However, people who are identified as victims of human trafficking often decline the assistance that is offered to them, and many victims are reluctant to report this crime or to seek help (Brunovskis & Surtees, 2012). Some trafficked persons even will not leave a trafficking situation.

In one of the biggest trafficking cases in the sex industry in the Netherlands a violent gang of traffickers targeted more than 70 victims, who did not make use of the protection that was offered by the government. The transportation and accommodation that was arranged for dozens of victims after the arrests was not used by a single victim. Also, very few victims cooperated in the prosecution of the traffickers; on the contrary, some were observed sending kisses to their traffickers in court while they heard them being sentenced to seven years in prison. One of the victims married her trafficker while he served a prison sentence of 7.5 years and they now have a child together (Vugts, 2014). Furthermore, measures to prevent the exploitation of sex workers, such as the closing of window brothels in Amsterdam, led to demonstrations of sex workers who did not want ‘their jobs to be stolen’, as their slogans read. 

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These apparent contrary situations and actions require exploration and clarification. Are these women afraid, ashamed, in love, do they suffer from the so-called ‘Stockholm syndrome’? What is the role of the traffickers in this? Are the government’s answers the right ones? How can we explain this apparent gap between the needs of victims and the way human trafficking in the sex industry is addressed? These questions lead to the main question of this dissertation:

**What is the nature of human trafficking in the Dutch sex industry and how does this connect to the way human trafficking is addressed?**

Little is known about the effectiveness of the ways to prevent and protect victims of human trafficking and prosecute perpetrators in the sex industry. Do we understand the actual nature of the phenomenon of exploitation and human trafficking? How is human trafficking addressed and investigated in practice? What are the government’s goals when addressing human trafficking? And to what extent do we actually help exploited sex workers with these approaches? To answer these questions, the central aim of this dissertation is to provide insight into the nature of human trafficking in the Dutch sex industry and the effectiveness of the ways human trafficking is addressed by policy makers, law enforcement and municipalities.

To shed light on the connection between the nature of this exploitation and the way exploitation of sex workers is addressed, this dissertation focuses on: (1) the characteristics of sex work and exploitation, (2) relationships between those who exploit and those who are exploited, (3) the criminal investigation of human trafficking, and (4) meanings of anti-trafficking measures for sex workers. To gain insight into these aspects I used police files of trafficking cases and interviews with sex workers and government officials. This empirical research builds upon prior research on the nature and countering of exploitation. The nature of my data enables me to shed light on both the (exploited) sex workers, and on the government’s perspectives as they emerge in policy as well as in anti-trafficking initiatives, and in the criminal investigation practice in the Dutch context of regulated sex work.

**Terminology**

In this chapter, as in the rest of this dissertation, different terms are used for the studied actors. I use terms such as ‘trafficker’, ‘pimp’, ‘suspect’, ‘partner’ or ‘service provider’ as synonyms depending on the context. I also use ‘sex worker’, ‘victim’, and ‘women who sell sex’. There are several reasons for this. First, not all chapters focus on the same people. Most chapters (2, 3, 4 and 5) deal with people who appear in police files, most of whom

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3 The Stockholm syndrome refers to the reactions of some people in a captive or hostage situation. Hostages can develop positive feelings towards their captors and negative feelings towards the police or other authorities that want to rescue them from their situation. See http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Stockholm+syndrome retrieved October 2016.
are perceived by the police as suspects or (possible) victims of human trafficking. The last chapter, however, refers to sex workers in general, not victims in particular.

Second, because I underline the existence of different perspectives, I choose to use this range of terms. Depending on the context, findings and the perspectives that are discussed, different terms are used. For example, when writing about relationships, one issue is that people (whether they are pimp, sex worker, trafficker or victim) perceive other people as their partners, which I find significant. By using certain terms, for example, ‘partner’ or ‘boyfriend’, I wish to underline the relevance of this issue by using terms that illustrate the different representations used by the different actors.

I use both the terms ‘prostitution’ and ‘sex work’ for the performance of sexual acts for money or other remuneration. Although prostitution for some may have negative connotations—and generally refers to penetrative sexual intercourse as opposed to ‘sex work’ that more broadly encompasses a range of sexual activities—the term ‘prostitution’ is widely used in the Netherlands in policy documents and in most of the government’s communication on the sex industry and on sex work. For this reason, especially when this policy (in which prostitution is seen as a form of work) is described and discussed, I use the term ‘prostitution’. For reasons of the negative connotations that may exist, in general I use the term ‘sex worker’ instead of ‘prostitute’, unless referring to others, who use the term ‘prostitute’. By the term ‘pimp’, I mean someone who lives off the earnings of one or more sex workers. This may be in exchange for protection or other work-related services.

Given the fact that this dissertation focuses upon the trafficking and exploitation of sex workers, I often use the term ‘human trafficking’ when referring to trafficking in the sex industry. Although this term also applies to trafficking in other employment sectors, the more specific term ‘sex trafficking’ is not as common in the Netherlands as ‘human trafficking’. Therefore, in general, when using the term ‘human trafficking’, I refer to trafficking in the sex industry.

The organization of the remainder of this introductory chapter is as follows: To begin with, I will sketch the context of this research and I will examine previous research. Subsequently, the research questions of this dissertation are outlined. This is followed by a description of the data and methods used for this dissertation. I conclude the chapter with a description of the structure of the dissertation.

**CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

By way of providing a background to this study I will outline sex work in the Netherlands, describe the more recent attention given to exploitation and trafficking, and sketch how this is addressed in the Netherlands.
Sex work in the Netherlands

Worldwide there are significant differences among countries in terms of the legality and regulation of sex work (Felson, 2006). In the Netherlands, sex work is legal, provided it concerns consenting sex between adults (i.e., those over the age of 18), and as long as sex workers possess the legal residence permit required for employment (Daalder, 2007). Brothel owners require a license, and sex workers in principle have to pay taxes. The underlying assumption of this policy is that normalization of sex work makes it more manageable, which may reduce harmful side effects such as exploitation and human trafficking.

In 1999 the Netherlands was one of the first countries to legalize sex work (Outshoorn, 2012). In 2000 this new legalization took effect and the ban on brothels was lifted; sex work was recognized as work and the regulation of the sex industry was delegated to local authorities (Outshoorn, 2012). Forced sex work, including human trafficking, remained a criminal offence. People working in the sex industry were to become entitled to the social rights usually accruing to other workers. Only EU citizens could work legally as sex workers; non-EU citizens were not to receive work permits (Outshoorn, 2012: 233).

Before the official legalization in 2000, sex work and brothels were condoned and tolerated by many local governments. The police only interfered when public order was at stake, or in cases of human trafficking. The reasoning behind this policy of tolerance (in Dutch, 'gedoogbeleid') was harm reduction (i.e., a decrease in undesirable consequences); the belief that enforcement of anti-sex work laws would be counterproductive, and that the best way to protect sex workers was to tolerate sex work (Brants, 1998).

Brants (1998) describes how, until the end of the 1960s, “prostitution in Amsterdam flourished for many decades under a regime of regulated tolerance that amounted to indifferent non-intervention in the districts near the harbour where, historically, brothels and bawdy houses have always been located” (Brants, 1998: 626). According to Brants (1998), the Amsterdam red-light district at that time was one of the safest places in town: “It was small-scale, there was self-regulation, there were small businesses and cosy cafes, and many more people lived there than do so now” (Brants, 1998: 626).

In the 1970s, when international tourism increased, prosperity grew, sexual mores in the West became more liberal, and a more global sex industry emerged (Outshoorn, 2015). At that time sex workers in the Netherlands were predominantly white lower-class women from the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. During the 1970s, women from Thailand and the Philippines entered the sex industry. In the 1980s there was a second wave of women from Latin America and Africa, who were more vulnerable groups. Janssen (2007), in her study of sex workers from Latin America, describes how these labour migrants made use of transnational social networks, receiving help

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4 Worldwide policy regimes regarding sex work take a variety of forms: criminalization of the sex worker; client criminalization; regulation and decriminalization (Wagenaar, Altink & Amesberger, 2013).
and encouragement from family, friends and acquaintances. These networks of (former) sex workers, predominantly dominated by women, motivated and facilitated migration to Europe and access to the sex work market by providing information, financial support, or providing assistance in finding a workplace. This triggered chain migration (Janssen, 2007).

In the 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of communism in Eastern and Central Europe, women came from Eastern Europe. Subsequently, due to the enlargement of the European Union (in 2004 and in 2007), many came from Central European countries such as Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary (Staring, 2012; Outshoorn, 2015).

From the 1980s onward, as opportunities for making money from the sex industry increased, sex work became big business. Some of the pimps who once controlled part of the traditional window prostitution now also owned highly lucrative sex clubs and theatres with huge and partly invisible turnovers that were reinvested in gambling halls, sex tourism, and more sex clubs; their owners moving into organised crime, and thus organised crime moved in (Brants, 1998: 627). From that time, social attitudes toward sex work underwent a gradual change, a result of which was a criminal policy in regard to exploitation within sex industry businesses (BNRM, 2002: 11). This can be found in elements of the policy on sex work that became increasingly aimed at preventing abuses such as exploitation and human trafficking.

