Chapter 5

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE NETHERLANDS

A slightly different version of this chapter was published earlier in Dutch as:

Chapter 5

ABSTRACT

Police teams investigating human trafficking face several challenges that arise from the features of the crime and from police organizational issues. By studying both the human trafficking features and police practices, challenges and best practices are identified. Our findings are based on an analysis of police files of twelve criminal investigations into human trafficking in Amsterdam “window prostitution”. Interviews were held with police team leaders that investigated the cases. Relevant are the relationships between suspects and victims that characterizes the crime, its local embeddedness, and the gradual process of trafficking. These features give rise to challenges regarding the availability of victims’ reports, the identification of cases, and the gathering of proof. We explore the expertise and experience of police teams with human trafficking, the initiation of cases, and the investigative methods used. Practices that often work best are the use of wiretaps and collaboration with local investigation partners such as the community police. Further considerations for effective criminal investigation are retaining expertise and knowledge, and making the most of ‘residual information’ from previous investigations.
INTRODUCTION

While exploitation in the sex industry has been reported frequently, the criminal investigation of human trafficking has received a new priority in recent years (College van procureurs-generaal, 2012; Regeerakkoord, 2012). Human trafficking in the sex industry, particularly prostitution, is a complex offence and differs from other forms of organised crime. Therefore, the criminal investigation of this offence is not easy. This chapter discusses several characteristics of human trafficking and their practical implications for the criminal investigation of trafficking in “window prostitution” in Amsterdam. Several challenges and best practices are discussed.

The complexity of human trafficking

Human trafficking in the prostitution sector is complex. A first point that differentiates it from other crimes and that complicates cases of human trafficking is the multifaceted relationship between victim and suspect trafficker. As a result, victims can be afraid to press charges or they do not want to do so because, for example, they do not feel victimised or because they blame themselves for the situation in which they find themselves (Cf. Van de Velde, 2009: 16). While this limited willingness to press charges may be related to fear or to emotional attachment to the traffickers, it may also arise from the fact that sex workers, in spite of their disadvantaged working conditions, do—after all—make some money themselves by selling sex; therefore, it is often in their interest to continue to work and to maintain the status quo (BNRM, 2007: 128)—a point developed further later on in this chapter. In addition, when victims do report being trafficked, it often becomes the word of the victim against that of the suspect (BNRM, 2007: 138).

Secondly, human trafficking is unlike other forms of crime as it is not a single, static ‘event’, but much more a gradual process. This process can involve multiple offenders and crime sites across several jurisdictions, ultimately leading to exploitation of the victim (ICMPD, 2003; David, 2007).

A third point by which human trafficking differs from other forms of organised crime is that, according to police and justice officials, human trafficking cases are laborious and often not initiated by victims. Because cases concern so-called “hidden” crimes about which usually no report or declaration is (formally) made, the police have to initiate a case and vigorously pursue information themselves (Cf. LP/OM, 2008: 3; Goderie &

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64 Window prostitution refers to sexual services that are provided in a room where the window fronts the street and serves as a “shop window” and “negotiation venue” for the services offered. The “windows”, or workrooms, are rented out by brothel managers in two shifts. In principle, sex workers work independently; they are self-employed, and they negotiate the price and the services provided to their clients on their own (Van Wijk et al., 2010). The red-light district in Amsterdam has about 290 windows/workrooms, which are offered for rent by 31 brothel owners (Van Wijk et al., 2010).

65 This chapter is adapted from parts of Verhoeven, Van Gestel & De Jong, 2011, Mensenhandel in de Amsterdamse raamprostitutie [Human trafficking in the Amsterdam window prostitution].
Boutellier, 2009: 31). In addition, the complex legislation—the longest article of the Criminal Code—does not endear the offence with police and justice officers (BNRM, 2009: 321).66

Furthermore, because of specific issues about human trafficking, there are various guidelines for the detection of the offence. Several policy documents are published by the prosecutors office67 and the police68, with guidelines on tackling human trafficking that investigation teams should take into account (BNRM, 2002: 118-123). For example, the Board of Prosecutors General (in Dutch ‘College van procureurs-generaal’) published ‘Instructions on Human Trafficking’ (Aanwijzing mensenhandel, 2008), which contains guidelines for the detection of human trafficking. It involves the use of multidisciplinary teams and the approach to victims of trafficking. Before any report is filed the police should first conduct a conversation (“intake”) with a victim.69 In this interview victims are informed about the process of a criminal investigation and trial, the consequences of reporting the crime, and the possibility to make use of the B9 regulation.70

