

# DESIGN AGAINST KERB-CRAWLING: TIPPELZONES (vice zones)

## European Experiences in Displacement

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<b>Organisation</b>	<b>DSP-groep</b>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Amsterdam, Netherlands (in comparison with a few other Dutch cities like Rotterdam, The Hague, Groningen, Heerlen and Utrecht)</li> </ul>
<b>Trigger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Concern about the nuisance and violence associated with prostitution</li> </ul>
<b>Causes of crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Economic motivations</li> <li>■ Vulnerable status of prostitutes</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives of intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To reduce littering</li> <li>■ To restrict curb crawling to designated areas (planned displacement)</li> <li>■ To reduce levels of violence towards prostitutes</li> </ul>
<b>Interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Development of 'Tippelzones'</li> </ul>
<b>Enablers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Good design developed</li> <li>■ Cooperation of police and other groups</li> </ul>
<b>Tensions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Protests from local residents</li> <li>■ Attracts prostitutes to an area</li> <li>■ Creates opportunities for prostitution</li> <li>■ Linked with illegal trafficking of women</li> <li>■ Successful zone in Amsterdam unable to cope with volume of users</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Development of several good practice examples</li> <li>■ Failure of some zones is calling into question the whole approach</li> <li>■ Tippelzone in Amsterdam did not attract drug-addicted prostitutes (target group)</li> <li>■ After closing down the Amsterdam Tippelzone several prostitutes start working in other cities (Utrecht) resulting in overcrowded zone</li> </ul>
<b>Lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Good design can help reduce problems associated with prostitution</li> <li>■ Planned displacement of Kerb-crawling is possible combining opportunity approach (design of Tippelzone) and repressive police action (chase and arrest elsewhere in the city)</li> <li>■ The co-operation of the police is required to ensure zones are used</li> <li>■ Dealing with drug-addicted prostitutes remains difficult</li> <li>■ Zones can become unmanageable if not controlled</li> <li>■ Zones may attract illegal immigrant prostitutes and promote trafficking of women</li> <li>■ Action should be taken to address problems before a 'tipping point' is reached, and prostitution-related crime escalates</li> <li>■ Displacement to zones in other cities after closing down Tippelzone Amsterdam</li> </ul>

## Synopsis

This paper examines the Dutch phenomenon of regulated street prostitution in designated areas called 'Tippelzones' (vice zones). These are zones where street prostitution is allowed and certain facilities, such as medical services and a 'living-room', are available to the prostitutes. The careful design and management of these areas has enabled city councils and police to alleviate problems of violence and nuisance associated with prostitution, benefiting both prostitutes and local residents. In Amsterdam, the success of the zone in attracting prostitutes coupled with a failure to tackle the growing numbers of illegal immigrant prostitutes resulted in the zone becoming unmanageable and in its eventual closure. This paper concludes that steps have to be taken in the management of such areas to prevent a 'Tipping Point' being reached and crime and other problems escalating.

## Introduction

This paper deals with the Dutch phenomenon of regulated street prostitution in designated areas called 'Tippelzones'. These are zones where street prostitution is tolerated by the police and certain facilities, such as medical services and a 'living-room', are available to the prostitutes. These Tippelzones exist in several Dutch cities, the better-known ones being Keileweg in Rotterdam, Kanaalweg in Utrecht, Bornholmstraat in Groningen, Imstenraderweg in Heerlen and Theemsweg in Amsterdam.

In December 2003, after fierce debate, the decision was taken to close the Amsterdam Tippelzone, mainly because of the high percentage of illegal immigrant prostitutes working there. Other cities, such as Rotterdam, The Hague and Heerlen, have also decided to close the zones or are rethinking their strategies as a consequence. At the same time as the Dutch are closing some of the zones, other countries such as the UK are looking into the possibility of opening them. The Dutch response to the problem of street prostitution is therefore of interest to other European countries and there are aspects of the design and operation of the zones that can still serve as examples of good practice.

## Prostitution in the Netherlands: a brief history<sup>1</sup>

In the Netherlands, prostitution has been legal since the times of Napoleon, but the *organisation* of prostitution has officially always been prohibited. This ban on the organisation of prostitution led to the practical Dutch approach of the official red light district in which prostitutes were allowed to rent a small room and big window. As long as the public order was not disturbed the official policy was not to intervene and to tolerate prostitution (Savornin Lohman, 1999). The Dutch word used here is '*gedogen*' or cultural tolerance, though this translation is not precise. As Ellen Goodman explained in her column in the Boston Globe (April 1997):

"If the word is not easily translated, perhaps it is because the concept is so *Nederlandic*, so not-American. *Gedogen* describes a formal condition somewhere between forbidden and permitted. It is part of the [Nederlandic] dance of principle and pragmatism. [In The Netherlands,] drugs are *gedogen*. They remain illegal, but soft drugs like marijuana and hash are available in duly licensed coffee shops that dot [Amsterdam]."

