PRELIMINARY STUDY ON SEX TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION MARKET DYNAMICS IN KOSOVO
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In cooperation with the Kosovo Population Foundation.
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Roos de Wildt, Utrecht University, in cooperation with the Kosovo Population Foundation.
1. Introduction

Academic literature on prostitution migration and sex trafficking has recently been growing (e.g. Siegel & Bovenkerk 2000; Siegel & Yesilgöz 2003; Siegel 2009; Friman & Reich 2007; De Wildt 2007; Davies 2009; Oude Breuil 2008 and 2009). Studies often focus on the situation of women involved in the sex industry, either by force or decision, in their place of destination in Western Europe. Although more and more studies also touch upon the Eastern European context from which victims of trafficking and prostitution migrants originate (Lindstrom 2004; Klopcic 2004; Goodey 2004), little ethnographic research has so far been done in Western Balkan countries. The focus on, primarily, safety issues related to the prostitution business in Western Europe (e.g. Kempadoo 2005; Sanghere 2005; O’Connel Davidson 2005) leaves voids, the study of which is important for understanding the complex reality of sex trafficking and prostitution migration. Challenges related to (out-country) prostitution for countries in Central and Eastern Europe need more thorough analysis, as does the influence of clientele from ‘the West’ on the shaping of sex industries worldwide. Kosovo makes an interesting case for an exploratory research on these matters since the country knows intensive transnational mobility in a relatively small area and has a large potential foreign clientele.

1.1 Research objectives and explanation of terms

This research is meant as a first exploration of sex trafficking and prostitution market dynamics in Kosovo, including the continuum from ‘voluntary’ sex work in the context of labour migration to ‘forced’ human trafficking for sexual exploitation, as well as all possible forms between these two extremes. The study deliberately has an explorative nature and attempts to identify general characteristics of the Kosovar sex industry, which will be the basis for a more in-depth PhD study in the coming years.

The central research question in the preliminary research is: ‘How is the sex industry in Kosovo organised?’ Special attention is given to:

- involvement of foreign as well as local women;
- working conditions;
- the (inter)national character of the clientele; and
- changes in the organization of the sex industry in the past decade.

The initial findings are recorded in the underlying report. Where this research report speaks of ‘trafficking’, this refers to human trafficking as defined in Article 3 of the ‘Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations convention against transnational crime’ which is generally referred to as the Palermo Protocol. Where the report refers to ‘locals’ this is to be understood as people who are born and raised in Kosovo and currently live there.

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1 The protocol can be found at: http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf.
1.2 Methodology

Data collection on the complex reality of prostitution (migration) and sex trafficking commenced with a literature study. Publications on theories on sex trafficking and prostitution (migration) (e.g. Kempadoo 2005; Segrave et al. 2009) as well as on the way the phenomenon is taking shape in the Balkans in particular (e.g. Terre des Hommes 2010; Friman and Reich 2007) have been analyzed.

In order to test general theories derived from this study and provide a deeper understanding of prostitution (migration) and sex trafficking dynamics in Kosovo in particular, ethnographic research methods have been used. Ethnographic research methods are qualitative by nature and aim at understanding the actual experience of people involved through in-depth interviews and observation, among other things (Decorte & Zaitch 2009). Findings on trafficking and prostitution are generally hard to quantify and data on the number of trafficking cases should be approached with caution according to scientific studies on human trafficking (e.g. Kempadoo 2005; Sanghera 2005; Goody 2008; Segrave et al. 2009), making the use of such ethnographic research crucial. Furthermore, as Brennan (2005: 36), Associate Professor at Georgetown University, outlines: ‘researchers on trafficking find themselves writing on an issue that has been sensationalized, misrepresented and politicized. With the bulk of media treatment only sensationalizing trafficking – especially in stories of sexual exploitation – social scientists must, in contrast, provide carefully researched on-the-ground accounts of life in and after trafficking.’ Such on-the-ground data was collected during two one-month fieldwork periods in Kosovo in 2011, throughout which the following methods were used:

- in-depth interviews with trafficking and prostitution experts (including policymakers, police, shelters, local and international NGOs). Key characteristics of in-depth interviews are open-ended questions and a semi-structured format (Decorte & Zaitch 2009);
- observation in locations that could be involved in the sex industry; and
- in-depth interviews and informal conversations with persons who could be involved in the sex industry.

1.3 Ethical concerns

The researcher adheres to the ethical guidelines of the American Anthropological Association. Central to the ethical conduct is the need to ensure the physical safety and emotional well-being of the people interviewed, in particular women who may be involved in the sex industry. The main researcher has significant experience with interviewing vulnerable and marginalised individuals and dealing with their risks of intrusion, dependency, distortion of life experiences through repeated intervention, emotional involvement, feelings of distress and problems of closure (Brennan & MacLeod 2002). Experience has been gained through earlier ethnographic research on sex trafficking and prostitution conducted in Italy and the Netherlands, among other things.

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3 See De Wildt (2007) for a description of ethnographic research on the influx of Romanian victims of trafficking and prostitution migrants involved in street prostitution in Rome, Italy, after the accession of Romania to the European Union. Refer to Oude Breuil, Siegel, De Wildt & Nagy (2011) for conclusions on a study on the sex industry in the Dutch municipality of Almere.
Data protection is of particular importance in order to guarantee confidentiality and avoid premature conclusions. During the study a triangulation of methods is applied which indicates that more than two research methods are used with a view to double-check (or triple-check) findings. One can only be satisfied with a result if different methods lead to the same result by the end of the research.

Key information about the research is provided to all participants (e.g. research objectives, anonymity, the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw). In order to guarantee anonymity, names and places mentioned in the report, have been made up.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report includes the initial findings from the study of sex trafficking and prostitution market dynamics in Kosovo. It attempts to map general characteristics of the Kosovar sex industry. The features mentioned warrant more in-depth research, which will be conducted in the form of an in-depth PhD study in the coming years. The report thus reflects features of the Kosovar sex industry in order to lay a foundation for this PhD study.

Chapter 2 describes the involvement of both foreign and local women in the Kosovar sex industry. The working conditions of these women are addressed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 subsequently considers the clientele of the women as well as other men profiteering from their work. Conclusions are presented in Chapter 5. Due to the preliminary nature of the study, the report does not make any recommendations, but instead provides food for thought as a basis for the PhD study.
2. Women involved in the sex industry

2.1 Sex trafficking and prostitution in the Balkans

In order to grasp the dynamics of the sex industry in Kosovo it is essential to adopt a global perspective and simultaneously consider how transnational processes are embedded in locally specific circumstances. Sex industries take shape against the background of processes of globalisation. All around the world the desire to improve one’s socio-economic living conditions is a principal reason to engage in (out-country) prostitution (see also: Laczkó et al. 2002; Agustin 2007), with different opportunities regarding mobility eventually determining where women are put to work or decide to work.