International studies on the criminal investigation of human trafficking also have identified obstacles in the investigation of human trafficking. For example, the lack of training and expertise of law enforcement personnel (Clawson, Dutch & Cummings, 2006: v; Gallagher & Holmes, 2008), new laws, complex investigations, conflicting law enforcement goals, communication problems (Farrell et al., 2008), and identifying and contact with victims (Farrell, McDevitt & Fahy, 2010; IACP, 2006; Surtees, 2008: 61, 63).

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter focuses on the challenges and best practices concerning the criminal investigation of human trafficking. On the one hand, we look at the specific characteristics of human trafficking; on the other, we explore how these are dealt with in the investigational practice. In particular, several issues are evident: To what extent do investigation teams have knowledge and experience with the characteristics of this offence? What are the

66 Also see ‘Politie moet leuren met mensenhandelzaken’, in Blauw, Opsporing, (2010).
69 This is a different kind of intake then the intakes that are discussed in Chapter 6.
70 The term B9 refers to chapter B9 in the immigration legislation. It describes the procedure which is intended for victims of trafficking. Its purpose is to make victims able to file a report and eventually to remove any threat of deportation.
sources of initial information? And, what role do detection resources such as wiretaps and the involvement of the community police have in the investigation of human trafficking?\textsuperscript{71}

The findings in this chapter are based on a study that focused on the criminal investigation of human trafficking in the Amsterdam red-light district. For this study we examined the police files of twelve investigations into alleged human trafficking that were carried out in the period 2006-2010.\textsuperscript{72} The police files contained all results of the criminal investigation and consisted, \textit{inter alia}, of wiretap transcripts, data obtained from police observations, interrogations of and statements from victims and suspects, etc. Moreover, face-to-face interviews were held with the team leaders of the police teams that led the investigations. In two of the more recent investigations there was the possibility to closely observe and follow the investigation process and team. The interviews were transcribed and the information from the police files were processed and ordered on the basis of different themes. Accordingly, these text files were coded with the help of MAXQDA, a software program developed specifically for the analysis of qualitative data.

\textbf{Background cases}

The twelve investigations centred around suspected traffickers (76) who exploited sex workers (70) by means of coercion, deception or fraud. Sometimes victims were ‘recruited’ abroad, often women were already doing sex work, but were convinced ‘to do business’ with the suspects. Several women were from the Netherlands, so some of the cases concerned domestic trafficking. However, it also occurred that Dutch women were taken to work in Belgium and Germany for a short time when business in Amsterdam was low. The suspects were mostly born in Turkey (seventeen), Hungary (sixteen), the Netherlands (fourteen), or Germany (twelve). More than half of the women were born in the Netherlands (forty-five). Another significant group was born in Hungary. Other countries of birth were Romania, and in a few cases Poland, Thailand, France, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Belgium, and the Netherlands Antilles.

The duration of the investigations varied from one to eighteen months. The majority of the cases lasted three to seven months. The cases varied in terms of the size of the suspect groups: three cases involved one subject each; four of the cases involved two or three, while five of the investigations each involved six to seven suspects. One investigation was extensive, involving thirty suspects. The cases with several suspects involved cooperating pimps, suspects that worked together in watching sex workers, or who used others for providing odd jobs. A number of cases concerned suspects who facilitated Hungarian

\textsuperscript{71} A recent study from Belgium noted the constraints in the investigation of human trafficking (Boels & Ponsaers, 2011). However, the focus of this research was aimed at another question, namely, how the criminal policy is reflected in specific criminal cases. Because of this difference in questioning, it is not always possible to compare the results of this study with the findings of our study.

\textsuperscript{72} Two of the twelve cases are also discussed in Chapter 4, the other two cases from chapter 4 are not used in this chapter because they concerned older cases.
women in their journey to the Netherlands and in sex work. One investigation concerned a group of friends who picked up girls in the nightlife scene and persuaded them to be sex workers.