This explains why next to the coffee shops in the Netherlands there are also the world famous red light districts, like the one in Amsterdam (figure 1):



**Figure 1:** Red light district of Amsterdam

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<sup>1</sup> The authors wish to thank Marieke van Doorninck from the Dutch Institute for Prostitution Issues for her work on the history of Dutch prostitution and Tippelzones.

Recent research on the situation of prostitution<sup>2</sup> showed that in 30% of the Dutch communities prostitution does exist, especially in the bigger cities and in border areas (with Germany and Belgium). In 12 cities there is the type of 'window prostitution' mentioned above, where daily 2000 prostitutes work. Next to that there are about 600 to 700 sexclubs and apartments where on a daily basis 3500 to 4000 prostitutes work. All in all the research calculated that on a given day at least 6000 prostitutes work in The Netherlands. Among them there is a relatively small group of street prostitutes: an average of 320 women are working the street daily; approximately 5% of all prostitutes.

In de sex business the street prostitutes are an underclass of mostly drug-addicted or illegal immigrant women 'working the streets', which in Dutch is called '*tippelen*'. Besides women, there is also a substantial group of transsexual men, mostly from Eastern European countries or Central America. In the Amsterdam Toppelzone, an estimated ten per cent of prostitutes working were in this category. Their presence could be a typical Amsterdam phenomenon, however, as one of the two big academic hospitals in Amsterdam specialises in transgender operations.

Since street prostitution almost inevitably leads to a lot of nuisance in the form of littering, noise from kerb-crawling cars, etc. this activity is forbidden in most local bylaws and city ordinances. This, however, does not mean that this mode of prostitution has disappeared. While prostitution in the official red light districts was controlled relatively easily, the problem of women working the streets attracting kerb crawlers had always been a more problematic part of 'normal' city life. When in The Netherlands during the end of the seventies and the start of the eighties, more and more heroin-addicted women began to work the streets in order to earn enough money to support their addiction, the presence of street prostitutes began to cause an increasing number of problems in the neighbourhoods where they worked.

In the year 2000, the law that prohibited brothels was repealed, 17 years after the first proposal was made in parliament. Since the lifting of the ban, owners and managers of brothels had to comply with a number of rules and regulations. For instance, they have to screen their employees more carefully (no illegal immigrants and no minors are allowed to work). They also have to supply the employees with certain services, such as proper hygienic working conditions—similar to labour-laws in other areas of economic activity (e.g. the health and safety act). Brothel-owners lose their permit if they employ illegal prostitutes or minors. The exploitation of voluntary prostitution was legalised, but the exploitation of involuntary or illegal prostitution was punished more severely.<sup>3</sup> This change may have had a negative side effect, as specific groups of prostitutes, mostly those without a working permit, moved from the brothels and windows into street prostitution, where there was less risk of being 'uncovered' by officials checking the compliance of official brothels with the new regulations.

Condoms, used needles, pimps, drug dealers and customers (kerb crawlers) became major nuisances in areas frequented by prostitutes. Most local authorities reacted to these problems with repressive activities, but this almost never had the desired effect of bringing down the number of prostitutes working the streets: it merely displaced their working area to other or adjacent neighbourhoods. As will be shown below in Amsterdam this 'chase and arrest policy' was officially changed in the mid eighties.

## **Designing out kerb crawling nuisance and violence to prostitutes: The invention of the Toppelzone**

To prevent kerb crawling nuisance, but also to supply the prostitutes with a safer working environment, and provide them with some medical services, the so-called called, 'Toppelzones' were opened in some of the bigger Dutch cities. Within these areas, medical services dealt with unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and drug addictions and legal advice was made available. These initiatives started in the mid-eighties and continued into the mid-nineties.

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<sup>2</sup>Profeit studies: 'Prostitutie in Nederland in 1999' and 'Trends in prostitutie en beleid'. Mr A. de Graaf Stichting funded by Scientific Research and Documentation Centre of the ministry of Justice; see <http://www.mrgraaf.nl/researchframe.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> See for the text of the new law in English the website of the Mr. A. de Graaf Stichting: <http://www.mrgraaf.nl/> click: prostitution policies.

A Toppelzone is almost always located in a non-residential, often rather deserted area, where one or more of the following three functions are available:

- A pick up area, where the prostitutes offer their services and negotiate with clients (kerb crawlers);
- An "afwerkplaats" or 'service area', where sexual services are provided
- A 'living room', where only prostitutes can enter and where health and welfare officials may be present

It took a while to invent and design the best solution to the problem and at first these three functions were not combined.

In 1982 the first 'living room project' for addicted prostitutes opened in Amsterdam: the Mirjam house named after Mirjam who led the Jews from slavery in Egypt to the promised land with her brothers Mozes and Aäron. It was run by Roman Catholic nuns. From 1985 this house was subsidized by the Council, the ministry for Health and the Church (approx. € 50.000,- a year each).

In 1984, the city council of The Hague was the first to nominate a non-residential area as an official streetworking pick up zone. In the same year, the council of Utrecht decided to open an official pick up zone and opened a small centre for street sex workers, called the living room. Although the zone had freed residential areas from kerb crawlers, the people in the neighbourhoods around the zone were now complaining about the fact that sex workers and their clients were performing sexual acts and leaving their litter. Consequently, the city chose to create a 'working area' (where sexual services were rendered) at a distance of one kilometre from the pick-up zone and consisting of separated car parks.