Today, there is a great variety in the types of sex businesses and manifestations of sex work in the Netherlands (Daalder, 2015). There are window brothels, sex clubs, private homes, street prostitution, and escort agencies. Window brothels are the most visible businesses. Customers are recruited from behind a window, meaning that the sex worker is visible from the public road during the phase of customer recruitment. Sex clubs or brothels are private spaces, but accessible to the public. In such clubs there is usually a bar room where customers can choose from among several sex workers. Private homes are distinct from sex clubs in that they lack a bar and a catering license. Customers can choose from among several sex workers in a separate reception room. Typical for an escort agency is its mediating role between the customer and the sex worker. Contact is usually established via the Internet, social media, or by telephone (Daalder, 2015: 17).

The current policy on sex work in the Netherlands is subject to ongoing debate. Evaluations of the sex work policy have shown that, despite the regulation of the industry, abuses in prostitution still occur.5

**Evaluations of the policy**

The policy on sex work has been evaluated twice, in 2006 and in 2014, after several baseline studies in 2001 (Smollenbroek & Smits, 2001; Daalder, 2002, 2007, 2015; Goderie, Spierings & Ter Woerds, 2002; Van Lier et al., 2002; Naber & Van Lier, 2002; Vanwesenbeek, Höing & Vennix, 2002; Veldkamp Markonderzoek bv, 2002a; 2002b;

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5 Kamerstukken II (Parliamentary Proceedings Second Chamber) 2009-2010, 32 211, no. 3.
Biesma et al., 2006; Dekker, Tap & Homburg, 2006; Flight et al., 2006; Bleeker, Heuts, Timmermans & Homburg, 2014; Nijkamp, Sijtstra, Snippe & Bieleman, 2014; Van Wijk, Van Ham, Hardeman & Bremmers, 2014). Several reports discuss the consequences of the lifting of the ban on brothels. When it comes to human trafficking and exploitation, the researchers found in 2006 during their fieldwork that a large majority of the interviewees worked in sex work with a so-called ‘boyfriend’ or ‘pimp’. Among these interviewees, some sex workers were forced to hand over their earnings to pimps (Daalder, 2007: 79). In the study of sex workers in the licensed sector, 8% of the interviewed sex workers indicated that they had experienced some form of coercion when they started working (Daalder, 2007: 80). The evaluations showed there seemed to be no decrease in the number of sex workers working with pimps (Daalder, 2007: 81). Van Wijk et al. (2010: 165) interviewed police officers, social workers, and sex workers who said that in the Amsterdam red-light district there was virtually no sex worker working without a pimp. In theory that should not be a problem, but other interviewed professionals in the red-light district stated that, based on their experience in practice, “no good pimps” exist (Emergo, 2011: 84). Van Wijk et al., found that when sex workers did not want to work for a pimp, the pimp would sabotage customers by simply standing outside the door and force women to pay for ‘protection’ (Van Wijk et al., 2010: 165).

Seven years later, in 2014, the policy was again evaluated. At that time researchers found that two-thirds of the interviewed sex workers thought that the majority of sex workers work voluntarily. Almost half of them thought that the majority of the sex workers hand over part of their earnings to a pimp. The researchers noted that this pertains to the sex workers’ own perception, and that the term ‘pimp’ may have been interpreted in different ways (Bleeker, Heuts, Timmermans & Homburg, 2014; Daalder, 2015: 24). One meaning of the term is that it involves someone who exploits the sex worker financially and/or in other ways; another meaning is that it is someone who performs certain (work-related) services for the sex worker, and is remunerated accordingly (Daalder, 2015: 24).

The role of pimps

With the amendment of the law, which came into effect in 2000, the general ban on brothels and pimping was lifted; the relevant sections were removed from the Dutch Criminal Code (Daalder, 2007). The law came, instead, to focus mainly on brothel owners and on sex workers. Daalder (2007) describes how this complicated the combating of the exploitation of involuntary prostitution:

“The policy, the issuing of licences, and enforcement are all mainly targeting the owners of sex businesses. Although owners might use coercion, such force is chiefly exercised by pimps who operate more in the background, and of whose existence the owners are not always aware. In evaluation of the new law, it was found that pimps were still a very common phenomenon. Sex workers with pimps mainly work behind the windows, in the escort business, and at home. These are the easiest sectors for the pimps to be able to (charge others to) keep an eye on the prostitutes.
In the context of the combat against the exploitation of involuntary prostitution, the fact that the number of prostitutes with pimps does not seem to have decreased is a cause for concern. There does seem to be an increased awareness among brothel owners and sex workers about the need to prevent involuntary prostitution and exploitation” (Daalder, 2007: 13).

*Bill to further regulate prostitution*

Since 2009, the government has proposed to introduce new legislation to address the problems in the sex work sector. This bill, the ‘Act to Regulate Prostitution and Combat Abuses in the Sex Industry’ (in Dutch, ‘Wet Regulerende Prostitutie’, abbreviated; Wrp) has a primary objective to address the causes of the persistence of abuses. The bill focuses on reducing local differences in sex work policy, gaining more visibility and control over the industry and facilitating monitoring and enforcement.6 The Wrp consists of a nationwide uniform licensing system for all sex businesses and a registration requirement for all sex workers in the Netherlands. This bill has been debated in the Senate since 2009.

The conviction in 2008 of six men in an extensive trafficking case in Amsterdam, books and movies about so-called ‘loverboys’ (pimps who seduce girls to do sex work in order to exploit them), and the media attention on both focussed attention on exploitation and human trafficking in the sex industry. As a consequence, the current debate is about the necessity to introduce a ‘prohibition of pimps’, raising the minimum age for sex work, and the penalization of customers of trafficking victims.7 The introduction of a register of sex workers is also part of the discussion, because registration was part of the above mentioned new sex work bill.

*Human trafficking in the Netherlands*

In Dutch law, forcibly recruiting, transporting, moving, accommodating or sheltering another person with the intention of exploiting them in prostitution is deemed as human trafficking and punishable by law. The essence of human trafficking is (the intention of) exploitation. The use of force, as an element of the definition of human trafficking, is not limited to (the threat of) physical violence, but can also consist of, for example, deception, abuse of a vulnerable position or misuse of authority arising from the actual state of affairs. Article 273f of the Dutch Criminal Code criminalises human trafficking, regardless of whether this takes place across international borders or within the Netherlands. According to this article, anyone who wilfully profits from the exploitation of another person shall be guilty of human trafficking. The same applies to anyone who forces another person to provide him/her with the proceeds of that person’s sex work.8

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6 Kamerstukken II (Parliamentary Proceedings Second Chamber) 2009-2010, 32 211, no.3, p. 2.
7 The idea behind this proposal is to encourage customers to report signs of involuntary prostitution (Spapens & Rijken, 2015). The discussion in parliament about this proposal is ongoing, see https://www.eerstekamer.nl/wetsvoorstel/34091_initiatiefvoorstel_segers retrieved October 2016.
The registered victims of human trafficking in the Dutch sex industry are mostly women, between the ages of 18 and 30. The most common country of origin among victims reported to CoMensha (the national coordination centre against human trafficking) is the Netherlands. Other common countries of origin are Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Nigeria.

Apart from human trafficking and exploitation in the sex industry, exploitation also occurs in other sectors. The human trafficking article in the Dutch Criminal Code, apart from sex trafficking, also refers to labour exploitation, exploitation through criminal activities, and removal of organs (see article 273f of the Dutch Criminal Code). Labour exploitation involves people who are made to work under bad conditions. It can occur in various sectors such as agriculture, horticulture and the cleaning industry (within households). Exploitation through criminal activities consists of inducing people to commit criminal acts. Examples are cases in which people are induced to commit theft, smuggle drugs or cut hemp. Also punishable as human trafficking is every action by which a person is forced to surrender his or her organs. This dissertation, however, refers specifically to the human trafficking and exploitation of sex workers.

The nature of human trafficking in the sex industry

The stereotypical image of human trafficking in the sex industry is that of women who are lured to the Netherlands under false pretences and who end up in sex work against their will. That image is provided with nuances by the results of several studies. According to research, women are in many cases already aware of the sex work that they will do in the Netherlands (Vocks & Nijboer, 1999; Van Dijk, 2002; Smit, 2007; Kleemans & Smit, 2014, Verhoeven, Van Gestel & De Jong, 2011). Sometimes, women have already worked as a sex worker in the country of origin. Nevertheless, there can be human trafficking because the women, once they are in the Netherlands, end up in much poorer working conditions than was portrayed to them in advance, or they barely earn anything because they are forced to hand over their earnings. Violence, intimidation, and threats - also addressed to relatives of the sex worker - can be used by traffickers to get women under their control, to encourage them to work long hours, and to pressure them to hand over their earned money (Van Dijk, 2002; Staring, 2007; Kleemans & Smit, 2014, Verhoeven, Van Gestel & De Jong, 2011). Also, debt-bondage is a well known way of exploiting women in sex work. Another way to get women to work as sex workers and to hand over their earned money is the so-called ‘loverboy’ method. ‘Loverboys’ are pimps who win over women through seduction tactics, with the ultimate aim of exploiting them in sex work (BNRM, 2005; Bovenkerk & Van San, 2011). The emotional attachment that comes

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11 See article 273f of the Dutch Criminal Code and www.dutchrapporteur.nl
from being in love makes it possible for the pimp to influence his ‘lover’ largely in the work that she carries out and in the money she hands over (Bullens & Van Horn, 2000; Bovenkerk 2006; BNRM, 2009; Van San & Bovenkerk, 2013).