RESULTS

The relational and local nature of human trafficking

The studied cases revealed certain notable features, the first of which was the relational nature of human trafficking. In all cases it occurred that relationships existed between suspects and victims and that often they lived together. In these relationships, intimidation, control and violence play a role, besides affection and mutual dependence. This combination does not facilitate easy termination of such relationships. In some respects these relationships show similarities with domestic violence in terms of how victims deal with intimidation, control and violence, and the coping strategies they employ. As we have seen in chapter 2, the women tended to play down violence, manipulation or control, and that they saw their situation as something temporary, as a relationship problem, or simply as a way in which they treated each other. This, combined with fear, caused relationships to persist. Women did not see themselves as victims, or they did not want their partner to go to jail. Therefore, they did not seek help and they seldom reported events to the police.

A second aspect that stands out in the cases is the local nature or embeddedness of human trafficking. Human trafficking is usually associated with the international trade in people, a consequence of which is that law enforcement is focused on international contacts of suspects, and at the ‘entrance’ and transport of victims. However, besides being an international crime, we found that human trafficking was also a local phenomenon and locally embedded. The activities of sex workers and traffickers were often concentrated in certain districts, neighbourhoods and streets. Women worked in window prostitution in streets, that are part of neighbourhoods, often in small sex work areas. The women were on or near the street for a large part of the day or night and regularly had contact with people on the streets, with brothel managers and with other local entrepreneurs. Pimps collect money at the windows, hang around in the area, and drop-off or pick-up women before and after their work.

What are the implications of these specific characteristics of human trafficking for the criminal investigation of this phenomenon? To answer this question, we explored the challenges and best practices for criminal investigation as presented in the twelve cases. We first document the knowledge of and experience of the police teams in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking, followed by the initiation of human trafficking cases, and finally the investigative methods.
Implications for law enforcement

Experience and expertise

Because of the specific and complex nature of human trafficking, we explored to what extent the police teams had experience with investigating human trafficking. In half of the twelve cases none of the team members had experience at the beginning of the investigation. In the other half of the teams, the team leader (and sometimes a single detective) already had experience with human trafficking. In five of the cases a public prosecutor who specialised in human trafficking was involved, while in seven cases this was not the case.

One of the team leaders said there are often changing team leaders on human trafficking cases, who then have to continuously “re-invent the wheel”. A team captain, who led an investigation for the first time and lacked experience, indicated that some signals did not seem relevant at first: ‘A human trafficking case is very different from a drugs investigation, you have to look for completely different signals.’ Another team leader said that it is unusual for the district police to specialise certain people by having them perform the same type of investigation more than once, a policy that is underpinned by the idea that police officers should gain experience in several broad areas. For this reason they are constantly deployed on other types of crimes, and thus required knowledge of a certain type of crime then gets exchanged between colleagues. This working assumption underpins how policing is organised, namely, that the police tasks at the district level are as broad as possible. On regional and nationwide levels, more specialist tasks are assigned. Of the twelve cases, five were conducted by the district police, while three of the investigations were each carried out by the regional police and supra-regional police, and one investigation was carried out by the national police.

In the police teams with little or no experience with human trafficking, knowledge on the topic was gained in different ways at the start of the investigation, which one team leader illustrates:

“You cannot just start with a human trafficking investigation. Personally, I first jumped into the literature to get to know more about the subject. This turned out to be very valuable. After all, you should first have some knowledge of the background before you can set up your case well.”

In three police teams, an expert was asked to lecture on human trafficking to the entire team. In these lectures it was mentioned what signals the team should look for, how they

73 From January 1 2013, the police in the Netherlands was organised from 26 police corps into one National Police. In the new police organisation the vision is of generic targeting within basic teams and more specialized targeting at regional and nationwide levels. In addition, there is the plan to work with the so called ‘playfield model’ where ‘generic capacity and specialisms are brought together situationally’ (Concept Inrichtingsplan Nationale Politie, 2012: 52).
can set up the investigation in the best way, and what they should look for when listening to wiretaps. One of the teams also watched a film about human trafficking. Further, the teams made use of information from the police intranet about human trafficking, from the ‘Instruction on Human Trafficking’, and from documents about “the stacking method” of the police Expertise Centre on Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling (EMM). Some teams approached this Centre or the vice squad with questions. Teams without experience thus gained information on human trafficking in different ways.