Although the 'working area' was established to protect public order and prevent nuisance in surrounding neighbourhoods, it also greatly benefited the safety of the prostitutes. They no longer had to travel with their client to desolate places to provide sexual services. In the working areas, other sex workers and the police were nearby in case of danger. Utrecht was the first city to open a 'toppelzone' combining the pick up/streetworking zone, a living room/health centre and a working area. The combination of these three elements became popular in other cities as well, and the 'Toppelzone' was invented.

A total of eight Toppelzones were developed in the Netherlands. Besides Amsterdam, there are Toppelzones in Arnhem (De Poorter and Voster, 2001), Den Haag, Groningen (Den 1999), Heerlen (Bieleman, 2002), Nijmegen, Rotterdam and Utrecht. Some of these zones started as tolerance zones, but others were officially appointed as a Toppelzone from the start. In each case, however, the process of choosing a location was an arduous one because of moral objections to street prostitution among politicians and protests from residents. Almost every zone had to be moved at least once because of these factors, before a more permanent location was decided upon. These problems were confounded by the fact that a Toppelzone too far away from residential areas most often proved not to be a viable solution because of the distance prostitutes and customers had to travel to get there. There was also the problem of drug addiction among prostitutes. Drugs and drug dealing are prohibited in the zones, which effectively meant that to make a Toppelzone a suitable working place for drug-addicted prostitutes, the zone had to be within an acceptable distance of the places where drugs were sold. Since drugs were almost always sold in city-centres, railway stations or other crowded areas, the Toppelzones were placed as close to these facilities as possible.

In cities where an official Toppelzone has been decided upon, city bylaws and ordinances forbidding working the streets and kerb crawling tend to be more strictly enforced. In this way, street prostitution is pushed towards the Toppelzone. Without enforcement in other areas, most Toppelzones would probably have remained relatively empty parking lots. This process of planned displacement is well documented in Amsterdam as well as in Groningen (175.000 inhabitants most northern part of the Netherlands) where a pre/post evaluation research – 1997/1999 - was done interviewing residents in the unofficial old area and the new official Toppelzone as well as interviewing businesses and prostitutes and using police and health statistics (Den, 1999).

## The Amsterdam Toppelzone

In the eighties, kerb crawling was a problem in some downtown areas in Amsterdam. Problems centred around the southern part of the city centre (Utrechtsestraat/Amstelveld) near the Central National Bank about one kilometre away from the well-known red light district near the Central Station. In this area the Mirjam house mentioned above was opened in 1982 to help addicted street prostitutes 7 days a week from 8 am till 8 pm. The prostitutes worked the streets in a small zone where the police had decided to look the other way regarding prostitutes. This policy resulted in an influx of prostitutes from other cities. Residents started complaining about the noise at night, the littering and prostitution itself. One of the most invasive consequences of street prostitution in a residential area is the fact that kerb crawlers regard any woman there walking at night as a prostitute. In 1985 the Council of Amsterdam adopt a motion stating the city was not only responsible for the public order – and hence a chase and arrest policy for addicted street prostitutes – but the city also had a responsibility for the health and well being of these prostitutes (Potters 2004).

In 1985, the street working zone shifted to the rather dark, windy and generally unpleasant strip at the back of the central station and the Mirjam house living room moved to the same spot. There were fierce protests of a few residents living there (Potters, 2004). Due to planned building activities around the Central Station (Korthals Altes and Smits, 2000) the zone had to be moved once more – about half a kilometre east. Again there were protests by residents.

In October 1994, after more than five years of preparation and planning, the local authorities decided to have an official Toppelzone in operation by the end of 1995. In October 1995, the city council agreed on the final location: a desolate road in the western harbor area of Amsterdam called the Theemsweg (see figures 2 and 3). From January 1996, the zone was open daily from 9 pm. until 6 am and all street prostitution outside of this designated area was forbidden. The day after the opening, more than a hundred residents from neighbourhoods south of the zone took to the streets in protest, but the Toppelzone remained open.