There is also literature on the people or groups committing human trafficking in the Dutch sex work sector. These studies identify how and to what extent human trafficking is organised. It is clear that the more people are involved in the trafficking practices, the more the tasks are distributed (Staring, 2007). These tasks are comprised of the recruitment, transportation, housing, employment in sex work and controlling and putting pressure on sex workers (BNRM, 2009; Staring, 2007, Verhoeven, Van Gestel & De Jong, 2011). The organization of human trafficking is diverse and the criminal groups vary greatly in size (Van Dijk, 2002; Staring 2007). In a study by Van Dijk (2002), three types can be distinguished: the ‘soloist’ (a pimp who has one or a few girls working for him, sometimes assisted by a helper); the ‘isolated criminal group’ (a group who controls the entire trafficking process, from recruitment, transportation, control, and housing to the exploitation of sex workers); and ‘the criminal network’ (a group that works together with other (sub) groups and uses, the services of other groups of traffickers) (Van Dijk, 2002: 78).

**Scale of the problem**

CoMensha, the national coordination centre against human trafficking in the Netherlands, has the task of registering the nature and extent of trafficking victims in the Netherlands. Additionally, CoMensha coordinates aid and shelter for adult victims of trafficking. Several organisations report (possible) victims of trafficking to CoMensha. These can be victims who file a report, as well as reports from, for example, the KMar (Royal Military Police) who pick up indications of human trafficking at the border and report these to CoMensha. Table 1 presents Comensha’s latest annual figures for 2013 of the sectors where exploitation took place. Note that these figures contain actual as well as presumed victims.

In 2013 CoMensha received information on 939 women and 41 men who were (possible) victims of human trafficking in the sex industry in the Netherlands. As mentioned before, human trafficking can also occur outside of the sex industry. Apart from the above figures, possible human trafficking victims are reported in other areas such as domestic services, agriculture, forced criminal activities (e.g., drug smuggling), or in shipping. The number of reported victims to CoMensha has increased since 1998. This does not automatically mean that human trafficking has increased, but may also mean that awareness and detection has improved. In addition, the definition of human trafficking

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12 CoMensha reports that, for all types of trafficking, 26% of the victims file a report, but when it concerns ‘loverboy’ methods (204 possible victims in 2013), only 17% of the reported (possible) victims filed a report (CoMensha, jaarcijfers 2013: 31).

13 See also http://mensenhandel.nl/pagina/hoeveel-slachtoffers-van-mensenhandel-zijn-er retrieved March 2016.
in the Criminal Code has, since 2005, been broadened to include exploitation outside the sex industry (for a study on exploitation outside the sex industry in the Netherlands, see Van der Leun & Vervoorn, 2004).

**Combating human trafficking**

*Different perspectives on human trafficking*

The views on appropriate ways to tackle human trafficking are linked to views on the issues and causes surrounding the phenomenon. There are different perspectives on this. Human trafficking is variously considered as a phenomenon caused by the uneven distribution of wealth in the world; as a moral problem that is a direct extension of morally reprehensible prostitution; as a migration problem; as a labour law problem; as a problem of organised crime; as a human rights problem, and as a problem of public order (see also Wijers & Lap-Chew 1999; Van Dijk, 2002; Shelley, 2007; BNRM, 2002, 2009). These different perspectives are reflected in the scientific literature on human trafficking, in the policy on human trafficking, and in initiatives to address the problem.

The migration researcher Baldwin-Edwards, for example, describes trafficking “not per se as an issue of migration, but rather one of economic survival strategies on the part of both traffickers and those being trafficked” (2006: 9). He points out that given parties frequently are “willing participants in complex interactions with other persons and/or criminal organisations in their migratory experiences” (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006: 7). Sweden’s approach is different. Based on a perspective of human rights and gender equality, all sex work is seen as exploitation and the volition or coercion of those involved

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Table 1. Presumed and actual victims reported to CoMensha and the sectors of (sexual) exploitation in 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors of (sexual) exploitation</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution (sector unknown)</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window prostitution</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothel/club</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private home</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massage salon</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private brothel (in dutch privé-huis)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>939</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 1

is not considered relevant. In Sweden, therefore, paying for sexual services is punishable (SOU, 2010: 31), as is the case in Norway, France, and Iceland.

In the Netherlands several elements of the abovementioned perspectives form the basis for the way in which human trafficking is addressed. These perspectives are expressed, for example, in the sex work policy, in the policy on combatting organised crime and in the formulation of human trafficking in the Criminal Code.

The aim of the Dutch sex work policy is to control and regulate the sex work sector without moralising. For this purpose, six objectives were formulated that aimed, on the one hand, to turn the sector into a normal business sector free of marginal criminal elements; one to which the existing rules of labour and tax apply, and on the other hand, to make it easier to tackle undesirable forms of sex work (exploitation) more firmly. The lifting of the general ban on brothels has led to a separation of the sex work sector into a legal sector and a sector prohibited under criminal law. The legal sector is (the organisation) of voluntary sex work among adults and subject to conditions. The illegal sector consists of all other forms (and the organisation) of sex work, usually typified by exploitation (BNRM, 2005:14).

The assumption behind this policy is that a sex work policy that regulates the sex industry can prevent human trafficking by making sex work a legitimate occupation and giving sex workers the same rights and protection as other professionals.14 Because the labour laws offer, theoretically, protection against exploitation, then violence, coercion, and abuses are easier to detect when sex workers operate publicly and legally rather than in a clandestine subculture (cf. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012).

**Administrative approach**

To tighten up the criminalization of unwanted phenomena in this sector the government decided to combine a criminal and an administrative (law) address. Human trafficking and punishable exploitation of sex work are addressed via the Criminal Code, while the legalisation of the sex work sector is addressed via an administrative (law) approach, which should lead to better control and regulation of the sector. This administrative approach operates at the municipal level (BNRM, 2002: 16).

The administrative approach is mainly focussed on brothel owners or managers, and on sex workers. Brothel owners must apply for a license before they can operate a brothel or rent workspaces to sex workers. The introduction of this municipal licensing system enables the police and other law enforcement agencies to conduct inspections of brothels, subject to the mayor’s consent. The idea is that through regular inspections it can be ensured that brothels operate in accordance to the licensing conditions (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012).

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14 See Kamerstukken II (Parliamentary Proceedings Second Chamber) 1996-1997, 25437 no. 3 (explanatory memorandum, in Dutch, ‘memorie van toelichting’).
Several municipalities used this approach to withdraw licenses, sometimes with the consequence of closing down whole sex work areas. In 2007, the municipality of Amsterdam withdrew the licenses of four brothel owners, who owned 30 different sex businesses with a total of 100 windows (Siegel, 2009; NRC, 2006). According to the municipality, “there is a risk that these individuals use their licenses to commit crimes” (NRC, 30-11-2006). In 2013, the city of Utrecht withdrew the licences of the operators of 143 workplaces on boats (NRMSGK, 2013). The licenses were withdrawn on the basis of, inter alia, indications of human trafficking. The same happened with respect to a street with window prostitution in Utrecht’s city centre (Verhoeven & Van Straalen, 2015).

Also, streetwalking zones in the main cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Eindhoven) were closed in the years following the official legalization of sex work. They became more crowded with sex workers from Eastern Europe and concerns about human trafficking led to their closure by municipalities (see also Siegel, 2009).

**The Dutch Criminal Code**

Apart from lifting the ban on brothels, the change of 2000 introduced article 250a in the Criminal Code. This article defines the forms of sexual exploitation of human beings which are 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 is also punishable to make a profit from the aforementioned circumstances (Staring, 2012). As mentioned before, in 2005 the definition of human trafficking in the Criminal Code was broadened. Taking the implementation of international regulations and the Palermo Protocol into account, the new article 273a came into force (a year later renumbered to 273f). In addition to the former article, exploitation in other work or services and the forced removal of human organs were added to the new trafficking provision (Korvinus, Koster & De Jonge van Ellemeet, 2006). Article 273f states that anyone who forces, or deceives 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 or deceives another person to surrender the proceeds of prostitution is liable to a custodial

15 The closing of brothels became possible since 1 June 2003, when the Public Administration Probity in Decision-Making Act (BIBOB – in Dutch, ‘Wet Bevordering Integriteitsbeoordelingen door het Openbaar Bestuur’) entered into force. According to this law, administrative authorities are allowed to decide on whether or not to grant a permit, subsidy, or building contract to an organization or a company. They may refuse this if they only suspect that criminal activity or the presence of a criminal group in any form is involved (Siegel, 2009: 11).


