

The Social Ecology of Red-Light Districts: A Comparison of Antwerp and Brussels

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Abstract

Research on modern red-light districts (RLDs) is deficient in some key respects. Centered largely on street prostitution zones and nations where prostitution is illegal, this literature gives insufficient attention to settings where RLDs consist of a cluster of indoor venues that are legal and regulated by the authorities. Using classic Chicago School research on vice districts as a point of departure, this article examines the physical structure and social organization of red-light zones in two Belgian cities: Antwerp and Brussels. The comparative analysis identifies major differences in the social ecology of the two settings. Differences are explained by the distinctive ways in which each municipal government manages its respective RLD, which are related to the contrasting social backgrounds and political capital of the population residing in the vicinity of each district. Policy implications are briefly discussed.

Keywords

geography of vice, public disorder, regulation of prostitution, red-light district

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Although research on erotic red-light districts (RLDs) has a long lineage, this literature is deficient in some important respects. First, most contemporary studies of publicly visible prostitution focus exclusively on street prostitution zones (e.g., Cohen 1980; Hubbard 1999; Lowman 1992; Porter and Bonilla 2010; Tani 2002). Much less attention has been given to RLDs that host indoor prostitution businesses (exceptions include Aalbers 2005; Curtis and Arreola 1991; Katsulis 2008). This is a surprising deficiency in the literature, given the visibility of such zones in several major cities, including Amsterdam, Bangkok, Hamburg, Seoul, Singapore, and Tokyo. The present study focuses on two cities: Antwerp and Brussels.

A *red-light district* is defined here as a setting containing a cluster of visible sexually-oriented businesses; it does not include places where prostitution is confined to street-level transactions or where indoor businesses are scattered across the city. To qualify as a RLD here, there must be geographical *clustering* of publicly *visible* erotic *businesses*. Erotic businesses include strip clubs, porn shops, bars offering sex, peep shows, massage parlors, and brothels.

A second issue in the scholarly literature is the association of vice districts with ecological decay and underworld crime. Classic Chicago School studies of urban problems beginning in the 1920s accounted for the spatial distribution of street crime and vice by the presence of a set of ecological conditions (e.g., transience, poverty, ethnic heterogeneity, family instability, physical deterioration) and the absence of social control over deviant actors (Burgess 1925; Reckless 1926, 1933; Shaw and McKay 1942). In his detailed study of Chicago, Walter Reckless (1933), concluded that “vice resorts concentrated in those tracts of the city which showed the highest rate of community disorganization,” measured by rates of crime, poverty, disease, and divorce (p. 252). Both street crime and vice “must hide in the disorganized neighborhoods in order to thrive,” argued Reckless (1926, p. 171). In places of such “vast social disorganization,” “personal taboos disintegrate and appetites become released from their sanctioned moorings” (Reckless 1926, p. 168).

Reckless and other Chicago School researchers presented a fairly uniform picture of conditions in vice districts. These associations continue to be made today and have served as a rationale for municipal zoning ordinances that ban or restrict sexually-oriented businesses. (The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1986 that city governments can use the principle of adverse “secondary effects” as a basis for zoning and other restrictions on adult businesses.) For local residents and policy makers alike, there is an assumption that sexually-oriented premises generate a host of negative social and environmental effects. Indeed, the picture painted by Chicago School researchers many decades ago continues to shape contemporary public perceptions of isolated

erotic businesses (e.g., a strip club, massage parlor, adult theater, or video store) and RLDs hosting multiple establishments (Aalbers and Deinema 2012; Edwards 2010; Lasker 2002; Linz 2004; Papayanis 2000; Paul, Linz, and Shafer 2001; Prior and Crofts 2012; Ryder 2004; Weinstein and McCleary 2011). Prior and Crofts (2012) summarized the adverse effects associated with sex premises today: as contributing to “blight and urban deterioration (e.g., decline in property values); deleterious effects on environmental and personal health (e.g., noise); antisocial behavior and crime (e.g., drug dealing, public urination); and the erosion of community standards” (p. 131). Despite some research findings challenging these associations (Linz 2004; Paul, Linz, and Shafer 2001), Weinstein and McCleary (2011) claimed that properly conducted studies “will always demonstrate an association between adult entertainment businesses and negative secondary effects” (p. 581). Weinstein and McCleary focused on crime; they argued that sexually-oriented businesses attract men who are at high risk of victimization by offenders who are looking for soft targets in underpoliced areas. These settings are *presumed* to “attract predators” and to have a “low police presence” (Weinstein and McCleary 2011, p. 586).

But just how generalizable is the adverse effects model today? Are there red-light zones that are *not* particularly anomic, dilapidated, socially disorganized, and criminogenic? I argue that the social ecology of such areas differs significantly from place to place, with some departing quite dramatically from the traditional, marginalized “skid-row” image. These differences have important implications, positive or negative, for the participants in sexual commerce and for other stakeholders, including local residents, merchants, and state authorities (Hubbard and Whowell 2008).