**Figure 2:** Location of Toppelzone relative to city of Amsterdam (western harbour area; left upper corner of the map)

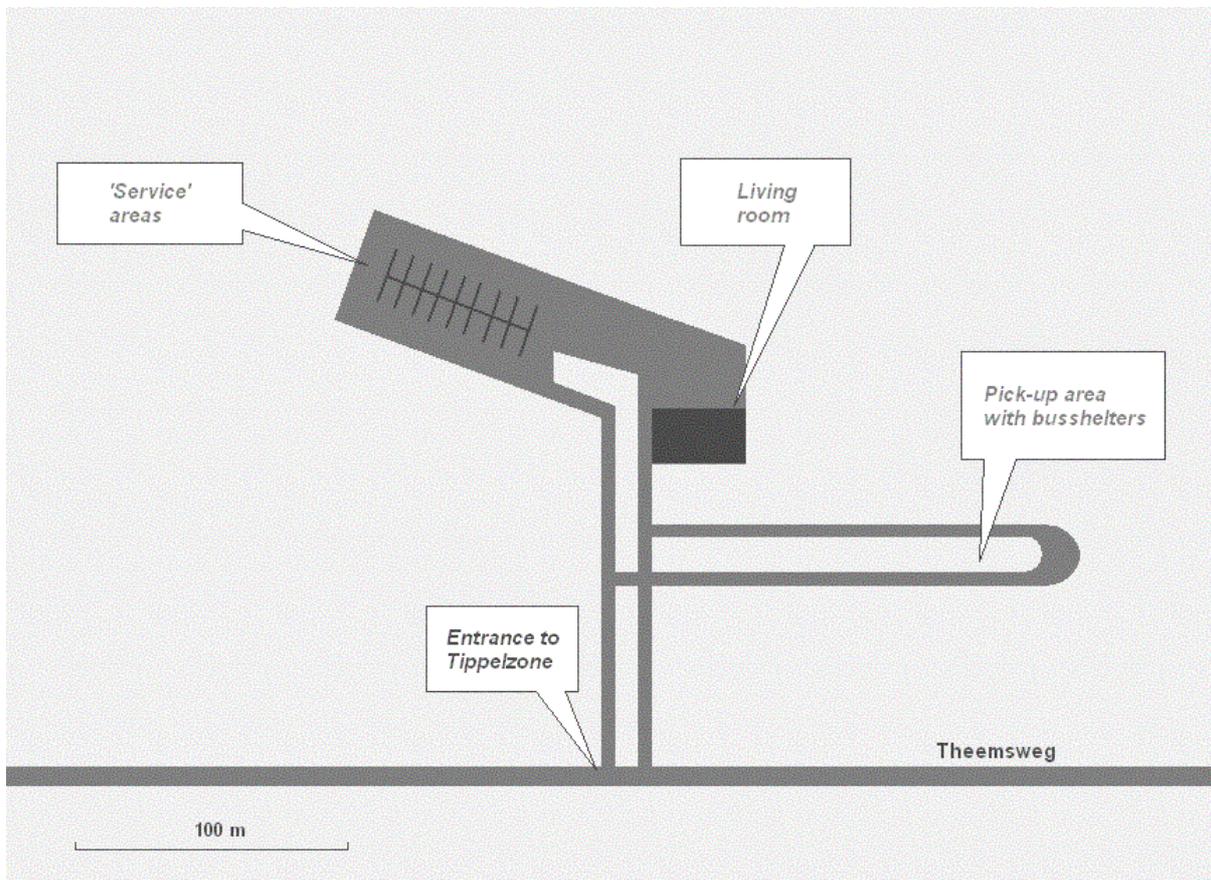


**Figure 3:** *Toppelzone Amsterdam*

*NB: Note that there are no residential areas nearby, only infrastructure (e.g. railroads, highways, etc)*

## Design

Four of the eight Toppelzones in Dutch cities are used as normal streets during the day. This is the case in Utrecht, Den Haag, Groningen and Nijmegen. The other four cities have a zone that is closed and fenced off during the day and open during evening and night hours. The Toppelzone in Amsterdam is an example of the latter category. It consists of a fenced-off area with two U-shaped roads connected in the middle (see figure 4). The first loop is an area where customers can look at, negotiate with and pick-up prostitutes. Bus shelters provide protection from bad weather and this part of the zone is fairly well lit (see figure 5).



**Figure 4:** *Layout of the Amsterdam Toppelzone*

Following the 'pick-up loop', there is a shelter, the so-called 'living room', which houses a number of services for the prostitutes. In Amsterdam, this is a two-storey building with an entrance at the front for the prostitutes and an entrance at the rear for care-workers and other staff. The most important part of this building is the actual living room where prostitutes can buy some food, non-alcoholic drinks and condoms. They can also take a shower, use the restrooms or just relax on the couches or chairs. Two nights a week, a medical doctor is present in the living room where prostitutes can go to get information or help concerning medical issues. Upstairs, an observation room has been built where police, care-workers or researchers can study the proceedings outside without being seen by customers or prostitutes. In the back of the building, some offices are present for administrative purposes and there are some storage facilities.

There is an alarm-button in the living room that enables lights to be switched on all over the zone in the case of an emergency. This will floodlight the entire zone so as to prevent clients or prostitutes that cause problems, aggressive pimps or others from being able to hide or escape unseen. During its seven years of operation, this facility has only been used a few times.



**Figure 5:** *Tippelzone Amsterdam – the 'pick-up' loop with bus-shelters*

Next to the living room are 24 "afwerkplekken" or service-areas. Each compartment is fenced off on three sides by aluminium plates, mounted in such a way that they do not reach the ground. This is to avoid giving the impression of complete seclusion and thus improves safety. Each compartment has a litterbin to the left of the car, which effectively prevents the driver from opening the door on the driver's side whilst parked (see figure 6<sup>4</sup>). The door on the prostitute's side, however, can be opened giving her the opportunity to leave the car if needed. There is a special, smaller "afwerkplek" for customers arriving by motorcycle or even by bicycle.