The result of a lack of experience with human trafficking is that extra time and effort is required to get to know the specific phenomenon. In the Belgian study on the detection of human trafficking (Boels & Ponsaers, 2011) the point of a lack of expertise also was noted, creating what police officers experienced as a bottleneck in their investigations.

**Signalling human trafficking**

Because victims of human trafficking are reluctant to report to the police, it can be difficult to identify signals of human trafficking (Cf. KLPD, 2008). Moreover, police capacity is limited and human trafficking cases compete for police resources with sexual assault and rape cases that are more regularly reported by victims themselves (Goderie & Boutellier, 2009: 31). If victims of human trafficking are usually reluctant to file a report, the question, then, is on what basis and information does the investigation begin?

The twelve investigations we studied began on the basis of different kinds of information, derived from different sources: police intelligence (from the Criminal Intelligence Unit, the ‘secret service’ of the police), information from the police registration system (in Dutch ‘mutaties’), witness and victim reports, and witness statements of nuisance and violent incidents.

It is often a combination of different kinds of information that initiates an investigation. Information from an earlier investigation, also called excess or residual information—

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74 Stacking up means that the available information is ordered in files on suspects and files on victims. These files combine all information regarding the (role of the) person in question. The filing of information for each suspect and each victim separately is often called the ‘0+0+0+0 = 1 principle’ by the police. It is a ‘stack’ of facts indicating that the women are not prostituting themselves of their own free will, or indicating that there is a case of human trafficking. By stacking up these facts in a criminal file, a reasonable suspicion of guilt of the suspect can eventually be investigated and proven, without it being necessary for the victim to file a report or make a witness statement. Furthermore, the information in these files on suspects and victims has been structured by systematically classifying the information on the basis of different key characteristics of human trafficking. These key characteristics include such features as control, violence, the surrender of earnings, the influence on working hours and working conditions, the isolation of the women, and accommodation. By ordering the information systematically in structured files on suspects and victims, it becomes clear which information is still missing with respect to evidence that is needed for the proper furnishing of proof. The investigation can then be specifically directed towards obtaining that information.
information that is not used in a particular case and to which no further investigation was performed—often plays an important role at the start of a (new) investigation. Half of the studied investigations began on this basis. Reasons for this are, for example, that the information referred to a new suspect for which no time or capacity was available in the first investigation, or that the information did not fit within the aim of the particular investigation. Sometimes the information was so interesting, that it became a reason for a new investigation.

The residual information that was available at the start of the investigations came from several different sources. Firstly, it may have originated from wiretapping. Incriminating information can come to light from tapped phone calls that concern other persons or crimes than those central in the initial investigation. For example, in one case we saw that arrests by the police caused a panic reaction amongst the suspects. The phones of these suspects were wiretapped and their conversations contained clues about new suspects. This information however could not be used in the initial investigation, but did give reason for a new investigation. If residual information is available, a new investigation is not always started immediately. This was the case, for example, with a suspect of a shooting. In the context of the investigation to this crime, the phone of the suspect was wiretapped. From the phone calls he made, the impression was raised that he also was involved in the exploitation of sex workers. The investigation of the shooting, however, did not allow for zooming in on human trafficking activities. If, however, clues of his involvement in human trafficking come up again a few of years later, the tapped phone calls from the shooting case may be used for the start of a new investigation into human trafficking.

Secondly, residual information may be derived from declarations, reports, or hearings from older cases. For example, a victim not only reports about her current pimp, but also about an ex-boyfriend who forced her into prostitution years before. When hearings occur during the completion of an investigation, this information sometimes can not be used anymore and hence valuable residual information remains, as it was unused in that particular case. Valuable information about new suspects also comes to light from the interrogation of suspects. As with the other examples, this new information was not always useful for the initial case, but may help with or initiate a new investigation into human trafficking.