17 It replaced the former article 250 ter in the Dutch Criminal Code.
sentence (Korvinus et al., 2006; Staring, 2012). To reflect the seriousness of the crime, the maximum penalty for human trafficking was increased from six to eight years in 2009. If the offences were committed by two or more persons in association, or if the victim was under 16, the maximum penalty is 12 years. If the victim suffers grievous bodily harm this rises to 15 years; if the victim died as a result of the crime, the maximum penalty is 18 years (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012).

The article in its entirety is complex, and in one of the sub-paragraphs there actually is a notable difference in the law between domestic and international trafficking. In this sub-paragraph the UN definition of trafficking in human beings “is interpreted widely and declares all recruitment of women for sex work in another country as illegal” (Wagenaar, Altink & Amesberger, 2013: 82). The Dutch law on human trafficking actually prohibits helping women from one country to engage in sex work in another country, even when they work in the sex industry voluntarily (Van den Brink, 2013). The wide interpretation of the definition of human trafficking in Dutch law, or in other words, the criminalization of the international recruitment for sex work (without force or exploitation), stems from the Geneva Convention of 1935. By not renouncing this treaty, it is consequently retained in Dutch law, even though it is in fact contrary to the Dutch prostitution policy. For this reason, some argue this treaty should be removed from the statutory provision (for example Gerritsma & Wijers, 2003). In a recent thesis of Koster (2016), the author not only states that this part of the criminalization of trafficking in Dutch law is in fact inconsistent with the Dutch policy on sex work, but also that it is contrary to the Community law (in Dutch, ‘Gemeenschapsrecht’) of the European Union. The provision prevents people from other EU countries joining the Dutch sex industry. It in fact impedes free movement of persons and services without any justification (Koster, 2016: 57). Agreeing with Gerritsma and Wijers, Koster found that the criminalization of voluntary recruitment and the ‘taking along’ for prostitution in another country, within the EU constitutes a restriction on fundamental freedoms and is a form of unlawful discrimination (Koster, 2016: 47-48). She also found that judges often decide contra legem and consider exploitation a necessary condition for human trafficking (Koster, 2016: 36). Recent court decisions however show that in practice exploitation or force are seen as necessary conditions for human trafficking. In May 2016 the Supreme Court made an important ruling. This ruling no longer qualified bringing someone across the border to work in the sex industry as human trafficking (Nationaal rapporteuer, 2016). Therefore, in practice we could say, Dutch law makes a distinction

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18 See also article 273f of the Dutch Criminal Code.
20 Article 273f lid 1 sub 3 of the Dutch Criminal Code.
21 Staatsblad [Statute book], 1935, no. 598.
between acts of trafficking that are ‘punishable’ and ‘non-punishable’ (Wagenaar et al., 2013). ‘Punishable’ acts require the elements of exploitation, deception or force, “meaning a cross-border ride to a befriended sex worker would be considered ‘non-punishable’ and would not lead to prosecution” (Wagenaar et al., 2013: 82). In this dissertation, I use a definition of human trafficking that does require elements of exploitation, deception, or force.

**Combating organised crime**

In addition to attempting to control human trafficking in the Dutch sex work policy and the criminal code, strategies to combat human trafficking can also be found in the policy on organised crime. National policy treats human trafficking as a very serious form of organised crime.23 This policy states “human trafficking continues to demand attention with regard to the very serious consequences of exploitation for the victims. It is modern slavery that must be tackled hard.”24 The national threat assessment of the Dutch police also qualifies exploitation in prostitution as a threat, and human trafficking has become a priority in the investigation and prosecution of serious and organised crime (Bottenberg, Valk, Kuipers & de Weerd, 2012: 20). In a special program to improve the fight against organised crime (in Dutch, ‘Programma Versterking Aanpak Georganiseerde Misdaad’ (PVAGM)), the tackling of human trafficking at local, regional, national, and international levels is elaborated. The approach can be characterized as the integral or programmatic approach (Bottenberg et al., 2012: 20).

An integral approach to organised human trafficking is characterized by the cooperation of the police with other criminal law and administrative enforcement partners in order to gain insight into and control over human trafficking networks (Staring, 2012). With the cooperation of municipalities, the prosecutors office, the police, tax authorities and other partners, a range of criminal, administrative, fiscal and private law instruments can be used to tackle human trafficking.25 The goals of this integral approach are not only to convict human traffickers, but also to collect insights into the supportive and opportunity structures that facilitate human trafficking (Staring, 2012). The assumption of this policy is that with an approach that is oriented toward the phenomenon, barriers can be raised in order to make it difficult or impossible for criminals to continue their methods (Van Gestel & Verhoeven, 2009).

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25 Kamerstukken II (Parliamentary Proceedings Second Chamber) 2012-2013, 29911, no. 79.
Chapter 1

Criminal investigation

Administrative control is an important source of information for the criminal prosecution of human trafficking. The idea behind the legalization and regulation of sex work is that structural control and survey of the licensed sex work sector through regular police inspections would make it possible to detect signs of human trafficking. This information can be used to trace and prosecute offenders in order to tackle human trafficking effectively (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012; Staring, 2012). In addition, criminal investigations should not be dependent only on the testimonies of victims, but should be very proactive by using financial investigations and the abovementioned integral approach (Staring, 2012).

Due to the different programs and existing national and international rules and conventions, the prosecutor’s office drafted a document with rules for the criminal investigation of human trafficking. These rules require that every sign of human trafficking must be investigated further, and a financial investigation is required in every case. The document states that “human trafficking is modern slavery” and that “human trafficking constitutes a serious violation of human dignity and the physical and mental integrity of victims and is seen as a violation of fundamental human rights”. Furthermore, human trafficking is characterized as follows: “Human trafficking often takes place in an organised manner and criminal organizations engaged in human trafficking often operate internationally. Criminal law alone is not sufficient to prevent the undermining of society through this serious and often international organised crime” (Aanwijzing Mensenhandel, 2013).

Protection

In addition to the criminal prosecution of human trafficking, the protection of victims is included in Dutch policy. Several initiatives are undertaken to provide safe shelter, medical, social and psychological care and legal aid. Anyone in the Netherlands illegally and a victim of human trafficking who files a criminal complaint of trafficking or otherwise assists the criminal justice process, is granted a temporary residence permit pending the outcome of legal proceedings. This arrangement offers assistance and protection to victims and witnesses of human trafficking. Victims are given three months to decide whether they wish to file a criminal complaint. They are allowed to stay in the Netherlands

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28 If the proceedings result in a conviction, they may be eligible for a residence permit for continued residence on humanitarian grounds. They may also be eligible for such a permit in case of acquittal, provided they have resided legally in the Netherlands for at least three years. If the proceedings are still ongoing after three years, victims may apply for a residence permit for continued residence on humanitarian grounds (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012). See for the current rules concerning residence arrangements for victims of human trafficking: https://ind.nl/organisatie/themas/mensenhandel/verblijfsregeling, retrieved October 2016.
legally during this period and may use all public facilities and services, such as counselling, medical care, and financial and legal services (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012).  

Other Initiatives

Aside from the foregoing, several other measures are undertaken to further improve the tackling of human trafficking. In 2000, the Netherlands commissioned an independent national rapporteur, one of the few positions of its kind in the European Union, to publish an annual report on the character, scale and developments regarding human trafficking and to make recommendations to the Dutch government (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2012; BNRM, 2002). A dedicated phone number, called ‘Report Crime Anonymously’ (in Dutch, ‘Meld Misdaad Anoniem’), has been established so that members of the public can anonymously report suspicious activities, including, for example, signs of or conjectures regarding human trafficking. A national action plan has been formulated with measures on all aspects of addressing human trafficking. Moreover, a Task Force on Human Trafficking was set up in 2008 to identify and remove obstacles to tackling human trafficking (Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken, 2012).

PRIOR RESEARCH AND CONTRIBUTION CURRENT STUDY

Both nationally and internationally, there is a growing body of literature about human trafficking in the sex industry. In this section I will sketch both previous and more recent research and explain the contribution of my research to these findings and approaches. I will examine existing academic research on the nature of human trafficking; the links or conflations with sex work; the ways to address human trafficking; and the impact of anti-trafficking policy on sex workers and migrants. I will briefly discuss the existing literature on these aspects.

The nature of human trafficking

Much of the literature discusses the interpretation of the concept of human trafficking (Meshkovska et al., 2015). In discussions on what trafficking entails definitions vary from “all (migration for the purpose of) sex work, be limited to deceitful and coercive transport of human beings, or describe not as much the transport or migration issue but rather abusive (informal) labour exploitation and lack of employee protection” (Vanwesenbeeck, 2011: 2). These variations have to do with both unclear definitions and with moral views

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29 See for studies on special arrangements and on (the misuse of) residence arrangements: Klaver & Van der Leun (2014); Lettinga, Keulemans & Smit (2013); Kulu-Glasgow, et al. (2012); and Van Londen & Hagen (2012).
31 Several studies discussed here came out in the period that this dissertation was written.
regarding sex work. It is not surprising for this reason that many publications come to different interpretations of the nature of human trafficking.