**Figure 6:** *Amsterdam Tippelzone – the parking spaces as seen from within*

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<sup>4</sup> A car is 'forced' to pull over to the dustbin side by a rather high kerb.

The police play a vital role in ensuring the safety of all Toppelzones. They check the zone a few times each night and are available for prostitutes or care-workers if they need them. The police can enter the living-room, but an understanding has developed that the police do not arrest illegal immigrant prostitutes in the living-room. The presence of the police is crucial to help maintain a safe working environment because they give a strong signal to violent customers, pimps and drug dealers. They also act to prevent prostitutes from soliciting for customers outside of the zone. In Amsterdam, a special team of 12 police officers was added to the local police force when the zone opened. On top of their normal duties, they were given the task of monitor proceedings in and around the zone, as well as building up a relationship with care-workers and prostitutes.

#### **Facts and figures on the Toppelzone Amsterdam**

- The zone was designed to accommodate a maximum of around eighty prostitutes at any one time. However, the number of prostitutes working the Amsterdam Toppelzone each night varied from zero to over one hundred and fifty during the busiest nights.
- The number of cars per night has been fairly constant over the years. Counts and estimates show that there are between 500 and 1,500 car movements each night. It is estimated that half of these are made up of visitors returning for a second run before choosing a prostitute or going elsewhere. It is not known how many of the visitors are 'serious' customers and how many are just there to watch.
- The average price for the standard service (S&F – oral sex and intercourse) is EUR 25. This price can, however, vary drastically with the number of prostitutes present. If there are only two prostitutes working, prices increase rapidly, but during busy nights, some would even charge as little as EUR 10 to get a customer.
- The average prostitute makes an estimated EUR 80 per night. Popular prostitutes can earn much more, depending on the competition and the clientele.

#### **The Amsterdam Toppelzone: some highlights 1996-2002**

During the first few months of 1996, the zone was yet to become crowded. Only twenty to thirty prostitutes worked there each night. The police arrested prostitutes still working behind the Central Station or at one of the other traditional locations in the Eastern part of the harbour. From the start, the police noted the high percentage of illegal immigrants working in the zone. Research confirmed this: in 1996, one year after the opening of the zone, an evaluation was carried out (Amsterdam, 1996). This evaluation showed, among other things, that most of the prostitutes working in the zone were not addicted to heroin or other drugs. Since one of main goals of opening the zone was to move all drug-related street prostitution from the city-centre to the Toppelzone, this was generally regarded as a negative outcome. At the time, however, it was not considered enough reason to close the zone. This decision was influenced by other research showing that the addicted prostitutes had not become hidden, and that care-workers in other parts of the city still remained in contact with the vast majority of addicted prostitutes through traditional channels.

Another reason for the continued support of the Toppelzone was another outcome revealed by the same evaluation: a lot of women who had previously worked in less visible areas of street prostitution (illegal immigrants, many of them in the process of a transgender operation), *did* come to the zone. This finding was, in 1996, regarded as a positive result: the zone seemed to offer a much valued venue to reach these previously 'invisible' prostitutes and offer them much needed information and help. This group of prostitutes proved to be extremely vulnerable to violent customers, sexually transmitted diseases and other problems as their illegal immigrant status and lack of knowledge of their rights prevented them from seeking help from officials. Their vulnerability limited their potential to negotiate with customers substantially. All in all, the initial developments on and around the zone were positive.

Despite the initial vehement protests, there were hardly any complaints from people or organisations located in the vicinity of the zone, which surprised many of those involved in the Toppelzone initiative.