When an investigation team starts a case on the basis of residual information, they first have to consider to what extent the information is still up to date. One of the teams had to deal with victims who had moved abroad in the meantime, which impeded the investigation. Furthermore, a number of cases showed that victims and other witnesses were reticent in cooperating with the investigation, because the exploitation occurred some time ago. They meanwhile had different jobs and did not want to be confronted with the sex work, or were disappointed that the police did not act at an earlier time.

The use of residual information offers a good opportunity to further investigate other

75 Wiretaps are granted by a judicial magistrate
signals of human trafficking. This is of importance, because the signalling of human trafficking is complicated. The above shows the importance of not letting residual information age, but to use it expediently and quickly.

**Tapping phones**

Other challenges and best practices arise with the use of wiretaps as an investigational means regarding human trafficking. In all of the studied cases the choice was made to tap phones (for both audio and textual data), although wiretapping was never used alone. In most investigations, the phones of both the suspects and the victims were tapped, although in some cases just the phone of the victim or that of a suspect was tapped.

Increasingly criminals are more careful with using phones to prevent detection by the police (BNRM, 2009; Odinot, De Jong, Van der Leij, De Poot & Van Straalen, 2012). However, we did not see this restraint in the studied cases. The tapped phone calls often brought relevant information to the investigation. Firstly, they provided information about the relation between the victim and the suspect. In human trafficking, dependency and exploitative relationships, dominance, duress and deception play a role, so information about the nature of the relationship between suspect and victim is of importance. On the phone, endearments and threats were made, and the control that suspects exerted on their victims was evident. This is illustrated by the following examples:

**Suspect:** “How much have you earned already?”

**Sex worker:** “Can I quit?”

**Suspect:** “You have to come home with 700 to 800 euros!”

The conversations indicated that the women were urged to make as much money as possible. While working, a woman received a call to do better: ‘You’re standing there like a wooden doll.’ Another woman called a suspect and asked if she could go for a sandwich because she’s dizzy from hunger. She can go, but only for five minutes. The suspect did not want her to be outside for too long.

Secondly, phone calls give information about the collaboration and the division of tasks between different suspects: bodyguards are controlled, money is transferred, instructions are exchanged on how to manipulate, extort, and use violence. Examples of conversations are: ‘Who is watching that woman today?’ ‘He doesn’t work for us any longer, I’ll just wreck his face.’ After the arrest of a suspect, the others talk on the phone about someone else who should now pick up the money from the girls and that person should leave for Hungary with the money as soon as possible. Further, contacts between suspects and brothel managers came up in phone calls. In four investigations the suspects try to reserve a room or seek information about the availability of work rooms by phone. In most cases the brothel managers did not respond this.

Thirdly, tapped phone calls give tactical information about new suspects and new phone numbers, which the police can then intercept. Phone calls can also provide
information about the residence of the suspects. Furthermore, the conversations can be valuable when combined with observations or house visits. For example, the impression that a woman is molested by her pimp develops in an investigational team because of a wiretapped phone call. The team asks a local police officer to visit the woman. The officer notices that the woman has a black eye, the woman answers that it was caused by an accident. Later, she calls her pimp and tells him that she did not tell the police anything.

The intercepted conversations also indicate that suspects instruct victims about their statements to the police. For example, one suspect told a woman that she should tell the police that she came to the Netherlands by herself and that she works on her own. In some of the investigations, it also appears from tapped phone calls that victims are instructed to watch other victims, or to pick up their money. In this way, the suspects can stay out of red-light districts themselves, and they may think that they will be less noticeable to the police.

The above shows that tapping phone calls plays an important role in collecting evidence in human trafficking investigations. A team leader of the police notes that suspects increasingly use the internet (Email, Skype, Hyves and other social network sites) for communication. In one investigation an ‘internet tap’ was also used, by which call, surf and e-mail behaviours could be examined. This gave a lot of information about the ‘recruitment methods’ of the suspects. In another case the use of an internet tap was considered. Eventually, consideration of investment and efficiency led to the decision to not use an internet tap. In two investigations the hard drives of the suspects’ computers were inspected. Chat conversations were found, from which it appeared that the suspect tried to persuade different girls to work in prostitution for him.