Third, the literature on prostitution is heavily focused on contexts where it is illegal and where the participants are subject to arrest and punishment. The result is that most of what we think we “know” about prostitution may be skewed by findings based on its illicit, clandestine, and marginalized manifestation rather than the alternative—contexts where it is legal and regulated by the authorities. There are only a few studies of contemporary legal prostitution regimes (e.g., Abel, Fitzgerald, and Healy 2010; Brents, Jackson, and Hausbeck 2010; Sullivan 2010) and almost none that specifically examine the special case of legal window-prostitution districts (Aalbers 2005; Loopmans 2004)—the focus of the present article.

RLDs take one of two forms (Ashworth, White, and Winchester 1988; Curtis and Arreola 1991; Ryder 2004; Symanski 1981). Some are *single use*, almost exclusively confined to erotic service. Such monolithic zones are typically remote from the city’s central core, cater to a local clientele, and have “few or no spatial links with a wider entertainment industry” (Ashworth,

White, and Winchester 1988, p. 208). Their social ecology differs radically from more *variegated* vice zones in cities such as Amsterdam, Bangkok, Frankfurt, and Tokyo—where prostitution is mixed in with other businesses (bars, cafes, snack shops), other commercial sex businesses (strip clubs, peep shows, adult video stores, etc.), or other vice (e.g., gambling arcades). Multiuse vice-entertainment zones are more common than single-use prostitution zones (Ashworth, White, and Winchester 1988) and have certain advantages. They allow the visitor to engage in “a package of activities that comprise the night-out . . . [and] advantages are maximized by the location of prostitution close to other entertainment facilities” (Ashworth, White, and Winchester 1988, p. 208). Indeed, the visitor gets “the opportunity to view other goods and services they may not have previously been aware that they wanted” (Cameron 2004, p. 1653). Such variegated zones have a potentially normalizing effect on commercial sex businesses because of the latter’s proximity to at least some conventional businesses. A multiuse RLD can benefit the sex workers as well: The juxtaposition of conventional businesses alongside sexual entertainment (1) offers amenities to sex workers that are scarce in areas where prostitution is the sole activity; (2) expands the potential customer base, as visitors who enter the area for other reasons may find themselves buying sex opportunistically; and (3) enhances the probability of social control over disorderly or predatory persons, insofar as shopkeepers are available to intervene in such situations. In isolated, single-use RLDs, social control is largely relegated to coworkers, the police, or on-site security personnel if they exist. Yet there can be advantages to a single-use zone as well. Given their limited attractions and, hence, fewer visitors, they are potentially more manageable by the authorities, which enhance public order and personal safety for workers and clients alike (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011).

The RLDs examined in this article—in Antwerp and Brussels—are single use, composed largely of window prostitution (described below). Drawing on a variety of sources, the article identifies key differences in the two RLD’s social ecology, normative orders, and recurrent behavior patterns. The findings show that one of the sites is consistent with the classic vice model described above, while the other departs from it substantially. The differences are explained by the amount and type of local government engagement in the respective RLDs, which, I argue, is a function of the socioeconomic status and political influence of the population residing adjacent to each district.

Study Sites and Methods

The article is based partly on field research. I conducted systematic observations in each city’s RLD: photographing and mapping the configuration of

businesses in each district for an objective record of physical arrangements, recording the conduct of people on the street, and noting observed street-level interactions between the sex workers and visitors.¹ Regarding the latter, I followed Aalbers' (2005) method of stopping and observing individuals who conversed with a particular sex worker as well as observing patterns in visitors' demeanor and conduct on the street—paying special attention to recurrent as well as exceptional behavior.

The field observations were purposive—focused on documenting indicators of physical and social disorder. Physical disorder refers to visible signs of dilapidation and negligence, while social disorder involves actors' behavior (Skogan 1990). Measures of disorder were replicated, with some modification, from those used in other research. Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) measured *physical disorder* by the presence of litter, garbage, syringes, cigarettes, condoms, empty alcohol bottles, graffiti, and abandoned cars. To this list, I add buildings that are vacant or in disrepair. *Social disorder* was measured by persons loitering, consuming alcohol or drugs, being visibly intoxicated, selling drugs, arguing or fighting, and by the presence of identifiable gang members (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999; cf. Skogan 1990). To this list, I add panhandling, street harassment, auto congestion (with its accompanying noise and air pollution), and the lack of a visible police presence for order maintenance.

Observations were conducted during the day and night, on weekdays and weekends, and during different months periodically between 2008 and 2012. Fieldnotes were recorded in a notebook both on-site and shortly after leaving the setting; fieldnotes consisted of diagrams and descriptions of physical arrangements and detailed chronological observations of individual behavior and social interaction. Both sites are open access: There are no entry restrictions.