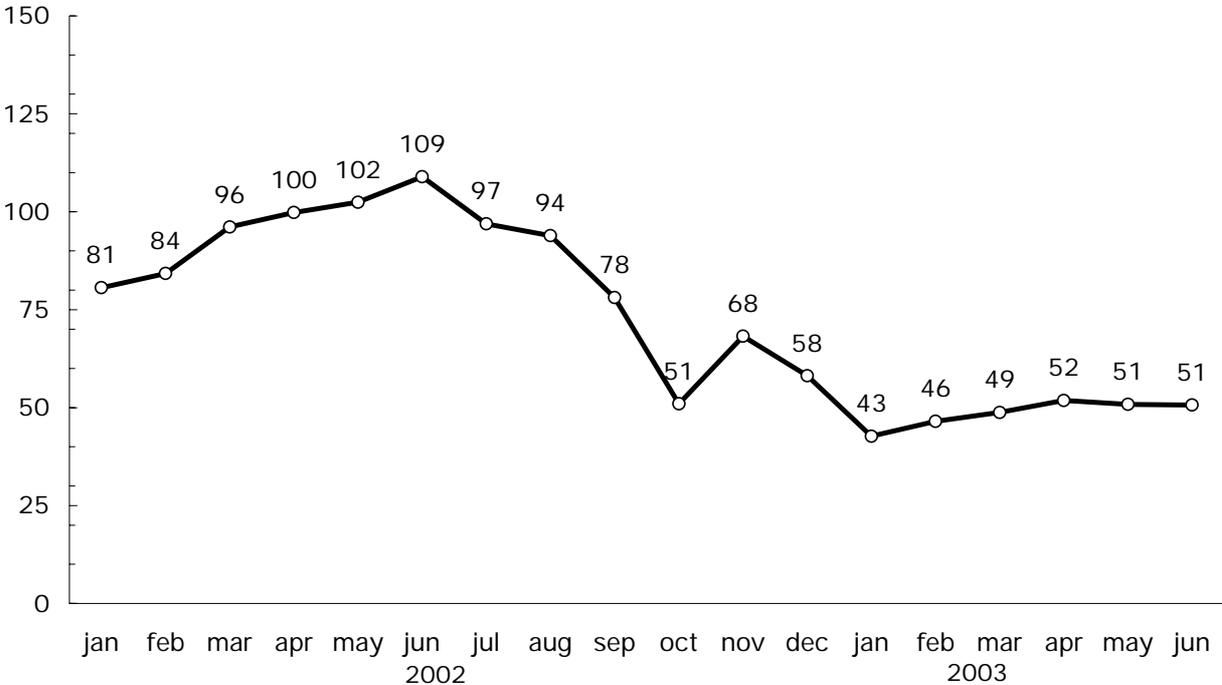
In February 1998, the closing time for the zone was moved from 6 am to 3 am because there was hardly any business after this time and the health and maintenance officials were expensive during those hours.

In September 1998, the number of prostitutes and the number of kerb crawlers increased exponentially. There was even pressure to open a second Toppelzone in Amsterdam, but local authorities were against the idea. Interestingly though, there were still few drug-addicted prostitutes working the zone, as they continued to prefer the centre of Amsterdam. One of the consequences of the clamp down on street prostitution was that they seemed to work on their own much more and a lot of them started to take customers to hotel rooms or their own private home.

Between 1999 and 2002 there was a constant struggle between two sides of thought. One group of people—mainly the police—argued that the zone was a breeding zone for the illegal trafficking of women (often from Eastern Europe) violence, blackmail and kidnapping (European Commission, 2001). In their view, the Toppelzone should be closed. The other group of people—mainly care workers—said that closing the Toppelzone would only result in a dispersion of prostitution all over the city, thereby making invisible to the authorities and health-care work the dangers and problems, but not reducing them. The mayor of Amsterdam later summarised this as a 'diabolical dilemma'.

### Crisis and shut-down

During the summer months of 2002, according to both the police and staff of the living room, the situation at the zone became impossible to handle. During busy nights, the number of prostitutes working at the zone could number up to 150, when it was originally designed to accommodate a maximum of around 80 (see figure 7). This led to dangerous situations in the zone and to intolerable levels of competition among prostitutes. Fights for customers started among prostitutes, and customers and pimps alike took advantage of this chaotic situation. Care workers from the living room alerted the authorities, including the police, and asked them to help find a new balance. The number of prostitutes was considered to be too high for the zone and the number of incidents of trafficking women was alarming. The illegal status of most of the prostitutes presented too many possibilities for extortion, mistreatment and exploitation of these women.