The Dutch “national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings” notes that few results are achieved by wiretaps, because criminals consider that they are being wiretapped. This is supposed to count to a lesser extent for ‘first offenders’, or the ‘periphery’ of suspects (BNRM, 2009: 349). Also, in different investigations that we studied, suspects seemed to have considered that they can be wiretapped. The suspects used different phone numbers at the same time (sometimes six different numbers), and regularly changed from one phone number to another, or used some kind of code language. These measures are not always effective, though. The following example, where two suspects talk about money, shows that they are not always adroit in their code language:

Suspect 1: ‘I have ten red points.’
Suspect 2: ‘How many was ten red points again?’
Suspect 1: ‘Hundred.’

Another suspect instructed his ‘girlfriend’ to never use his name on the phone, because he is afraid that he might be wiretapped, as he tells her on the phone. That suspect considered the police investigation, and said that nothing should be discussed on the
phone anymore. In practice, however, they are not always rationally steering phone calls or shielding themselves. For example, one suspect yells on the phone when he is warned that the police is watching him:

‘I said it before, why didn’t they come yet? (...) I’m tired of being paranoid about them tapping the phone. Like I’m the biggest criminal in the world.’

Involving the community police

Taking the local embeddedness into account of a crime that is often approached as typically transnational, can improve an investigation. As noted before, human trafficking is also a local phenomenon, that is, locally embedded. Although mobility can play a role in human trafficking, the window prostitution of Amsterdam, in which the human trafficking occurs, is mainly a neighbourhood-based industry. It is run for a major part by locally bound entrepreneurs (see also Zhang, 2009: 191). This local embedding of human trafficking offers possibilities for the deployment of the community police, who operate on a local level and are the eyes and ears on the street. Community police officers can gather information by carrying out surveillance and by their regular and direct contact with people in the neighbourhood. Therefore, community police officers are often more capable of building a bond of trust with people from the neighbourhood, often within a shorter period of time than is possible with other police departments. The community police are active in window prostitution areas in Amsterdam. This presence forms an important moment of contact between government and potential victims of human trafficking (BNRM, 2009: 306). Because of this, community police officers often know the women who are working in the red-light districts, as well as the pimps that walk around and the brothel managers that rent the rooms. As a consequence, they can pick up signs of abuse, exploitation and trafficking. They can also form a point of contact for the women in case of trouble.

The extent to which the community police are involved in an investigation is an important factor. For example, community police officers contribute to the identification of victims in some investigations, and can gather targeted information without being overly conspicuous when they are aware of developments in the investigation. When a person becomes the subject of an investigation, it is usual that the police systems are examined for information that is already known about this person. In the case of human trafficking, information often comes up about the (frequent) presence of the suspect in the red-light district, and the contacts with pimps or sex workers in the area. This information usually comes from the community police. In a number of cases, the registered information of the community police play a role in the start of an investigation.

In a large number of the studied cases, the community police not only gathered information, but also they were actively involved in the investigation team, commonly playing a role in identifying and observing suspects and victims. Because community police officers are in contact with members of the neighbourhood, they know (or they can easily
get to know) who is who, who works in which room, where they stay, who are family and friends, and because of their local knowledge are useful in the interpretation of tapped phone calls. Both investigation teams and the community police declare that it is beneficial when the community police are aware of the course of the investigation. In addition, the studied investigations suggest that contacts between police officers and brothel managers can bring forth information about pimps. Actively involving the community police thus seems to have a positive effect on the gathered evidence in the cases we studied.

CONCLUSIONS

Police teams investigating human trafficking face several challenges that arise from the features of the crime and with police organizational issues. By studying both the human trafficking features and the police practices, some best practices could be identified.

The continuity of knowledge and expertise

In human trafficking, complex relations between suspects and victims occur, and human trafficking can develop gradually. This relational and process-oriented nature makes it difficult to identify or prove the crime, for which specific knowledge and experience of the detectives is indispensable. In half of the cases we studied, however, none of the team members had experience in the field of human trafficking. In the other half of the cases, the team leader, and some detectives, did have experience with investigating human trafficking. Knowledge about human trafficking legislation, recognizing situations of human trafficking, picking up signals and approaching victims requires expertise of team leaders and detectives. The continuity of that experience and expertise is important. A lack of such expertise can have a retardant and obstructive effect on the identification and investigation of human trafficking.