Several authors relate human trafficking (partly) to poverty, migration, and globalization. Examples include developments such as an “increase in part-time employment and unemployment in both post-industrial and “developing” countries” (Bruckert and Parent, 2002); new international arrangements with harmful effects on national economies causing the displacement of rural populations, lower wages and heightened poverty (Kempadoo, 1998:16), and the feminization of poverty and of international migration (Kempadoo, 1998; Bruckert & Parent, 2002). Against this background, human trafficking is often considered in the context of worker migration and understood by the factors that promote emigration, the factors that attract population groups, and the restrictions and opportunities with regard to legal migration and migration networks. Those aspects “foster the organization and adoption of parallel practices and, from there, exploitation and trafficking” (Bruckert & Parent, 2002: 11). Vanwesenbeeck (2011: 3) points to immigration restrictions in many countries of destination “that make migrant sex workers dependent upon intermediaries, a market that has increasingly been taken advantage of by expanding networks of criminals”. Agustín also points to those service providers offering services that migrants keenly desire, but whom are labelled as traffickers by outsiders (Agustín, 2008: 79).

Analysing existing research on human trafficking it is striking that many studies are more reflective than based on empirical research. However, there are exceptions. In the Netherlands several empirical studies that were conducted regarding sex work and human trafficking are insightful regarding the research questions of this dissertation. Examples include the studies of Van Dijk (2002), Bovenkerk et al. (2006), Janssen (2007), Oude Breuil et al. (2011), Siegel (2005, 2007, 2015), Siegel & De Blank (2008), Zaitch & Staring (2008), Weitzer (2012), Goderie & Boutellier (2011), Bottenberg & Janssen (2012), Bottenberg et al. (2012), Rijken et al. (2013), Groenstyn (2013), Kleemans, Van den Berg & Van de Bunt (1998), Kleemans et al. (2002), Van de Bunt & Kleemans (2007), and Van Rij (2014).

**Traffickers and relationships**

In the Netherlands, the first ‘organised crime monitor’ (Kleemans et al., 1998) showed that before the official lifting of the brothel ban, traffickers (in the police files they studied) were often owners and managers of brothels and sex clubs. Women were sold and regularly transferred to different brothels (Kleemans, 1998: 39). To prevent women from running away, they took their money or passports, imposed rules and behavioural restrictions or imprisonment, and used compulsory drug use and voodoo. In addition, through false promises, lies, and pretended debts, the women were inveigled to cooperate (Kleemans, 1998: 112). Since the lifting of the ban on brothels in 2000, these brothel owners and managers have come under increased scrutiny and are subject to many rules, regulations and requirements.

Since 2000, more empirical studies on trafficking identified traffickers that seemed to be closer to the sex workers: friends, acquaintances, or family members (e.g. Vocks & Nijboer 2000; Sutrecs 2008; Jacobsen & Skilbrei 2010; Weitzer, 2014), or lovers (Bovenkerk et al., 2006), pimps (Daalder, 2007), third parties (Agustín, 2008), or business partners (Verhoeven, Van Gestel and De Jong, 2011). Van Dijk (2002) studied the nature of trafficking, the degree of organisation, and criminal investigation on the basis of 81 police files and interviews with police officers. She included all cases where victims filed a report and where suspects were arrested between 1997 and 2000. Almost 50 cases (61%) were related to window prostitution (Van Dijk, 2002: 99). In both the domestic and the transnational cases she found economic and (love) relationships between victims and suspects (Van Dijk, 2002: 107, 169-170).

These different types of personal affiliations shifted the attention to the relationships between traffickers and their victims (Lehti & Aromaa, 2006; Kleemans, 2009). Several types of relationships are distinguished between sex workers and traffickers: intimate relationships, extortion relationships, and business relationships (Van Dijk, 2002; Verhoeven, Van Gestel & De Jong, 2011). Groenstyn (2013: 52) found in her study based on interviews with 41 Hungarian sex workers that the sex workers needed help to be able to start working in the Dutch sex industry. Some sex workers therefore found it logical that they pay some money for this (Groenstyn, 2013: 52). The victims of ‘loverboys’ in the study of Verwijs et al. (2011) described how the men they met, at often difficult times in their lives, offered them something that they needed at that moment, for example, security (in Dutch, ‘geborgenheid’), structure, love, money, or shelter (Verwijs et al. 2011: 67-77). When they entered care facilities, most victims did not have or could not formulate a request for help (Verwijs et al. 2011: 79). Rijken et al. (2013) interviewed 36 victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands that had used assistance and found that the Dutch victims...
of sexual exploitation often had had a love affair with the trafficker. Zaitch and Staring (2008 in; Van de Bunt, 2007) found that women did not make such clear distinctions between voluntary and involuntary sex work, between legal and illegal exploitation of sex work, and between love and hate towards pimps. Sex workers have their own ideas about good and evil, which are often not consistent with “the dichotomous (legal) differentiations of law enforcement officers” (Van de Bunt, 2007: 80). Oude Breuil et al. (2011: 41) speak in this context about socially constructed categories of ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ and argue that “the idea of both parties being each other’s opponents can then be refuted”. Siegel (2007) confirms this with her findings on the role of female traffickers based on 89 criminal records of female offenders from the period 1993-2004 (see also Siegel & De Blank, 2008). She found that women not only appear as victims, but are sometimes the perpetrators. The Nigerian madams involved played an active and leading role in the trafficking organizations (Siegel, 2007). Bovenkerk et al. (2006) interviewed 20 young men self-described as ‘loverboys’ and found that these men said that the women insisted on working for them, or they let others hit on women to then “take them over” (see also Bovenkerk & Pronk, 2007). Huisman and Kleemans (2014: 218) conclude that between sex workers and pimps, there can be “manipulation through social relationships, close monitoring, intimidation and outright violence”, as well as (economic) dependency.

Internationally, recent studies of Marcus et al. (2014) and Morselli and Savoie-Gargise (2014) using ethnographic observations, interviews, and content-analysis of phone-tapped conversations document “a continuum of relationships between the minors and their legally defined traffickers” (see also Weitzer, 2014: 18). Some of the pimps in the studies fit the conventional exploiter image, but this was not the case for the majority. In many cases, it was the sex worker who approached the pimp for assistance, rather than the pimp enticing or coercing the sex worker. The studies show that pimps’ and sex workers’ relationships involve complex exchanges of network resources (Morselli & Savoie-Gargise, 2014).

**Organised crime**

Internationally, the policy instrument on tackling human trafficking is part of the ‘United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime’. The ‘Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons’ is a part of this convention. For this reason, human trafficking is often perceived and approached as a matter of transnational organised crime. Some scholars indeed describe examples of human trafficking where

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32 Rijken et al. (2013) add that “the results may not hold true for victims of sexual exploitation originating from the EU, as this group was under-represented in the focus groups and interviews, possibly because victims from this group do not use the assistance provided to the same extent as non-EU victims. Further research on the support available to victims of sexual exploitation originating from EU countries is required, particularly because they frequently appear in the files of the prosecution service and in the figures of CoMensha, the central organisation responsible for the registration of trafficking victims in the Netherlands” (Rijken et al., 2013: 144).
organised networks of traffickers are active, but different scenarios are also found. The Dutch Research Commission that studied organised crime in the Netherlands as part of the parliamentary committee of inquiry on organised crime, states that human trafficking is often easily equated with organised crime, but when looking at how it is actually committed, concludes that many cases do not correspond to the characteristics of organised crime (Fijnaut, Bovenkerk, Bruinsma & Van de Bunt, 1995: 74; see also Fijnaut, 1994). In Amsterdam however, where the police were less active in checking on brothels than police in other cities, the Commission found in addition to less serious cases, accounts of gangs extorting other sex businesses to acquire a monopoly position, a characteristic highly associated with organised crime (Fijnaut, Bovenkerk, Bruinsma & Van de Bunt, 1995: 76). Van Dijk (2002: 78) found, as I briefly mentioned above, single traffickers (including ‘loverboys’), isolated groups (more than two suspects), and networks of traffickers in her study of 81 criminal investigations (Van Dijk, 2002: 78). She discusses to what extent the ‘organisations’ she found could be called ‘organised crime’ and concludes that depending on the different definitions of organised crime, 58 %, 22% and 0% of her cases respectively could qualify as organised crime (see for the used definitions Van Dijk, 2002: 162).