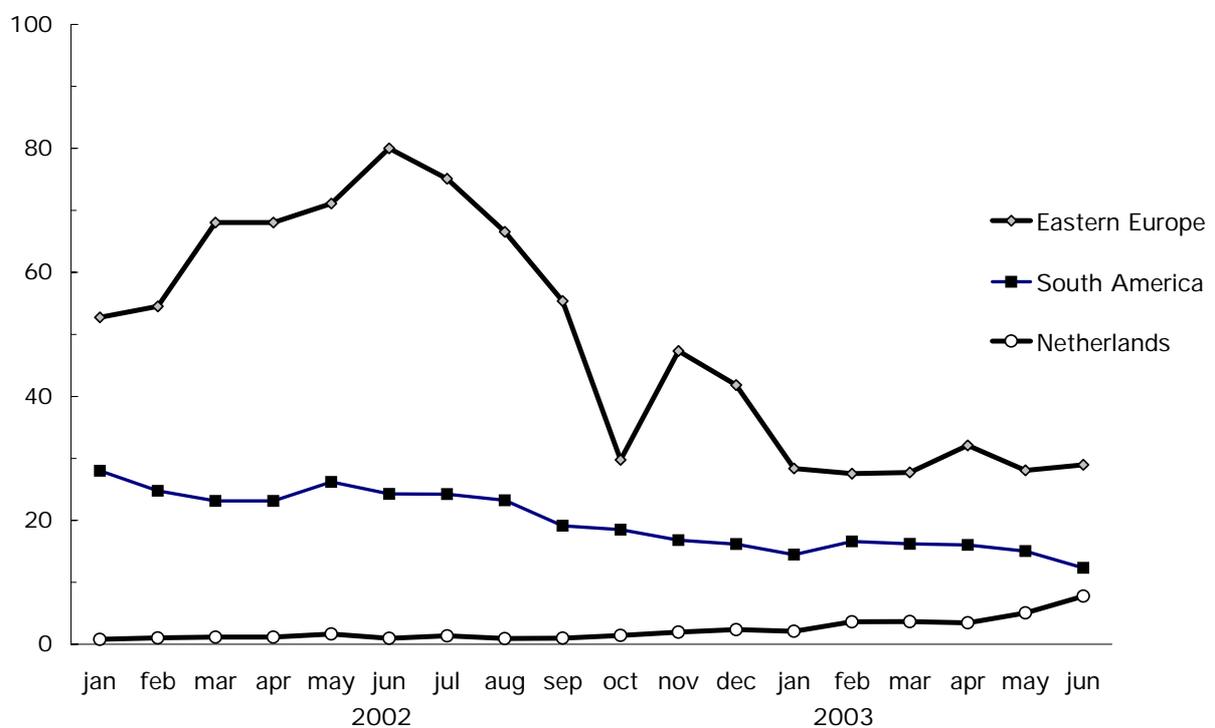


**Figure 7:** Mean number of prostitutes per night in the Toppelzone living room January 2002 to June 2003 (absolute numbers)

In an attempt to tackle these problems, a new set of measures was introduced, including more policing

in the zone, and the possibility for the police to give prostitutes without proper papers, so-called 'verblijfsverbod', prohibiting them from entering the zone for a period of fourteen days. To make this possible, a city by-law had to be amended as the zone was formally no different from a normal street, making it practically impossible to prohibit anyone from entering. In addition, a maximum number of prostitutes was set, although this was never enforced.

The most visible and drastic actions taken, however, were two large-scale police raids in September 2002 and January 2003—the effect of which can be observed in figure 8. During these actions or 'sweeps', the police checked the legal status of all prostitutes in the zone. Illegal immigrant prostitutes were immediately transported to the airport and flown back to their home countries. Following the first sweep, 97 prostitutes were repatriated mainly to Bulgaria, Albania and Romania. After the second sweep, 67 women were flown home, mainly to Bulgaria, Romania and Ecuador. In the time between these large-scale actions, the police checked hundreds of women during regular shifts and banned many of them from the zone for a designated number of days. The police actions had a notable effect on the East European group of women especially (see figure 8).



**Figure 8:** Country of origin prostitutes: January 2002 to June 2003 (absolute numbers per night)

**Source (figure 7 and 8):** *Cijfers Huiskamer, dagregistratie 2002 en 2003; see: Flight, Van Heerwaarden & Lugtmeijer, Evaluatie Toppelzone Theemsweg Amsterdam; extra beheersmaatregelen, DSP-groep: Amsterdam (2003).*

As a result, the number of prostitutes in the zone fell dramatically, from an average of over a hundred, to about fifty per night. Research clearly showed that the percentage of illegal immigrant prostitutes, however, did not drop in parallel (Flight, Van Heerwaarden & Lugtmeijer, 2003). This fact, combined with the finding that the number of incidents did not decline, led the city council, after much heated and often emotional debate, to support the mayor's decision to close the zone. Therefore, in December 2003, after a year of discussion and evaluation, the Toppelzone was closed.

To prevent displacement of street prostitution to other areas, an agreement was made with the police to actively pursue street prostitution anywhere in the city focussing on prostitutes as well as fining kerb crawlers. In a report from June 2004 (Amsterdam, 2004) police figures as well as information from other sources show the amount of displacement and side-effects, such as a move from street

prostitution into escort services. Reliable figures on violence against prostitutes are not available<sup>5</sup>. The overwhelming problem with this type of research is of course, the invisibility of prostitution in these other areas. Especially the most vulnerable groups of prostitutes will avoid contact with authorities, including health care services. Nevertheless the research results are interesting and they show no displacement in Amsterdam.

<b>Police district</b>	<b>First 4 month 2003</b>	<b>First 4 month 2004</b>	<b>difference</b>
District 1 (North)	0	2	+ 2
District 3 (Center)	454	369	-85
District 4 (East))	0	4	+ 4
District 5 (South)	0	0	0
District 6 (New West incl Toppelzone)	14	3	-11
District 7 (Southeast)	0	0	0
District 8 (Old West)	7	5	- 2
<b>Amsterdam total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>-92</b>

**Table:** Police registration number of cases street prostitution

**Source:** Amsterdam 2004 page 1

The figures on kerb crawlers fined by the police also show a reduction (see total below) especially at the Central Station. This result is easy to explain since by the end of 2003 building activities started there for a new bus station, road tunnel and underground line.

<b>Spot</b>	<b>First 4 month 2003</b>	<b>First 4 month 2004</b>	<b>difference</b>
Central Station (rear)	249	148	-101
West of Central Station <sup>6</sup>	118	151	+ 33
Haarlemmer Houttuinen <sup>7</sup>	16	41	+ 25
Other spots in the city	83	26	- 57
<b>Total</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>-100</b>

**Table:** number of fines for kerb crawlers (police figures)

**Source:** Amsterdam 2004, page 2

Information from the Amsterdam health authorities (outpatients' clinic for prostitutes and passers-by) and from the organisation once running the living room in the former Toppelzone indicate a shift to prostitution in hotel rooms, phone/escort prostitution and displacement to several spots in the city where individual prostitutes or very small groups change their working spots in a mercurial fashion. Most certainly there is displacement to Toppelzones in other cities most notably to the Toppelzone in Utrecht (less than an hour from Amsterdam by car or train).