It is, then, perhaps obvious that organizing this expertise within the police structure is necessary. In Amsterdam the regional police has featured a specialized team in human trafficking since 2009, which principally takes on the detection of human trafficking. However, cases that are investigated at more local levels can still be carried out by more generic teams. The question, then, is how the importance of specialised human trafficking teams and public prosecutors relates to the vision that police officers at the more local level should be principally generalists. However, with the new organization of the National Police, the special human trafficking team has moved to the immigration division of the police (in Dutch ‘de vreemdelingenpolitie’). This raises the question as to what effect knowledge and expertise in the area of human trafficking is guaranteed in the practice of the new National Police organisation.

Apart from the continuity of expertise, the use of residual information offers a chance to optimally investigate signs of human trafficking. New information about other (possible) suspects, other cases and victims often develops from tapped phone calls and
declarations by victims and perpetrators. However, in order to keep the initial investigation manageable, the decision is often made to not take into account all new persons and events in that investigation. This residual information is then passed on to another investigational team, or remains unused. Moreover, the residual information about new suspects implies that there are no definite demarcated groups of suspects, but rather interrelationships between different pimps, sex workers and service providers. This interrelationship in window prostitution between (groups of) suspects and victims can be made more visible by the use of residual information. Residual information offers a good opportunity to further investigate the signs of human trafficking and to optimally use them in further investigations. In this context, Kleemans et al. speak of ‘chances that develop as a spin-off from other investigations’ (2002: 152).

Our study shows that half of the studied cases started on the basis of residual information. However, it also appeared that a new investigation was not always started directly. Sometimes there was a long period between the availability of residual information and the actual start of a further investigation. That interval can partly be ascribed to the usual bureaucratic procedures that come with assigning an investigation, and to investigation capacity. If a forward investigation first has to go through an extensive consideration procedure, it takes time. The danger then arises that the knowledge obtained by the police team gets lost in the meantime because of the termination of the team. Because of the passing of time, the risk also develops that new suspects are now located elsewhere or that they have changed their working methods (Cf. Kleemans et al., 2002: 515). The opportunity that arose thanks to information from earlier investigations may then have disappeared. To optimally use valuable residual information, it is thus important to be able to directly and quickly start further investigation. In such a scenario current police information about the suspect group does not get lost, the expertise of an existing police team is retained, and it is possible to quickly respond to signals of human trafficking.

Local embeddedness and the role of the community police

In policy notes, human trafficking is usually associated with international trade in people. As a consequence, ways to address the issue are organised accordingly. An example is the “barrier model”, which clearly shows the steps human traffickers take in order to execute their criminal activities, and defines the organisations that could play a role in interfering with and imposing criminal sanctions on those activities. The barriers established for human trafficking are entry/recruitment, accommodation, identity, employment and finance (Task Force Human Trafficking, 2011). Following the appointed ‘barriers’, the model recommends cooperation with international partners and border police. The thought behind this is that victims of human trafficking come from abroad, and thus have to cross country borders to get to the Netherlands and that they do not have valid identity papers. However, in the investigations we studied, more than half of the victims (45) were
born in the Netherlands and all had valid identity papers to work in the Netherlands. Our human trafficking cases furthermore show that victims who do come from abroad mostly come from Hungary, a country that is part of the European Union (EU). EU members are free to travel through Europe. The barriers of ‘entrance’ and ‘identity’ thus do not play a major role in several cases. Moreover, in human trafficking cases there is always a local embedding, as was evident from the studied investigations. It is therefore advisable to actively involve local aspects and local investigation partners in the gathering of information.

**A final remark**

Innovation in criminal investigation practice quickly raises issues on the use of advanced methods and modern technologies. However, when it comes to the investigation of human trafficking, it is important to focus on improving quality. This study has shown that the detection of human trafficking could benefit from an improvement in using ‘traditional’ resources such as expertise and the quality of investigators, and cooperation with local actors such as the community police. In other words, it is not so much about introducing new technologies, but rather an investment in tools that already exist.

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76 Shelley (2010) also notes that, compared to other countries, the Netherlands is the country with the most victims from within its own country. Van der Pijl, Oude Breuil en Siegel (2011) also conclude that the presumptions about human trafficking as a ‘global phenomenon’ do not correspond to the results from empirical research.
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