Van Duyne and Spencer (2011) are sceptical about the association of organised crime with human trafficking. They argue that the market of ‘flesh and money’ is not filled only with ‘tears and tragedy’ (Van Duyne & Spencer, 2011: 15). While they recognize the misery and debasement of human dignity that occurs, they argue that “the imagery is to a large extent determined by those stakeholders or problem owners who define the problems, often to their own moral satisfaction or to further their bureaucratic status”. It is often these ‘definers’, they argue, who provide victims with access to support or who enforce the law, and this is not always the same thing. Van Duyne and Spencer add that the process of ‘defining’ is not one-dimensional, because other interests and agendas tend to interfere and one of these is ‘organised crime’. They also argue that human trafficking could be conceptualized as management and that such activity does not necessarily lead to more harm, it can even result in less harm (Van Duyne & Spencer, 2011: 15). Oude Breuil et al. (2011) make a similar point, stating that different narratives reflect the power struggle of different parties in which certain narratives (perceptions of reality) are institutionalized in laws and politics and others are not (Oude Breuil et al., 2011: 31). Their findings are based on a combination of literature study, interviews with law enforcement experts, a law enforcement expert meeting and a meeting of a task force on Human Trafficking, newspaper clippings, and on earlier empirical researches conducted by the authors (Oude Breuil et al., 2011, see for their previous empirical work: Oude Breuil, 2008; Roos, 2008 and Siegel, 2005, 2007). They distinguished three different domains each with their own narratives: international/national law, local law enforcement, and academic ethnographic studies. Where policy and law enforcement perspectives on human trafficking “often depart from a black-and-white picture of helpless, innocent and naïve victims, these narratives are not neutral descriptions of the social problem
of human trafficking but reflect the needs, problems and interests of the settings from which they originated” (Oude Breuil et al., 2011: 43). They point to the influence of lobby groups (neo-conservative and feminist) that influenced the image of ‘victims’ of trafficking, emphasizing the vulnerability of women and children and their subordination in all situations of prostitution. In addition, proponents of the ‘war on organised crime’ would have an agenda of securing government funding and public backing for repressive (international) law enforcement policies. The authors state that it is important for these reasons to distinguish political motivations from empirical observations in the depiction of human trafficking for the sex industry (Oude Breuil et al., 2011: 43).

The links or conflations with sex work

Another topic in the literature on human trafficking is the conflation of human trafficking with sex work. Ditmore (2008) describes how “legislation and advocacy work have often blurred or denied any difference between trafficking and sex work”. She states that this has always made things worse rather than better for those involved. This mixing up is caused by different moral views on paid sex. In the literature, different views on ‘the moral (un)acceptability of paid sex’ are distinguished that both influence the policy on sex work and the laws and policy on human trafficking (Brants, 1998; Huisman & Nelen, 2014: 606).

Prostitution as human slavery

The belief in an inherent link between prostitution and trafficking is grounded in the view that prostitution itself is defined as a form of exploitation or human slavery. This neo-abolitionism or radical feminism argues that prostitution itself is a form of sexual exploitation that violates women’s human rights (Vanwesenbeeck, 2011; O’Brien, 2015). Neo-abolitionists believe prostitution itself is harmful to women whether or not they voluntarily enter into it (Limonchelli, 2009). They place prostitution within a wider critique of heterosexuality under patriarchy, arguing that “gender inequality is perpetuated and sustained by taken-for-granted assumptions about the inevitability of male sexual demand and the expectation that men have rights to use women’s bodies and women’s sexuality” (Limonchelli, 2009: 262). In this view, particularly legalized, decriminalized, or tolerated prostitution is thought to create conditions in which sex trafficking can flourish and therefore must be targeted (Weitzer, 2007; Limonchelli, 2009). Policy solutions in this view involve the criminalization of third party profit from prostitution and the demand side, but not of women in prostitution (Limonchelli, 2009: 262). This way of looking at trafficking for prostitution has been widely denounced as denying the agency of women who enter the sex trade voluntarily (Limonchelli, 2009: 262). Most of the research literature does not support this view, and, as Weitzer states, there is no evidence that ‘most’ or even the majority of prostitutes have been trafficked. Both empirically and conceptually, he claims, it is inappropriate to fuse prostitution and trafficking (Weitzer, 2007: 455).
Prostitution as work

Non-abolitionist or liberal feminist activists on the other hand, have argued that prostitution should be viewed as work and that forced labour in the sex industry is no different than forced labour in other industries (O’Brien, 2015: 191-192). In this view the abolition of trafficking is pursued, but not by criminalizing prostitution. Some seek to legalize prostitution as part of a harm minimization strategy, arguing that while the existence of a prostitution industry may not be desirable, the harms associated (including exploitation of trafficked women) could be minimized through a regulatory approach. Supporters of a liberal viewpoint see prostitution as an issue of sexual freedom and choice (Bell, 1994) and that it should be regarded as a form of labour and understood as ‘sex work’ (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998: 5). Advocates of this ‘sex work perspective’ argue that there is a need to move on from concerns over morality and exploitation towards a “consideration of the health and safety of workers, their wages, working conditions and power relations with employers” (O’Brien, 2015: 194-195). Vanwesenbeeck determines that The Netherlands is one of a few countries that are trying to turn away from prohibitionist or abolitionist policies and develop alternatives (Vanwesenbeeck, 2011: 1).

Ways to address human trafficking

When it comes to addressing human trafficking, several researchers address the tension between the different goals of prevention, prosecution and protection (Boot-Mathijssen, 2008; Oude Breuil et al., 2011). This is often explained by the difference between a human rights approach versus a criminal law approach. While the human rights approach focuses on victims and their need for special protection, the criminal law approach strives primarily for the repression of offenders (Oude Breuil et al., 2011: 37). Several authors perceive these approaches as contradictory and often being in conflict (Kempadoo, 2005; O’Connell Davidson, 2005 in Oude Breuil et al., 2011: 37). Pitcher and Wijers (2014) state that protection and prosecution should be (more) balanced and Brunovskis and Skilbrei (2016) state that these approaches are best not linked together.

Many scholars claim there is too much focus on the criminal approach in addressing human trafficking. Brunovskis and Skilbrei (2016), for example, claim that it is not simply a question of ending trafficking by eradicating organised crime. They warn that a dominant criminal justice approach deflects focus from “the pressing need to address deeper, structural conditions that continue to facilitate exploitation” (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2016, conclusion). Several scholars are critical of the lack of attention provided to the victims and plead for a more victim-centred anti-trafficking policy (Rijken & Van Dijk, 2007; Goderie & Boutellier, 2011; Oude Breuil et al., 2011; Rijken et al., 2013). Nevertheless, Cleiren, Van der Leun and Van Meeteren (2015) document a trend towards a more victim-oriented approach that will affect the position of the victims of human trafficking.

When it comes to addressing human trafficking in the Netherlands, several publications describe the initiatives taken particularly in Amsterdam. These publications discuss the regulation of the sex industry, the tackling of organised crime and the administrative
approach, offering (local) governments new instruments and new methods of multi-agency cooperation as ways to address organised crime or red-light districts (Van Gestel & Verhoeven, 2009, 2014; Emergo, 2011; Huisman & Nelen, 2014; Weitzer & Boels, 2015; Spapens & Rijken, 2015).

Goderie and Boutellier (2011) illustrate both the victim and the law enforcement perspective. They describe in their original and insightful article (regarding one interesting case of human trafficking) the different perspectives of the actors in the criminal justice system and that of a victim of human trafficking. Their research provides valuable insight into the complexity and the different perspectives that can exist regarding a certain (trafficking) situation.33

Concerning the criminal investigation of human trafficking, not much research has yet been done. Studies that do exist point to the lack of cooperation of the people that are seen as victims as one of the biggest challenges in the prosecution of human trafficking (Van Dijk, 2002; Farrell, McDevitt & Fahy, 2008; Montpellier 2007; Rijken, Van Dijk & Van Mierlo, 2013). Van Dijk (2002) interviewed police officers and reports on factors that hinder and stimulate the criminal investigation including the role of filing reports, trust in the police, victim support, international police cooperation, and investigative methods and prevention (Van Dijk, 2002: 139-153). Goderie and Boutellier (2009) interviewed 34 law enforcement officers and 24 victims of human trafficking about the criminal investigation of human trafficking cases. They found that for law enforcement the following issues play a role: limited knowledge on ‘the world of human trafficking’ (due to a generation gap); under-reporting of cases; cases that are labour-intensive; force and manipulation being hard to prove concepts; judges’ difficulties in understanding (the behaviour of) victims; changing statements; the difficult juridical interpretation of dependency; and dilemmas about serving the interests of the victims versus the general interest (Goderie & Boutellier, 2009: 27-37). The victims in their study sometimes felt misunderstood by the police; would rather talk to a female police officer instead of a male; did not feel that they were being taken seriously by being asked certain questions; and did not want to be interrupted while relating their experiences (Goderie & Boutellier, 2009: 43-51).