However, the overall picture shows an astonishing disappearance of the problems Amsterdam was facing with street prostitution in mid 2003. Especially the huge international influx of prostitutes from

<sup>5</sup> Figures from Heerlen show that in the years before the start of the Heerlen Toppelzone 5 prostitutes have been murdered, and since the start of the zone in 2001 none. See: Binnenlands Bestuur, August 6<sup>th</sup> 2004 p. 25). Prostitutes in Heerlen as well as Groningen say violence and aggression as well as their fear of crime is lower in the Toppelzone situation compared with the old situation (see Den 1999 and Bieleman 2002)

<sup>6</sup> Westerdoksdijk en Westerdokskade (by chance the road from the Central Station leading to the offices of DSP-groep).

<sup>7</sup> A busy road in front of a residential neighbourhood near the Central Station

Eastern Europe and South/Middle America seems to have vanished. More local oriented prostitutes are working in hotel rooms, use mercurial changing pick up spots or work in Utrecht. Since the Toppelzones in The Hague and Rotterdam will be closed in 2005 the local authorities in Utrecht have sounded the alarm. July 9<sup>th</sup> 2004 a national paper<sup>8</sup> published an article showing that the number of prostitutes in the Utrecht Toppelzone at the Europaweg doubled from 35 to 70. Authorities from Utrecht asked Amsterdam and Rotterdam to do something about this but their response was not over enthusiastic saying that further research and talks were needed.

The Toppelzone in Amsterdam has been put on hold for a year. It was mothballed waiting for the decision to be taken by the city council. at the beginning of 2005. Main while the zone is temporally leased out to a driving school thus making some money for the city

## Concluding remarks

The approach taken by the Dutch was pragmatic. If you cannot defeat prostitution using police control and regulation, then seek a solution that minimises the harmful aspects for all the stakeholders—prostitutes, residents, etc. The Dutch developed a design comprising a pick up area, working area, living space coupled with controls that worked well and created a healthier, safer and more secure environment for the street prostitutes in which to work. This was combined with policing practices that 'encouraged' women to work within the zones. In this way, the Dutch demonstrated how design and management procedures can reduce nuisance and violence associated with prostitution.

It should be noted, however, that the main target group, drug-addicted prostitutes, stayed in the city centre—although they were not out of reach of healthcare services. In addition, a new group of transgender prostitutes surfaced, many of whom were illegal immigrants. Over time, the zone started to attract pimps and women on a European and even worldwide scale, becoming a pull factor in its own right. In this sense, one could argue that the zone was generating opportunities for prostitution and perhaps making the profession attractive to a wider group of people.

The success of the Toppelzone appears to have been its downfall, as the number of prostitutes using the zone increased exponentially and the zone could no longer be controlled. The numbers of prostitutes using the area were monitored, and research highlighted a growth in illegal immigrant prostitutes. However, the implications of these changes were not identified soon enough for alternative courses of action to be considered. Thus, the problems became so severe that the only course of action open to the authorities appeared to be closure.

The effects of the closure seem to be a vanishing of the influx of international prostitutes from Eastern Europe and South/Middle America, a change of working methods of the local oriented prostitutes (phone/escort, hotel, changing pick up spots) and a displacement of street prostitutes from Amsterdam to Utrecht with the possible effect of this Utrecht Toppelzone running in trouble and closing down. From a world perspective the sudden international influx of prostitutes resulted in the closure of the Toppelzone in Amsterdam and this closure might have the domino effect of closing down the Toppelzone in Utrecht. Parallel with the economic globalisation and flash money being tele-banked around the world we might have seen the effects of the globalisation of another market here: crime and prostitution.

Interestingly, the UK is considering developing areas that are tolerant to prostitution. This case study shows how design and management practices can help concentrate prostitution in a zone. Furthermore, well-designed zones certainly help improve the safety and health of prostitutes, whilst reducing the nuisance for surrounding neighbourhoods. However, prostitution zones need to be carefully monitored and emerging trends identified. Action to address potential problems, such as the influx of illegal immigrant prostitutes, needs to be taken early on, before a 'Tipping Point' is reached. Tipping Point Theory examines sudden, often exponential changes and identifies the small cumulative factors that precede such transformations (Saville, 1998, Gladwell, 2000). In some cases, there may be a need to alter or adjust practices that have helped encourage use of a zone. For example, police may need to be more proactive in dealing with illegal immigrant prostitutes and focus efforts on identifying and punishing individuals involved in the illegal trafficking women.

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<sup>8</sup> Volkskrant July 9<sup>th</sup> 2004 headlining: **Toppelzone Utrecht in oppression**, prostitutes flooding in from other cities.

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