Within Europe, strict rules on immigration into the European Union, making Eastern European labour migrants increasingly dependent on transnational criminal networks for entering the Union (O’Connel Davidson 2005; Aas 2007), have significantly influenced human trafficking and prostitution migration, as did the political and economic collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Friman & Reich 2007: 3-9; Surtees 2008). As a result of these dynamics most countries in the Balkans were initially identified as so-called ‘source’ countries. They were ‘countries of origin’ (e.g. Albania and Bulgaria, see: Lindstrom 2004) for women trafficked into sex industries in, mostly, the European Union. Nowadays most of the Balkan countries, including Kosovo, however, are simultaneously recognized as countries of origin, transit and destination for trafficked persons (Friman & Reich 2007: 2-3; International Centre for Migration Policy Development 2007: 37-38; Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Internal Affairs 2008: 7; Segrave et al 2009: 20; US Department of State 2011). This is not unique. Studies on trafficking worldwide indicate the tangling up of places of origin, transit and destination (see for instance: Augustin 2007; Bastia 2005).

Prostitution market dynamics vary per Balkan country. The attractiveness to traffickers, pimps, clients and sex workers, depends for instance on a country’s logistical position on trafficking routes, possible post-conflict situation, phase in EU accession and political climate (Mertus & Bertone 2007; Friman & Reich 2007).

According to Mertus and Bertone (2007: 42) ‘(…) the arrival of an international community catalyzed the growth of the sex industry’ in Kosovo. Amnesty International (2004: 7-8) reported that the influx of large numbers of internationals and a climate of impunity as a result of a weak criminal justice system and lack of experienced police in post-war Kosovo transformed an allegedly small-scale local prostitution market into a large-scale industry with high demand for commercial sex (see also: Terre des Hommes 2010; Friman and Reich 2007), creating a pull-factor for prostitution migration and ‘import’ of trafficking victims from surrounding countries. Now, amongst other things, the request for valid working documents has made it more difficult for foreign women to enter Kosovo. The border police are trained to recognise potential victims of trafficking and prevent them from entering Kosovo.4 Figures of the Kosovar office of the national coordinator against trafficking in human beings show that increasing

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4 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics. For operating procedures see also: Standard Operating Procedures for Victims of Trafficking in Kosovo (Republic of Kosovo 2011) and EULEX Kosovo Mission Policy for Monitoring and Reporting Cases of Trafficking in Human Beings (EULEX 2010).
numbers of girls and women from Kosovo and neighbouring Albania are now involved in Kosovo’s prostitution. The progress reports ‘Implementation of Strategy and Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings’ (Republic of Kosovo 2009 and 2010) show that women and girls from Kosovo form the largest group of identified victims in 2008, 2009 and 2010, with Albanian women and girls being the second largest group in 2010.6

Also, stricter rules have been established within the peacekeeping system to prevent personnel from stimulating the local prostitution market. West-East mobilities of peacekeeping troops, diplomats and West European NGO employees are still relevant however, and their influence on prostitution dynamics has developed alongside law enforcement developments. American militaries for instance now cross the Macedonian border to Skopje to visit a sex worker. Moreover, new mobilities influence Kosovo’s sex industry: Bosnian girls go to Kosovo for ‘seasonal’ labour in the sex industry and Kosovar diaspora visit their native country during holidays, causing a peak in demand for sex work.7

2.2 Destination Kosovo

The initial research shows that the Kosovar sex industry has grown since the end of the war. The prostitution business seems to have benefitted from the void of formal structures in post-conflict Kosovo. With executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of power being out of place it was relatively easy to put foreign women to work in the Kosovar sex industry. Women from countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria entered Kosovo, together with refugees flocking back, and engaged in prostitution in coffee bars and nightclubs where they met and served international as well as local customers (Amnesty International 2004; Mertus and Bertone 2007; Friman and Reich 2007).

Women often mention the responsibility for a young child or other family members in a difficult socio-economic position as a principal reason for moving to Kosovo. Natalia from Ukraine stated: “I have a young daughter and paralysed husband back home. My husband doesn’t earn money. I send all the money I receive to them. I do everything as a sacrifice for my little girl. To make sure she has a future”.8 Poor economic and work opportunities are generally identified as key factor to explain the vulnerability to becoming a victim of trafficking, especially in combination with factors such as young age, low education, troubled family relations, feeling of responsibility towards the family and certain adventurous aspirations (Surtees 2008). There are however many exceptions (see also: International Centre for Migration Policy Development 2007: 39-40).

5 In Kosovo, Albanians are the largest ethnic group (92% according to the CIA World Fact Book: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html) and, together with Serbian, Albanian is the official language. Inhabitants easily and frequently cross the Kosovo-Albanian border.

6 Data from ethnographic research preceding (and preparing for) this project, June 2011. Some 30 government officials, NGO employees, law enforcers, sex workers and clients have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics in this preliminary research (De Wildt 2011).

7 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.

8 Interview with Natalia, 16 November 2011.
Kosovo, however, is seldom the first choice of destination for women in search of better economic opportunities. Women often try to go to countries in the European Union and settle for Kosovo after entering the Union has failed. “I really wanted to go to Italy” a 28-year-old Moldovan woman explains. “I found someone in Moldova who could arrange false documents for me. I paid him 1,000 euros for these documents and was supposed to pay him the same amount upon arrival in Italy. I travelled to Italy with four other girls but we were stopped at the border with Bulgaria.” With her false documents having been taken the woman went back to Moldova from where she arranged to go to Kosovo instead. “But I still plan to go to Italy. Maybe I can arrange a Romanian passport when I’m in Moldova this summer. Romanians can travel to Italy so that must work out”.

Eventually the decision for Kosovo is often made after a woman is invited to come to Kosovo by a friend or relative (e.g. sister or mother) who is already working there. Natalia for instance works in a motel with five other Ukrainian women who all decided to come to Kosovo after an invitation by one of the others. In some cases women go to Kosovo after meeting a Kosovar man in their native country. Although seldom identified as such by the women involved, these men seem to be recruiting women abroad. Aleksandra from Bulgaria for instance met her Kosovar boyfriend when she was working in a bar in her hometown. After dating him for a short period of time he invited her to come to Kosovo where she could work in his bar. “I was pregnant with our now 8 year-old son when I arrived in Kosovo. I started to work in the bar of my boyfriend and he arranged housing for me on the floor above. We couldn’t live together because my boyfriend is married and has two daughters.”

More in-depth research is needed to draw any valid conclusions on whether women, such as Natalia and Aleksandra, should be identified as victims of trafficking or could be seen as voluntary sex workers, opting for prostitution as a profession; an alleged distinction which is subject to on-going discussion in literature on human trafficking and prostitution (see also: Doezema 2000; Kempadoo 1998) since voluntary sex workers nowadays only exist in contrast with forced prostitutes, who are identified as victims of trafficking according to the third article of the ‘protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children’. If women do not meet the definition of the protocol, they will above all not be identified as victims of trafficking. Due to the lack of other categories, this immediately defines such women as voluntary sex workers. This distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution generally is far from evident for the very people involved and does not allow for any possible forms between these two extremes (see also: De Wildt 2007; Oude Breuil, Siegel, van Reenen, Beijer & Roos manuscript).