The side effects of anti-trafficking policy
A last topic in this discussion of prior research are the side-effects of anti-trafficking policy that are addressed by several scholars (Andrijasevic, 2007; Dottridge, 2007; Boot-Matthijssen, 2008; Van der Leun & Van Schijndel, 2016). Researchers point to anti-trafficking measures that may benefit certain groups, but that may stigmatize other groups or restrict their freedom of movement. Scholars are concerned that initiatives to stop

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33 They also point to the fact that before 2011 in the Dutch system (judicial) support for suspects (a councillor) is arranged, but not for victims, who are given no support during the criminal proceeding. The introduced law to strengthen the position of victims could offer an important improvement to take the perspective of victims into account during the criminal proceedings, according to the authors (Goderie & Boutellier, 2011).
trafficking may be counter-productive for the very people they are supposed to benefit (Dottridge, 2007; Boot-Matthijssen, 2008). These concerns include prevention campaigns, bans, and sex work and migration policies being overly protective and restrictive, rather than increasing women’s choices (Andrijasevic, 2007; Dottridge, 2007; Kempadoo, 2015; Siegel, 2015). Segrave, Milivojevic and Pickering (2009) stress that sex trafficking results in “state approaches that prohibit women’s mobility, their agency and their potential” (2009: xvii). Others argue that states may use the issue of human trafficking to justify immigration control and that the EU policy on trafficking is underpinned by a crime control approach. While the purpose of the EU policy states that its objective is to protect the human rights of affected persons, it is argued by some that it is actually used to limit irregular migration (Krieg, 2009; Chacón, 2010; Marinova and James, 2012; see also Huisman & Kleemans, 2014). Regarding the Netherlands, Janssen (2007: 11) describes how the legalization of prostitution (in order to prevent human trafficking) caused sex workers from outside the EU to be pushed into illegality. Unlike other labour sectors, it is not possible for immigrants from outside the EU to apply for a work permit in order to undertake sex work (Janssen, 2007: 11).

Several studies also draw a link between ineffective anti-trafficking policies and the nature of human trafficking as represented in the media, movies, and preventive campaigns (Andrijasevic and Mai, 2016). In the Netherlands, Holvast and Van der Meij (2011) as well as Van der Meij and Van der Leun (2010) studied the consequences of the strengthened administrative approach regarding the sex industry and point to the blurring of distinctions between criminal and administrative powers especially concerning the supervision of the prostitution sector. Although the authors are not only negative, they warn that when administrative tasks are carried out by the police, there is a risk that the legal protection of citizens against the actions of these supervisors is not sufficiently guaranteed.

Oude Breuil and Siegel (2012: 156) point to the dangers of the proposed changes in the Dutch prostitution policy for the privacy and equal rights (because of discrimination) of sex workers regarding a ‘controlling-protecting’ approach that causes a trend of non-accountability of sex workers (in Dutch, ‘de-responsabilisering’). Van der Laan et. al (2011) conducted a systematic review to explore what is known about the effectiveness of interventions that prevent or suppress cross-border trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Their main conclusion was that there was no (evaluative) research on anti-trafficking initiatives that met their methodological criteria. Consequently, they could not make a substantive conclusion about the effectiveness of the anti-trafficking initiatives.

Researchers that are critical about the way human trafficking is addressed and about the collateral damage of several anti-trafficking measures generally agree on the fact that sex workers (or their narratives) should be involved in policy development on human trafficking (Dottridge, 2007; Oude Breuil et al., 2011; Pitcher & Wijers, 2014).

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34 See also article 3 of the Employment of Aliens Act (in Dutch ‘Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen’).
Chapter 1

The contribution of my research

There are indications that the way in which human trafficking in the sex industry is dealt with (in order to prevent and prosecute it, or to protect possible victims) does not always fit the needs or problems of victims and sex workers. Therefore, this dissertation aims to add insight into how the tackling of human trafficking in the Dutch sex industry actually fits, or matches with, the nature of the phenomenon. This dissertation, in other words, seeks to explore to what extent the government’s approaches to human trafficking in the sex industry connect to sex work realities. In this way the dissertation aims to offer explanations of and suggestions to overcome the apparent gap between government approaches and the needs of victims and sex workers.

Additional knowledge about the connection between the nature of exploitation in the sex industry, and on the ways it is addressed, is important, for at least three reasons. First, it is important for a phenomenon that gets a lot of government attention and funding that the efforts are focused on the right things. Second, for the well-being of exploited sex workers in the short- and long-terms, it is important that they are supported and protected appropriately. Third, for a successful implementation of the sex work policy, it is important that anti-trafficking interventions are not obstructive to the policy’s goal of normalizing sex work and that the potential collateral damage of anti-trafficking measures is minimized. The same applies to the policy on human trafficking: for the policy to be effective, empirical knowledge about the nature, characteristics and manifestations of trafficking, as well as the implications for sex workers, are of importance.

From prior research it appears that moral views and unclear definitions blur the image of the nature of human trafficking, and that it is sometimes unclear for whom it actually is a problem. For this reason, it is sometimes unclear what it is that should be addressed, and that there is a range of ideas about how to address this. Several scholars seek to draw attention to the lack of empirical research on human trafficking that might “disentangle reality from myth” (Meshkovska et al., 2015: 380; see also Zhang, 2009). In addition, the fact that an increasing number of scholars draw attention to the consequences of anti-trafficking policies, increases the need to look at the way approaches may or may not be aligned with the nature of human trafficking, as it occurs in practice. Also, the perspective of sex workers and victims themselves on how they perceive exploitation and the formulated answers is relevant. With this dissertation, therefore, I aim to contribute to existing knowledge on the nature of human trafficking in the sex industry by exploring the social realities behind it, the ways it is tackled, and how these two are connected. By addressing both the perspective of (exploited) sex workers, and the policy perspective in the Dutch regulated sex industry, this dissertation could yield implications for policy and practice.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation consists of five studies, that together centre around the following question:

What is the nature of human trafficking in the Dutch sex industry and how does this connect to the way human trafficking is addressed?

This dissertation was not predetermined, but developed and broadened based on interesting findings in the data of several research projects that I conducted on the nature, prevention and criminal investigation of human trafficking. These projects were studies of the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC), where I work as a researcher. First, I was involved in an evaluation project of the programme-based approach to combat human trafficking in the sex industry. Part of this project consisted of an analysis of criminal investigation strategies of the police in human trafficking cases (see appendix 1 of Van Gestel & Verhoeven, 2009). The data of this analysis are used in chapter 4 of this dissertation; (for the report of the initial project see Van Gestel & Verhoeven, 2009). Later, I was involved in the Emergo project, a cooperative project between the municipality of Amsterdam, the police, the public prosecutor’s office, tax authorities, and the Ministry of Security and Justice, including the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC). This cooperation aimed to gain insight into criminal power concentrations and underlying opportunity structures of organised crime in Amsterdam’s red-light district (by working together and exchanging information). Part of this project consisted of an analysis of human trafficking cases that were carried out by the police in the Amsterdam red-light district. This analysis provided input for the project’s final report on the situation in the area and how to tackle organized crime by using an integrated approach; (for the final report about the Emergo project, see Emergo, 2011). I also separately reported on the analysis of the human trafficking cases in a report on the nature and criminal investigation of human trafficking in Amsterdam’s window prostitution (see Verhoeven, Van Gestel & De Jong, 2011). The data of this project are used in chapters 2, 3 and 5 of this dissertation. The last project that yielded data for this dissertation was a study of a specific anti-trafficking measure that was developed and implemented differently in three Dutch cities. For the report of this research project see Verhoeven & Van Straalen (2015). Chapter 6 is based on the literature and interview data that were collected through this study.35

During the initial study of the investigative process in human trafficking cases, other interesting research topics and questions gradually emerged from the empirical data in the police files: the role of the informal economy for sex workers, and domestic violence parallels with trafficking relationships. The previously gathered data were used to conduct sub-studies on these themes. The gathered data collected within the different projects

35 The chapters in this dissertation have been published as articles in scientific journals. On the first page of each chapter it is indicated where the chapter has been published.
were re-analysed to arrive at the different studies as presented in the different chapters of this dissertation. The following subjects are addressed:

(1) the characteristics of sex work and exploitation,
(2) relationships between those who exploit and those who are exploited,
(3) the criminal investigation of human trafficking, and
(4) meanings of anti-trafficking measures for sex workers.

The research questions that are addressed in the five empirical chapters are described in more detail below.

To gain insight into the characteristics of sex work and exploitation, I consider the role of informal services in sex work in chapter 2. This chapter centres on the first research question:

What role do informal economic activities play in the everyday work of women who sell sex and to what extent do these activities affect the exploitation and the autonomy of sex workers?

Chapter 3 discusses the relationships between those who exploit and those who are exploited. The following research question is explored:

What kind of relationships exist between victims and suspects of sex trafficking, and what parallels exist with the characteristics of domestic violence?

The fourth and fifth chapters explore the criminal investigation of human trafficking. They explore the following questions, respectively:

Which investigation strategies are used by the police and what opportunities and risks are the result of those choices?

What are the challenges and best practices regarding the criminal investigation of human trafficking?

Finally, to gain insight into the meanings of anti-trafficking measures for sex workers, the sixth chapter explores the following question:

What is the meaning of the government’s anti-trafficking policy for sex workers?
METHODS AND DATA

To answer the research questions, this study uses a qualitative research design. For this dissertation, I gathered information on both the perspectives of sex workers, and on the policy perspectives of government agencies. Using qualitative research methods, I try to not only understand the nature of human trafficking, but also to develop understanding of the ‘realities’ from the actors’ perspectives (Van Swaaningen & Staring, 2009). This dissertation is based on several studies using police files of criminal investigations into human trafficking in the Netherlands, combined with interviews with sex workers, police officers and public prosecutors. By using both police files and interviews I used triangulation to confirm and increase the reliability and validity of the findings (Chamberlain, 2012). The precise methods and data are described below. More details about methods can be found in the different chapters wherein I elaborate on the methods that are used within the separate studies.

Police files of criminal investigations into human trafficking

Because little empirical research on the criminal investigation of human trafficking had been done, in the first instance I decided to study four large-scale completed criminal investigations with the aim of providing insight into the complexity of the investigation of human trafficking by the police. This first study focused on cases that all took place in the Amsterdam red-light district and were comparable regarding the modus operandi of the groups of suspects (chapter 4).

For the second study ten additional human trafficking cases were selected to further analyse criminal investigation strategies. These cases were conducted by the police in the period 2006-2010 in the Amsterdam red-light district. The annual number of trafficking cases handled by the police are not available because trafficking is not registered separately in the police register (BNRM, 2012: 127); therefore, the Dutch Police were asked for a list of trafficking cases handled in the Amsterdam area. This list contained 25 cases. Together with the police it was determined which of this 25 cases were related to Amsterdam’s red-light district, which numbered twelve cases (two of which were already included in the first four cases).

In addition, in two of the selected cases it was possible, during the course of the investigation, to accompany the investigators and thus follow the cases closely. Besides that, the trials of six suspects who were arraigned in two of the selected criminal investigations were also attended.

The twelve cases included a total of 70 suspects and 76 victims. More than half of the women (43) were born in the Netherlands. Another significant group was born in Hungary. Other countries of birth were Romania, Germany, and in a few cases, Poland, Thailand, France, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Belgium, and the Netherlands Antilles. In the case files a total of 70 suspects of human trafficking were involved, most of whom were men. The suspects created situations in which they managed or claimed an amount of...
the money that sex workers earned, sometimes in exchange for protection or mentoring in sex work. Most of the men were born in Turkey (17), Hungary (16), the Netherlands (14) or Germany (12). Three of the 12 studied cases had only one suspect as the target of the investigation, whereas four cases centred on two or three suspects. Almost half of the cases (5) focused on a wider group of suspects, generally six or seven. One investigation was quite extensive, involving about 30 suspects. At the time of writing (April 2016) there had been convictions of human trafficking in nine of the twelve cases. Two cases still have yet to come to court, and in one case the details are as yet unknown.

The police files contain the results of each investigation and consist, among other things, of transcribed telecom interceptions, reports on police observations, interrogations, statements made by victims and suspects, etc. In the Netherlands, victims of human trafficking are counselled and interrogated by special police officers who are trained and certified in taking statements from these specific victims. Dutch criminal investigations make extensive use of wiretapping, yielding substantial amounts of ‘non-obtrusive’ evidence. In all the criminal investigations, the teams decided to wiretap suspects and/or victims. These telephone conversations provide valuable information about the relationship between victims and suspects and the ways in which they dealt with each other. Also, police interviews with suspects, victims, witnesses and other individuals who might be involved give a broad and detailed picture of the daily life and the social world of people who work in the realm of sex work.

Using police data inevitably also imposes some disadvantages. One disadvantage is that police files contain second-hand information. While fieldwork can provide first-hand information, access to primary sources can be restricted, and participants probably would rather not share information about operations that fall outside of government rules—although some informal activities may not necessarily be illegal. Another disadvantage of studying police files is that police data by definition are incomplete, because the results of police investigations are a reflection of what and who have been the focus of the police. Also, as Tyldum (2010) mentions, it is possible that the more severe cases with strong elements of coercion may be overrepresented in police information because these cases are seen as most likely to have successful outcomes (for the police). In addition, police information may be biased, because data are collected for the purpose of criminal investigation and prosecution and therefore focus on elements of force, coercion and exploitation, which is relevant for the criminal investigation of human trafficking (cf. Soudijn, 2006). Also, using police data implies a certain dependency on the labels that have been given and selections that have been made by others regarding the data.

Nevertheless, studying police files has significant advantages. These files contain a good deal of information about the way sex workers, pimps and other participants operate, cooperate, and interact with each other. Another advantage is that law enforcement agencies in the Netherlands are quite willing to cooperate with researchers and to provide access to police files (cf. Kleemans, Soudijn & Weenink, 2010: 19).
Interviews with public prosecutors and police officers

Before we studied the police files of the 12 cases, we interviewed police officers and Public Prosecutors dealing with each of the separate criminal investigations. The interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide. These interviews were fully transcribed. For the study on anti-trafficking policy we also interviewed 20 government officials, police officers and social workers, and 15 brothel managers (window, club and escort).

Interviews with sex workers

To understand the realities of sex workers facing the government’s counter-trafficking interventions, I garnered stories of their experiences with anti-trafficking initiatives. I experienced a great willingness from sex workers to answer my questions. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 21 sex workers were conducted. Sixteen of the sex workers that were interviewed worked in window prostitution in Amsterdam and The Hague, while five worked in a pick-up area in Utrecht (a so-called ‘tippelzone’). They came from Hungary (8), the Netherlands (4), Romania (3) Eastern Europe (3), South America (2) and Belgium (1). An interpreter who was experienced with the target group was present at the interviews. During the interviews we took notes which were directly elaborated after each interview. More detailed information on the method of interviewing can be found in chapter 6.

Coding and analysing the data

For each case, the information from the interviews and from the police files were arranged in an extensive topic list. This list was largely based on the topic list of the Organised Crime Monitor (Van de Bunt & Kleemans, 2007). Next to this, information that could not be placed in the list (immediately) was documented in a separate file. To analyse all the gathered information, I coded the data using MAXQDA to facilitate the analysis. The data that were initially gathered have been recoded within each of the different studies. Within each study the coding was done in several steps or ‘cycles’ (Saldana, 2009). By reading through the data several times codes (labels) were developed for parts of data (see also Boeije, 2010). This started with a list of initial codes to gather rough data from the files and interviews. This list contained broad general descriptive codes. A process of coding and recoding made it possible to find repetitive patterns and actions and enabled us to see which codes were especially useful. During this process, we gradually developed more abstract and analytical codes (e.g., Charmaz 2014; Saldana 2009). More details on the analysis can be found in the different chapters.

In sum, the used data shed light on sex workers’ perspectives as well as on the government perspective on the nature of and approaches to human trafficking. The sex workers’ perspectives can, for example, be found in the following data: statements they made to the police, telephone conversations, their presence and statements in court and interviews. The government’s perspective can be found in policy notes, police files on the explanation
of chosen strategies, in accompanying a police team, and of course in the interviews with government officials. In this way, using a multi-method approach I attempted to apply methodological triangulation as much as possible within the constraints of what was practically achievable.

ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The next chapter, chapter 2, investigates the role of informal activities of pimps and others in the everyday work of sex workers. I discuss to what extent these informal services affect the exploitation and the autonomy of sex workers. Chapter 3 explores the relationships that exist between victims and suspects of human trafficking. I focus on the similarities of these often intimate relationships with situations of domestic violence. Chapters 4 and 5 concern criminal investigation strategies used by the police. I first make a typology of different strategies and discuss the opportunities and risks that come with the chosen strategy. In chapter 5, I explore what challenges and best practices arise from the features of the crime, and with police organizational issues. In chapter 6, I discuss the meanings sex workers ascribe to their situations and to policies and initiatives of the authorities. I also shed light on the consequences of these meanings for the way sex workers act towards preventive and protective measures. Chapter 7 contains a general discussion of the main findings and conclusions and adds some theoretical reflections on the findings. The implications for policy and practice are discussed in this chapter. The structure of the dissertation, including subject, research questions and employed methods, is shown in Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Methods &amp; Data</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
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| Informal services and sex work               | What role do informal economic activities play in the everyday work of women who sell sex and to what extent do these activities affect the exploitation and the autonomy of sex workers? | -police files of 12 human trafficking cases (2006-2010)  
- interviews with police team leaders                                    | 2        |
- interviews with police team leaders                                    | 3        |
| Criminal investigation of human trafficking | Which investigation strategies are used by the police and what opportunities and risks are the result of those choices?                                                                                           | -police files of 4 human trafficking cases (1998-2007)  
- interviews with police officers and public prosecutors                  | 4        |
| Anti-trafficking and meanings for sex workers | What is the meaning of the government's anti-trafficking policy for sex workers?                                                                                                                                  | -interviews with 21 sex workers and 20 government officials and 15 brothel managers (2014)                                                      | 6        |
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Chapter 1


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Chapter 1