9 Interview with Julia, 30 November 2011.
10 Interview with Natalia, 16 November 2011.
11 Interview with Aleksandra, 2 December 2011.
2.3 Obtaining valid working documents

A foreign woman who agreed to come to Kosovo after an invitation from a friend, relative or bar owner would find her future bar owner arranging the necessary letter of invitation, airplane ticket and working documents. As explained by Tanya, costs made by the bar owner could subsequently be reimbursed by working in the bar.¹²

Tanya’s day starts at three o’clock in the afternoon. She walks into the coffee bar where she works, greets the male customers who are talking and drinking at one of the tables and sits herself down next to the heater with a cigarette. Her colleague, a waitress from Macedonia, serves the men another drink. A picture of a girl in bikini is pinned to the wall above their heads.

Tanya tells me that she has been in Kosovo since 2005. She used to work in a kindergarten in her native country Moldova. With the salary Tanya earned as a kindergarten teacher she could barely provide for food and other basic needs. A friend of Tanya had left for Kosovo some months earlier and invited her to come as well. “My friend knew I was having economic difficulties. I was reluctant to go to Kosovo at first because in Moldova we used to receive news through Serbia and my image of Kosovo was negative. But my friend said it was OK and arranged a well-paying job in Rahovec. So I decided to go”. Arrangements were made quickly when Tanya told her friend that she would come. Within two days Tanya received a letter of invitation and airplane ticket from the owner of the bar in Rahovec where she would be working. He informed her that she could pay back the costs, a sum of 600 euros, through her work in the bar.

Tanya started working in the bar at the day of her arrival and continued to do so every day for one year. She lived in a room above the bar. When a colleague of Tanya decided to move to another bar in Shtime, Tanya followed her. They worked in this bar for another two years and then changed to work in a bar in yet another town in Kosovo, where Tanya has been working for three years now. She is satisfied with the conditions in the bar where she is working but “it is an empty life. At home [in Moldova RdW] friends are married and you can visit family. I have nobody.” Therefore Tanya tries to visit her family in Moldova at least once a year. She does not experience any problems with travelling between Kosovo and Moldova because she has official working documents. The bar owner helped her obtain these documents. First she took a health test and then they went to a special department for migration issues in Prishtina. “They asked some questions at this department. If you are smart, you know what to say.” This procedure is repeated every year. Tanya receives a working permit for one year and then extends it.

Sometimes the police visit the bar. The police check the papers of the women working there. Tanya explains that the police have become stricter with such checks over the last months. If a woman cannot show her working permit she is sent back to her country of origin immediately. Tanya knows many women and girls from Ukraine and Moldova to whom this has happened.

Interview with Tanya, 23 November 2011.

¹² Tanya had to pay back a sum of 600 euro. Similar amounts have been mentioned by other girls. Interview with amongst others Tanya, 23 November 2001, and Elena, 23 November 2011.
While Tanya, as indicated by the majority of the foreign women interviewed, entered Kosovo with the necessary legal documents (see also: Surtees 2008), women do enter Kosovo in different, more informal, ways as well. This was the case for Mira from Serbia:

Mira looks well groomed with her long shiny black hair, carefully polished nails and neat clothes. Seeing her, one would never imagine that she rehabilitated from a drug addiction and quit working in prostitution to sustain her need for heroin less than a year ago. Mira’s addiction started in Serbia where she was married to an abusive husband with whom she regularly used drugs. Mira’s husband was extremely violent with her, which even resulted in her having a miscarriage at one point. “One day my husband told me I had to meet a Serbian drug dealer from Kosovo to arrange some drugs for us. When I met this dealer I told him about the violence used by my husband. The dealer told me this was not normal and offered to take me with him to Kosovo. If I accepted work in a bar in Kosovo he could provide me with drugs whenever I needed. I decided to do it”. Together with the drug dealer Mira crossed the mountains and entered Kosovo. Upon arrival in Kosovo the dealer found her a job at a bar and a room to live.

Interview with Mira, 8 December 2011.

Women like Tanya from Moldova, Natalia from Ukraine and Mira from Serbia did not experience difficulties entering and working in Kosovo (see also: Surtees 2008: 52 – 53). Not in the last place because their respective bar owners helped them obtain the obligatory valid working documents. Surtees (2008: 51) describes that the use of contracts and legal documentation can also be deliberately used by bar owners as ‘a means of deflecting [possible RdW] concerns about trafficking and masking the intended exploitation’.

A Moldovan woman explains the procedure to obtain legal documentation: “These days it is difficult to get proper Kosovar papers but when I arrived four years ago I just needed to do a health test and go to the Ministry with my boss. It was no problem and all arranged in three days. The papers are for one year and after one year you can extend it again.” The importance of having the correct papers is emphasized by all ladies. The Moldovan woman experienced that the police visited the bar where she is working two times this year. “They asked for my Kosovar ID, my Moldovan passport and my working permit. I could show it and then it was OK. I only had to put the documents on the table and didn’t speak with the police. The bar owner usually talks with them”.14

As outlined by Tanya, women who are not able to show valid working documents are increasingly often sent back to their countries of origin. The obligatory working documents are more and more difficult to obtain. At the same time the border police are trained to recognise potential victims of trafficking and prevent women and girls with suspicious reasons for travelling from entering Kosovo. The situation of a foreign woman is, for instance, seen as suspicious when she states that she will be working in an Internet café in Prishtina. With Kosovo’s unemployment rate being around 45%15 it seems

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13 Interview with Julia, 30 November 2011.
14 Interview with Julia, 30 November 2011.
rather unlikely that low-skilled workers have to be recruited abroad. These factors make it increasingly difficult for foreign women to enter and work in Kosovo.

2.4 Changes in the sex industry: growing involvement of local women

The sex industry has changed since its initial rapid growth. While it is becoming difficult for foreign women to enter Kosovo and work in its sex industry figures of the Kosovar office of the national coordinator against trafficking in human beings show that increasing numbers of girls and women from Kosovo and neighbouring Albania are currently involved in the Kosovar prostitution business (see also: Republic of Kosovo 2009 and 2010). The 20-year-old Donjeta from South Kosovo was forced into the sex industry after she moved to Prishtina to start studying there:

Donjeta moved into a flat in Pristina with two friends. After a few months she had difficulties paying the rent. One of her friends told Donjeta about a boy she knew. The boy had money and could be of help. Donjeta decided to meet the boy and they had sexual intercourse, after which he paid one month of rent for her. The boy and Donjeta entered into a sexual relationship during which the boy paid for the flat. After some months the boy insisted that Donjeta should have sex with his friends as well. Donjeta moved to another flat, arranged by the boy, where she lived and received men, also arranged by the boy. Donjeta was not able to leave this flat and situation of forced prostitution for nearly one year. After intervention of the police she was reunited with her family. Initially the family was unwilling to take Donjeta back into their home because of her involvement in the sex industry. The neighbours do not know about her past since it would make integration back into the village challenging.

Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees, have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.

The way in which the boy lured Donjeta towards the sex industry closely resembles elements of the working method of a so-called ‘loverboy’. The term ‘loverboy’ came into use in the Netherlands in the nineties and is increasingly being used internationally in order to describe a working method aimed at the commercial sexual exploitation of victims. Characteristic of the technique of a loverboy is the way of recruitment and use of ‘grooming’. Men and boys establish contact, seduce and charm a victim through (the promise of) a loving relationship, which in reality is aimed at her exploitation in the prostitution business or another industry (Bovenkerk 2006; Verwijs, Main, Goderie, Harreveld & Jansma 2011). Although it is not clear if Donjeta was in love with the boy or only involved in a sexual relationship in exchange for him paying the rent, it is distinctive that the boy made Donjeta dependent, possibly emotional but in any case financial, in order to subsequently exploit her for commercial sex, either by force, (the threat of) violence or misuse of the vulnerable position she was in.

16 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.
A boyfriend, closely resembling a loverboy, nowadays seems to play a paramount role in the involvement of Kosovar and Albanian girls in the sex industry. This is not unique to Kosovo. Sexual exploitation of, mostly, young women and girls in the sex industry, through loverboys, is also found in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. In her study on traffickers and trafficking in Southern and Eastern Europe, Surtees (2008: 52) concludes that trafficking in many countries heavily relies on ‘a trafficker’s existing relationship with the victim’. She found that over 80 percent of victims of trafficking in Albania in 2003 and 2004 were acquainted with their trafficker, with a significant part of the recruiters being men with whom the victim had a ‘loving’ relationship.

Some features make women and girls worldwide vulnerable to becoming a victim of such recruiters and ‘boyfriends’. Loverboys generally pick victims with a troubled family background, (mild) intellectual disability and low self-esteem; features which make people vulnerable since they tend to be more dependent and less likely to be able to defend themselves (Verwijs, Main, Goderie, Harreveld & Jansma 2011). Some characteristics of Kosovar society today can explain the vulnerability of young Kosovar women and girls, such as Donjeta, to becoming the victim of a loverboy or other forms of sexual exploitation.

Firstly, since the war Kosovo’s citizens are amongst the poorest in Europe (Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Internal Affairs 2008: 13). The difficult economic situation and limited economic possibilities make women and girls vulnerable. Secondly, decreasing social control in Kosovar society is considered to make the, considerable, young population more vulnerable to exploitation. During and after the war, many families moved from the sheltered communities in the villages to the more anonymous cities with limited social control. Young women in the cities more easily come into contact with outsiders offering love relationships or deceiving well-paid job offers as waitresses or dancers; jobs which may seem attractive to young women suffering from poverty but can turn out to be sex work.

Women and girls from Kosovo and Albania, however, do not always end up working in the sex industry after force or deception. “I used to work at a supermarket but left my job because of the low salary” tells a 22-year-old Kosovar woman. “I came to work in this bar because of the money. In addition to my salary the boss arranges food for me and a taxi that takes me home after work.” Young women and girls who exchange sex for housing, money, a taxi ride or cocktails are other forms of more informally arranged prostitution observed by police, taxi drivers and other bystanders in Kosovo’s main cities which seem to be caused by poverty. Furthermore, as outlined in the story of Mira from Serbia, drug addiction can be an important reason for entering the prostitution business. This also holds for local women:

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17 Interview with Tanya, 23 November 2011, Yana, 23 November 2011, Julia, 30 November 2011 and Aleksandra, 2 December 2011.
18 Unicef concludes that children worldwide are more vulnerable to involvement in (commercial) sexual exploitation in cities in their report The State of the World’s Children 2012: Executive Summary (February 2012).
19 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.
20 Interview with Besarta, 17 November 2011.
21 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.
Zamira (35) lived in Switzerland with her husband in the nineties. They often partied in discotheques and started using drugs, eventually becoming addicted to heroin. When Zamira returned to Kosovo in 2000 she was thinking about drugs all day. “I used to buy drugs from a dealer but sometimes I didn’t have money. When you are without heroin you accept any price to take a shot. You pay with money or if you don’t have money, something else.” In order to sustain her drug addiction Zamira started selling sex. “Sometimes clients wanted me to do things I didn’t want to do. But I had to do it because when you are in a drug crisis you do anything.”

Interview with Zamira, 25 November 2011.

As outlined in a study amongst clients in the Netherlands (Zaitch & Staring 2009: 94) female drug addicts can be attractive to clients who get a kick out of getting sexual services as cheap as possible from prostitutes in need for drugs and therefore money.

The ways in which foreign and local girls, either addicted to drugs or not, take part in the sex industry is outlined in the next chapter.

Overview

• Shortly after the end of the war foreign women, from countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria, entered Kosovo and engaged in prostitution. Difficult socio-economic positions are given as principal reasons for women to engage in this out-country prostitution.
• Women opt for Kosovo after an invitation by a friend or relative (e.g. sister or mother), who is already working there, or after meeting a Kosovar man in their native country. The future bar owner usually arranges the necessary letter of invitation, airplane ticket and working documents.
• Nowadays it has become difficult for foreign women to enter and work in Kosovo. Women who are not able to show valid working documents are increasingly sent back to their countries of origin.
• Growing numbers of girls and women from Kosovo and neighbouring Albania are currently involved in the Kosovar prostitution business. The difficult economic situation and limited economic possibilities as well as decreasing social control in Kosovar society are considered to lure local girls and women into the sex industry either by choice or by force. Furthermore drug addiction can be a reason for entering the sex industry.
3. Working conditions

Right after the war, sex workers were mainly found working in coffee bars and nightclubs. On these premises women also provided their clients with sexual services.\(^{22}\) This is not unique to Kosovo. “...being a waitress in Albania is just like being a "waitress" in Italy or Greece... serve in the front room, fuck in the back room.... (...) So anyone who is going to be a waitress in the West knows what that means... we are not stupid” (Davies 2009: 154-155). This citation, which is a compilation of statements by two informants in the ethnographic research by Davies (2009) on Albanian women in Lyon’s (France) sex industry, shows it is a well-known pattern that the sexual act takes place in coffee bars, night clubs and comparable establishments anywhere in Europe.

Sex workers in Kosovo, however, have changed their way of working over the past few years. In order to make it more difficult for the police to locate and control prostitution, women increasingly move to private houses or hotels for the sexual act, although they generally still meet their clients in the coffee bars and night clubs. These developments are explained as a consequence of the strengthening of police control (see also Surtees 2008: 55). The way coffee bars and nightclubs function as a meeting ground for women and clients is outlined in the next paragraphs.

Nowadays police and prosecutors also observe cases where women and girls, such as Donjeta, do not leave the private house or hotel to meet clients. This could mean the sex industry is evolving towards a situation in which women remain in private houses or hotels and have their customers brought to them (Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of the National Coordinator against Trafficking in Human Beings 2009). Meetings with customers are arranged by middlemen such as pimps, taxi drivers and, in the case of Donjeta, ‘loverboys’.\(^{23}\) This phenomenon is still under study and will therefore not be discussed in the underlying report.

3.1 The bar as a meeting place

The working conditions in coffee bars, which function as meeting grounds for clients and women, become apparent in the continuation of the story of Mira from Serbia, who crossed the mountains to enter Kosovo and then found a job in a coffee bar through her drug dealer:

\(^{22}\) Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.

\(^{23}\) Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.
“My friend [the drug dealer RdW] found me a job in a coffee bar. I could also live in a room in the basement of the bar, together with the other girls working there. We didn’t have to pay for it.” Mira worked in the bar together with four other girls. One of the girls was Serbian as well. “The day I arrived, the Serbian girl said to me in Serbian: ‘Why did you come? You don’t know what it is like’. An older waitress heard our conversation and told us to be silent or speak in Albanian. Then she took the Serbian girl to the kitchen. I don’t know what happened there but she had been crying when she came back in the bar.”

When in the bar, every girl would be responsible for three tables. “We had to keep the guests at our tables company. After work some of the girls would go with the clients. But only after working hours. The boss wouldn’t let you go during work because you had to keep all the guests company. Sometimes he [the boss RdW] would say: ‘go to that man. He has a lot of money. Let him order these drinks for you because they are expensive’.”

At the beginning Mira was not free to leave the bar after her working day had finished. The bar owner would not let her go out because he was afraid she would be tempted by other bar owners to work for them. “The bar owner and his wife lived in front of the bar. He told his wife to check if we were in the bar or in our room. She would watch us through the window from her house all the time. She also had the key of our room and sometimes would come over. She was so jealous and wanted to know if the bar owner had affairs with the girls. The wife wasn’t allowed in the coffee bar so she wanted me to tell her what was going on there and what her husband [the bar owner RdW] was doing. So she would come and ask questions all the time”.

When Mira had been working in the bar for some time, the bar owner did allow her to go out. Sometimes Mira would go with clients after work. “If I slept with a client then he would come over to the bar more often so the bar owner wanted that. But I could keep the money I earned after working hours for myself”.

While in the bar, the clients would pay Mira for the drinks. She would give this money to the bar owner after working hours. The money earned by keeping the clients company in the bar would be for her. “If clients asked me to accompany them, the price would start at 10 euros. If they took my telephone number and asked to meet later, then they would pay more to seduce me. This is not for sex but just for the company. If we left together and had sex later then he would pay again. Young men maybe 20 or 30 euros and older men between 60 and 70.”

At the beginning Mira could keep all the money she earned. After a while the bar owner, however, would try to take her money. “He would say: I need money. Can I borrow something from you? And then you wouldn’t get this money back. When I didn’t want to give him my money any more he started to treat me really bad and he started to yell at me.” Mira then decided she needed to get away from the bar. She managed to escape and went to the police.

Interview with Mira, 8 December 2011.

Some characteristics of prostitution as it is taking place around coffee bars and clubs in Kosovo today can be observed in Mira’s story. First women and girls can earn money by accompanying guests in the bar where they are working. A client is paying the girl to sit, drink and sometimes eat with him. Women can earn more money if they make the client buy them expensive drinks or if they dance, pole dance or sing.
Then, women tend to meet clients from the bar for sexual intercourse after working hours. A woman and a client can agree on a place to meet after the bar has closed or a client can ask for her telephone number. A meeting is then established by phone as soon as a woman is free. Mira explains: “You could meet with 3 to 5 clients a night this way. Maybe you would only work from 10 until 20 or from 20 until 23 but afterwards you might be working until 5 in the morning”. According to Mira, bar owners are not involved in the making of these appointments but benefit from the bonding of customers to the bar, ensuring more drinks are being sold, and they try to get access to the additional income earned by the women.

Later, women are inclined to move to a motel or hotel for the sexual act. Although women generally meet their clients in the coffee bars and night clubs they will agree to meet for sexual services in a nearby hotel where rooms can be rented per hour or per night. The client will pay for the costs of the hotel.

The progress report ‘Implementation of Strategy and Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings’ 2009, from the Kosovar office of the national coordinator against trafficking in human beings (Republic of Kosovo 2009: 15), describes the fact that women often seem to take the money from the clients as a possible strategy devised by bar owners or traffickers. Bar owners possibly try to avoid being identified as a human trafficker or person facilitating prostitution in case of a police investigation, by introducing this security measure of not directly taking the money.

As shown in the story of Mira, the fact that women often take the money does not mean that they can keep all the money earned. As described, bar owners use different methods to eventually take the money from the women. At the same time bar owners do not want to chase women away. A general strategy to keep women working in the bar is to offer them a minimal salary which could be just a bit more then alternative ways of making a living or opportunities in the country of origin (see also: De Wildt 2007; Surtees 2008: 58).

The abovementioned features of the sex industry, as it is taking place around coffee bars in Kosovo, are general trends. There are exceptions, since naturally every bar has its own dynamics. The abovementioned Zamira, for instance, worked in bars where the bar owner would allow and even stimulate her to go with clients during working hours. At times, the bar owner would tell her to go with a client and even set the price. It was difficult to refuse. “One time a boss hit me when I didn’t want to go with a really old client. I didn’t go to the police but I did quit that job.” If Zamira left the bar to go with a client during working hours then she would split the money earned between herself and the bar owner.

Similar exceptions exist with regard to the place a woman and a client meet. Although the sexual act generally takes place in a motel or private house, some working places (e.g. coffee bars) allow the women to meet a client in their private rooms in the same building.

Women and girls tend to circulate between bars in different cities in Kosovo as well as neighbouring Albania and Macedonia. Circulation can be voluntary, as illustrated by Tanya who changed her working place various times in order to follow a friend who informed her about better working conditions elsewhere. Zamira had a similar experience: “I often changed my working place. Sometimes the boss wanted me to go with a client and if I didn’t want it then I was fired or I quit and changed my job. It is almost self-employment. Usually I would only work in a place for a few weeks. I would leave when the boss started to force me to do things or when he wanted to take all my money.” Zamira always found it

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24 Interview with Zamira, 25 November 2011.
25 Interview with Natalia, 16 November 2011.
easy to find a new job. “When you do this kind of job you have many contacts. People know you. There are many coffees [coffee bars RdW] and if you cannot find one in Mitrovica then you will in Vushtrri. It never took long. Maybe one or two days.”

Mira, however, doubts if the circulation between bars is always voluntary. The Serbian girl she met on her first day, was working in the bar one day, when two men arrived. The men talked to the owner and then told the Serbian and one other girl to join them. “They spoke with my friend and the other girl. Then they went to pack their bags and they were gone in 15 minutes. We didn’t even have the opportunity to say bye. I don’t know if my friend agreed to leave or even knew that she would be leaving. She never talked about leaving the bar. I tried to call her but never managed to get into contact again. Someone told me she is working in another city now.” Experts suggest girls are being moved between bars in order to offer customers ‘fresh merchandise’ regularly (see also: Zaitch & Staring 2009). Women might be sold to other bar owners or circulate between bars owned by the same person.

3.2 Independent sex workers

Working in a coffee bar in order to meet clients is not the only way in which prostitution is practised in Kosovo. Women also work as rather ‘independent’ prostitutes. Lindita for instance created a network of local and international clients with whom she met in order to have paid sex.

“I had a number of regular clients from Kosovo but internationals as well. I lived in Germany for a while so I could speak German or English with the internationals.” Lindita met her clients by approaching them on the street or in coffee bars. At the time Lindita was practising commercial sex, the Skenderbeg statue in Prishtina was a place where women and clients would meet. “I would walk around there and ask men for a light. Then we would start a little conversation and make a deal to go to a motel. The same with coffee bars. I would go into a bar and try to join a man at a table, get close to him and then make a deal. I was my own boss and could decide when I worked or not. At the beginning it was difficult but then I created a network of people and it became easier”. Lindita usually made appointments with her clients by phone. She would ask 20 to 50 euro from a Kosovar client and around 300 euro from an international. “This way I earned enough to have a good life for myself and my daughter.” Lindita however decided to quit a year ago, after a client used excessive violence towards her. “One evening I agreed to go to a motel with a client. He called a friend and told him where we were going. When we finished, he brought in his friend. I didn’t want to do it with his friend. I never agreed to have sex with him as well. They started to hit me when I refused. Then they took all the money I had on me and left. I really wanted to go to the police but didn’t because I was afraid that they would arrest me. Instead I decided to quit this way of living. I went back to working as a housekeeper. I work 8 hours a day and barely earn enough to feed my daughter.”

Interview with Lindita, 5 December 2011.

26 Interview with Mira, 8 December 2011.
27 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.
As described by Lindita, women can find possible clients independently by prostituting oneself on the street or approaching men in bars and clubs. The use of mobile phones is widely practised. Women give their telephone number to established clients and ask them to distribute the number amongst friends who could be interested in commercial sex. “Local clients would introduce me to other guys. They would give them my number and they would call me to set a meeting. I had a special mobile number for that. One number for my family and one number for clients.”

Where Lindita established a network and structurally engaged in commercial sex work, young women and girls who exchange sex for housing, money, a taxi ride or cocktails are other forms of more informally arranged prostitution. This seems to be another possibly independent form of prostitution which is informal and occasional in nature.

3.3 Sex work through middlemen

In addition to commercial sex work being organised from coffee bars and independently, one can also find women involved in prostitution organised through middlemen. This can, for instance, be a ‘loverboy’, as was the case for Donjeta, or a drug dealer who arranges meetings with men in private houses or motels (Republic of Kosovo 2009).

The phenomenon of meetings with customers being arranged by middlemen is still under study and will therefore not be discussed any further in the underlying report.

3.4 Risks associated with the job

Violence and sexually transmitted infections can be identified as paramount risks for sex workers. Many women who were interviewed as part of the underlying research have experienced violence at one point, primarily by clients. A 40-year-old Albanian woman told me the following story:

“One time I told a client to take me home after we were finished. We were in his car. He didn’t stop at my house but just continued to drive. I didn’t know where we were going. I was afraid so I hit him and took over the steering wheel. Then we crashed. The guy started to beat me up very badly after we crashed. He was mad because the car was damaged. I was seriously injured and couldn’t work for two months. I didn’t dare to go to the police after the accident. It would only cause problems. But I did go to the hospital and told them I fell from the stairs.”

Interview with Jehona, 23 November 2011.

28 Interview with Lindita, 5 December 2011.
29 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.
Stories about clients using violence are not uncommon. Clients, for instance, get aggressive when they want to have more or a different kind of sex, want a woman to have sex with a friend or do not want to use a condom. Women feel they run the biggest risk of encountering such violence if they have not met with a client before. “If you meet someone for the first time then you don’t know anything about him. You don’t know how he will be and you don’t have any information about him which you could give to the police if he does something bad.”

Sociologist Teela Sanders (2005: 53) defined the mutual assessing of sex worker and client in order to decrease risks as the ‘prostitution trust game’. According to Sanders, sex workers often try to protect themselves from violence by gathering some information about their client.

In her study on traffickers and trafficking in Southern and Eastern Europe Surtees (2008: 58-61) also mentions the violence traffickers use against their victims in order to resolve conflicts and to discipline women. She, however, observes that the use of violence by traffickers in order to make women obey seems to diminish and is being replaced by other ‘manipulating tactics such as the payment of minimal wages’ (see also: De Wildt 2007). Women interviewed as part of the underlying study have not mentioned the use of violence by traffickers or bar owners, which does not necessarily mean violence from these actors does not take place.

Another risk for women is to be infected with a sexually transmitted infection or HIV/AIDS. As shown by a study on health risks for commercial sex workers in Kosovo in 2010, most women know condom use can protect them from diseases, but only 25% uses a condom on a regular basis (KOPF 2010). Reasons for not using a condom are manifold: clients pay more if the sexual act can be performed without using a condom, a middleman might force women to have unprotected sex or a woman does not want to spend money on condoms which makes her dependent on the whims of the client.

**Overview**

- Shortly after the war the sexual act took place in coffee bars and night clubs. In order to make it more difficult for the police to locate and control prostitution, women increasingly move to private houses or motels for the sexual act, while using the bars and night clubs as a meeting ground. Police and prosecutors furthermore observe that the sex industry is evolving towards a situation in which women remain in private houses or hotels and have their customers brought to them.
- During the work in the coffee bar women can earn money by accompanying guests in the bar, making clients buy them (expensive) drinks or by giving performances such as (pole) dancing and singing. Further money is earned though sexual intercourse with clients, which generally takes place after working hours in a motel.
- Women and girls often circulate between bars in different cities in Kosovo as well as neighbouring Albania and Macedonia.
- Independent sex workers find clients through street prostitution, by approaching men in bars and clubs and through distributing their mobile phone number amongst potential clients.
- Violence and sexually transmitted infections are the main risks associated with sex work.

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30 Interview with Katarina, 30 November 2011.  
31 Interview with Lindita, 5 December 2011.
4. Clients and other profiteers

4.1 A mixed clientele

Amnesty International (2004: 7-8) identified the influx of large numbers of internationals as one of the reasons that the allegedly small-scale local prostitution market in Kosovo was transformed into a large-scale industry with high demand for commercial sex (see also: Terre des Hommes 2010; Friman and Reich 2007). Some women, such as Lindita, indeed mention that foreign men, working as international peacekeepers or NGO representatives, are amongst their clients.

Experts and women, however, also mention the importance of the involvement of local clients. Nowadays local men seem to form the most important part of the clientele.32

Around twenty local men are drinking in the brightly lit bar tonight. Most of them are sitting at a table. They are talking and drinking a beer. One man is doing a drunken dance in front of the stage. A group of men in their twenties enter the bar. At the start of the next Albanian song the singer says: “a big welcome to our friends from Kukës [Albania RdW]”. They order a beer and join in a dance with the women.

Observations in a bar, 6 December 2011.

Although the majority of the clients are from Kosovo, the new road to Tirana is said to stimulate more Albanian men to visit bars in cities such as Prizren. The most influential clientele, however, seems to be Kosovo Albanians living abroad and returning with relative large sums of money to spend during holidays. The diaspora causes peak seasons in sex work in July and August, as well as in the weeks before and after New Year. “I usually have clients from neighbouring villages but also from the diaspora. I’m always happy with clients from diaspora. They respect you, sit and drink with you and give you tips. They also come in winter now. Not only in summer. That is really good for us” says Aleksandra.33 Some women even anticipate on the presence of the diaspora and come to work in Kosovo in summer and around New Year, while otherwise working in Macedonia or Albania. “I only stay here for the high season”, explains Mimoza from Albania when interviewed in a bar some weeks before New Year.34

Studies focusing on clients of prostitution show that the group of clients of sex workers is generally heterogeneous, including men of highly variable ages, educational backgrounds and occupations and men in stable relationships as well as singles (Di Nicola, Cauduro, Lombardi & Ruspini 2009). Research amongst clients in the Netherlands (Zaitch and Staring 2009) demonstrates that most clients try to distinguish between forced and voluntary prostitution, but often embrace a different definition of victims of trafficking than the one given in the aforementioned Palermo Protocol. Although perceptions and practices towards alleged trafficked women largely varied amongst the clients interviewed in this study in the Netherlands, the majority of the clients did not feel responsible for the occurrence of trafficking.

32 Data from ethnographic research in June / July 2011. Government officials, a special prosecutor, police and NGO employees have been interviewed on Kosovar prostitution dynamics.

33 Interview with Aleksandra, 2 December 2011.

34 Interview with Mimoza, 2 December 2011.
for sexual purposes. Therefore the study suggests to put greater effort in educating the public, and potential clients in particular, about prostitution and sex trafficking. Campaigns could increase awareness of possible indicators of sex trafficking so that clients are able to recognise forced prostitution and could become a partner in the fight against sex trafficking. The perception and practice of clients in Kosovo regarding possible forms of forced prostitution is interesting to investigate further.

4.2 Boyfriends or loverboys

Women regularly get involved with former clients or other men they meet through their work in a bar. Although the women define these relationships as serious commitments, the Kosovar boyfriends are married men with families, almost without exception. Julia has such a Kosovar boyfriend “(...) but he doesn’t live with me because he has a family”.\(^{35}\) Aleksandra\(^{36}\) is in a longstanding relationship with the married owner of the bar where she works. Tanya\(^{37}\) has been dating the married cousin of her bar owner for years and 23-year-old Yana from Bulgaria tells me: “I have had a Kosovar boyfriend for four years now. He has a wife and children but I love him. (…) We met in the bar. He was a client first”.\(^{38}\)

Mira from Serbia has a clear opinion about these relationships: “Usually they have boyfriends who say that they will marry them but never do and take their money in the meantime”.\(^{39}\) Mira justly defines the boyfriends as loverboys who, as also mentioned in Chapter 2, promise a young woman or girl a loving and committed relationship, with the aim to earn money from her through commercial sex work (Bovenkerk 2006; Verwijs, Main, Goderie, Harreveld, & Jansma 2011). Although the boyfriends seem to be in these relationships for the financial benefits this does not mean that the relationship cannot be ‘addictive’, like a drug, or does not fulfil any (emotional) desire of the woman or girl involved (see also: Bovenkerk 2006). Tanya, for instance, is critical of the dominant behaviour of her boyfriend sometimes but says “I need to be with someone” in the empty and rather lonely life she feels she is living.\(^{40}\) This commitment of women to relationships which are not always experienced as ideal make women ‘want’ to spend money on or through their boyfriends. The boyfriend therefore not necessarily seems to need to use violence or threats in order to take her money. The money, for instance, seems to end up with the boyfriends in exchange for services or goods, as is the case for Vlora.

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\(^{35}\) Interview with Julia, 30 November 2011.
\(^{36}\) Interview with Aleksandra, 2 December 2011.
\(^{37}\) Interview with Tanya, 23 November 2011.
\(^{38}\) Interview with Yana, 23 November 2011.
\(^{39}\) Interview with Mira, 8 December 2011.
\(^{40}\) Interview with Tanya, 23 November 2011.
Vlora (20) from Albania is playing with her one-year-old son in the bar before it opens. When it is almost time to get to work, Vlora’s boyfriend walks in. He is the brother of the bar owner. “The aunt of my boyfriend takes care of my son when I have to work. I earn around 300 euro per month and pay 200 euro for them to take care of him”. Vlora teasingly sticks out her tongue at her son when he gets into her boyfriend’s car. Then they take off and her working day starts.

Interview with Vlora, 17 November 2011.

In other cases, the work of women is directly organised by their boyfriend. This can result in situations in which the money earned by women goes to the boyfriend directly.

“A few months ago I met my boyfriend and he moved in with me. We had a good life together in Tirana”, says Mimoza. Mimoza tells me she is a singer, while she introduces her boyfriend as a manager of singers. After some months in Tirana Mimoza’s boyfriend arranged a job for her in a bar in Macedonia. “My boyfriend didn’t work when I was in Macedonia. He arranged the job”. Now her boyfriend has arranged a job for Mimoza in a bar in Kosovo. She stays in the bar for the ‘high season’, when the diaspora is in the country, while her boyfriend lives in her flat in Tirana. “My boyfriend always helps me find a job. He also arranged the contract with this bar owner. The salary is very good! He takes the salary and arranges everything. Sometimes my boyfriend gives me money. If I need something, I call him. (...) He doesn’t use me. He isn’t the type.”

Interview with Mimoza, 2 December 2011.

4.3 Drug dealers

Boyfriends are not the only ‘bystanders’ benefitting from the work of women. Drug dealers can also play a paramount role in organising sex work, so that the women earn a stable income which can be spent on drugs, bought from the dealer. This way a drug dealer can almost take the complete income from a woman, who is dependent on him and the drugs he provides. In retrospect Mira understands this must have been the reason for the Serbian Kosovar drug dealer to take her to Kosovo and arrange a job and room to live for her in a bar.
“I didn’t pay my friend [the drug dealer RdW] for his help with finding me the job in the coffee bar. But I always bought my drugs from him. I took drugs from him all the time. Drugs are expensive so all the money I earned went to my friend”. Since the coffee bar provided Mira with food and a place to stay, she could spend all her earnings on drugs. “Sometimes I had to buy some clothes and make-up but that was nothing. All my money went straight to my dealer”.

Interview with Mira, 8 December 2011.

Drug dealers benefit as long as a woman is addicted. The addiction makes her dependent on the drugs and her dealer, providing the drug dealer with a steady income. Lindita explains that drug dealers sometimes deliberately try to stimulate drug use amongst girls who are experimenting with it. “Sometimes a dealer gives a girl drugs for a little money. He wants her to get addicted and come back. And then, when she gets addicted and she gets into a crisis for drugs, he will tell her: ‘OK, I will give you drugs but if I do something for you, you do something for me’. He wants her to have sex with him or with his friends and other men to make some money. Dealers detect girls that are already using small amounts and try to keep them with them.”

Overview

• The clientele of the Kosovar sex industry consists of internationals, local and Albanian men, with the diaspora, who is returning to Kosovo in summer and winter holidays, being the most influential.
• Women are often involved in a relationship with a Kosovar man who could be identified as a loverboy promising a woman a loving and committed relationship, with the aim to benefit from her earnings in the sex industry.
• Drug dealers can play a paramount role in organising the sex work of female drug addicts. The income of an addicted woman is usually largely spent on drugs. This way drug dealers can take the complete income of a woman who is dependent on the drugs he sells.

41 Interview with Lindita, 5 December 2011.
5. Conclusions

This research explores sex trafficking and prostitution market dynamics in Kosovo by identifying general characteristics of the Kosovar sex industry. The signals that have been identified will be the basis for a more in-depth PhD study in the coming years.

Initial findings show that the Kosovar sex industry has changed since its initial rapid growth after the war. Right after the conflict, women from countries such as Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia entered Kosovo and engaged in prostitution in coffee bars and nightclubs. Foreign women often mention the responsibility for a young child, or other family members in a difficult socio-economic position, which made them enter the sex industry, either by decision or force. Kosovo was seldom the first choice of destination for women in search of economic opportunities but often made after an invitation from a friend of relative already working in Kosovo. On a smaller scale, women entered the Kosovar sex industry after being recruited by a Kosovar man in their native country.

Bar owners would arrange the necessary letter of invitation, airplane ticket and working documents for women coming from abroad. Women could reimburse the costs made by the bar owner by working in his bar. The importance of having a bar owner arranging working documents is emphasized by all women. Nowadays women who are not able to show valid working documents are increasingly often sent back to their country of origin. At the same time the border police is trained to recognise potential victims of trafficking. They prevent women and girls with suspicious reasons for travelling from entering Kosovo. It has therefore become more difficult for foreign women to enter and work in Kosovo.

While it is becoming difficult for foreign women and girls to work in Kosovo’s sex industry, girls and women from Kosovo and neighbouring Albania are increasingly involved in the Kosovar prostitution business. Boyfriends, closely resembling ‘loverboys’ (Verwijs, Main, Goderie, Harreveld & Jansma 2011), now seem to play a paramount role in the involvement of Kosovar and Albanian girls in the sex industry. The difficult economic situation and limited economic possibilities in Kosovo make women and girls vulnerable, as does the decreasing social control in Kosovar cities. Women and girls from Kosovo and Albania, however, do not always end up working in the sex industry after force or deception but also opt for working in prostitution, mainly as a result of their difficult socio-economic living conditions. Furthermore, drug addiction can also be a reason for working as a prostitute.

After leaving the sex industry, young women can experience difficulties integrating back into their community, due to the stigma associated with being trafficked. The women do not always receive sufficient assistance to integrate back into their communities and often return to similar socio-economic circumstances as those that contributed to them being lured into the sex industry in the first instance. These factors are said to make re-trafficking a large problem in Kosovo.

Right after the war the sexual act tended to take place in the coffee bars and night clubs where women also met their clients. Now, although women still meet clients in bars, women generally move to private houses or hotels to provide clients with sexual services. The bar is used as a meeting ground. During the work in the coffee bar women can earn money by accompanying guests in the bar, making clients buy them drinks or engage in performances such as (pole) dancing and singing. Further money is earned though sexual intercourse with clients, which generally takes place after working hours in a motel. Women and girls working in coffee bars often change their place of work on a regular basis. They circulate between bars in different cities in Kosovo, as well as neighbouring Albania and Macedonia.
Women, however, can also be involved in prostitution without working in a coffee bar. Independent sex workers find possible clients by prostituting themselves on the street or approaching men in bars and clubs. Mobile phones are intensively used for establishing meetings with possible clients. Recently more and more women also remain in private houses or hotels while having their customers brought to them by a middleman.

In all these forms of prostitution violence and sexually transmitted infections can be identified as paramount risks for sex workers.

The clientele of sex workers in Kosovo consists of internationals as well as local and Albanian men. The most influential clients however seem to be Kosovar Albanians living abroad and returning home with relatively large sums of money to spend in summer and winter holidays.

Drug dealers and boyfriends, who promise a young woman or girl a loving and committed relationship, with the aim to earn money from her, often profit from the work of the women by taking large parts of their income.

Signs indicating different periods, showing women with different nationalities working in the sex industry, as well as the use of coffee bars as a meeting ground and numerous bystanders profiteering from women, are not unique to Kosovo. Sex industries take shape against the background of processes of globalization. Different opportunities regarding mobility, influenced by a country’s logistical position on trafficking routes, possible post-conflict situation, phase in EU accession and political climate (Mertus & Bertone 2007; Friman & Reich 2007) eventually determine where women are put to work or decide to work. Working conditions worldwide are subsequently influenced by numerous reasons, such as local police practices. The observed loverboy methods are used worldwide. In order to grasp the dynamics of the sex industry in Europe and Kosovo in particular, it is crucial to adopt an encompassing, global perspective and simultaneously consider how transnational processes are embedded in locally specific circumstances.

The abovementioned characteristics of the Kosovar sex industry warrant further investigation, as do the signs about the use of violence against victims of trafficking for sexual purposes and various levels of agency within exploitative sex work conditions. The circulation of girls between different cities in Kosovo and neighbouring Albania and Macedonia should also be investigated and unanswered questions, such as the influence of Kosovo Albanians living abroad and returning in summer with relative large sums of money to spend in (amongst other) the sex industry, should be addressed. More insight is also needed into re-trafficking and signals that the sex industry is evolving towards a situation in which women remain in private houses or hotels and have their customers brought to them by middlemen. These and other questions will be the basis for a more in-depth PhD study in the coming years.
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Unicef *The State of the World’s Children 2012: Executive Summary*


Preliminary study on sex trafficking and prostitution market dynamics in Kosovo