Observational data were supplemented with information from newspaper reports, scholarly publications, information from official sources, and clients' online discussion boards. Such boards have been mined by others studying commercial sex; their utility depends on how the content is used by the researcher. I reviewed postings for the two cities on the websites *International Sex Guide* and *Ignatzmice*. I selected all entries, posted during the past five years, that described visitors' observations of and experiences in these RLDs; this offered independent data to supplement and cross-check my field observations. Because these are English-speaking forums, they likely overrepresent foreign visitors, who may have slightly different perceptions and experiences than locals. But overall, their observations and accounts were quite consistent with those documented on local forums; for example, postings on the premier Dutch-language site (<http://www.hoekers.nl/>) examined

by Loopmans (2004) closely resemble the postings I reviewed in the two online forums.

The study sites were selected because of their similarities and proximity, in effect holding certain factors constant. Antwerp and Brussels are Belgium's two largest cities, only 27 miles apart, and each has one geographically distinct RLD that has existed for decades and where prostitution is limited to the window type. The cities are subject to the same national laws regarding prostitution. But, as the article will show, the two RLDs differ strikingly from each other in physical arrangement, ambience, social structure, and relationship to local government.

Data analysis involved two steps: First, comparison of the two cases centered on identifying key dimensions of the ecological landscape and actors' modal behavior patterns. Using the standard "constant comparison method" of qualitative data analysis of the fieldnote data, I identified similarities and differences between the two study sites on the axes of physical and social disorder and observed public behavior patterns, and coupled this with insights drawn from the supplementary sources mentioned above. The second step involved contextualization of the study site data within the larger political economy of each city, a macro-micro linkage advocated by urban ethnographers (e.g., Burawoy 1991) to help explain micro-level findings.

Comparative examination of different cases can help to assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative models, with potentially important public policy implications for the regulation of visible prostitution settings. The "Conclusion" section explores these policy implications.

The Belgian Context

Belgians are more conservative than some of their northern European neighbors. The most recent opinion poll on prostitution dates from 1990, when 46% of Belgians said that prostitution is "never justified" (compared with 33% in Germany and 20% in the Netherlands).² This partly explains why prostitution is only *de facto* legal in a few Belgian cities, rather than formally legal at the national level (as it is in the Netherlands since 2000 and Germany since 2002). A 1948 law abolished existing municipal regulations and outlawed third-party involvement in prostitution (e.g., pimping, operating a brothel), but not prostitution itself. Local governments responded in different ways: Some continued to tolerate third-party involvement as long as it did not cause a public nuisance, while others imposed extralegal regulations on these actors. This is somewhat precarious, as an Antwerp official told me, "We have to be careful in regulating prostitution as a whole because then we'd be contravening the law."³ The regulation that does take place in Antwerp

indeed clashes with national law, which explains why some other cities, including Brussels, have been much less involved in oversight of their RLDs than their Antwerp counterparts. But in both places, the overall approach is one of *de facto legalization* (i.e., illegal but officially regulated). This is the current legal regime in some other nations as well, and was the precursor to formal legalization in the early-2000s in Germany, the Netherlands, and New Zealand (see Brants 1998).

Several legalization bills have been introduced in parliament over the past decade, but none have passed. Competing legislation has been introduced as well, to criminalize clients or close down existing brothels and window prostitution (Knox 2003). The failure of all such bills is a function of the lack of political unity on this issue. Unlike many other societies, prohibitionists are not popular in Belgium, and even the right-wing political parties are not known for being staunchly antiprostitution. Likewise, top law enforcement officials do not favor prohibition, because they feel that it would make their monitoring work more difficult. In short, prostitution has not been a contested issue at the national political level in Belgium.

The two cities differ in population and thus the size of the local client pool, with Brussels at 1,119,088 and Antwerp at 493,517 in January 2011.⁴ Brussels also has a larger pool of foreign sex customers than Antwerp: It hosts many international organizations (e.g., North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Parliament, Council of the European Union) and thus legions of men working away from home, and also has almost four times more visiting tourists than Antwerp.⁵ Still, neither city's RLD can be considered tourist-oriented, as they are remote from the central areas of each city and lack other attractions; they cater mainly to local men and, to a lesser extent, dedicated male sex tourists.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the two study sites, it is important to sketch some general features of window prostitution, a type of sexual commerce that may be unfamiliar to some readers.

The Nature of Window Prostitution

Window prostitution is distinctive—a unique hybrid of indoor and street prostitution. The sellers remain indoors yet are quite visible from outside though their windows or glass doors. Despite the uniqueness of window prostitution, the prevailing norms and behavior patterns within the host zones have rarely been studied (Aalbers 2005; Loopmans 2004).

Window prostitution can be found in several cities, including Amsterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Hamburg, and Seoul. While each window district has its own particularities, there are certain common

features. Window workers are not employees; they simply rent a room from a building owner. This affords workers more autonomy than some other types of prostitution, such as brothels or sauna clubs, where owners and managers dictate appearance and conduct norms. Building owners may exercise some control (e.g., screening out drug-dependent or underage individuals), but in general, the women operate independently of the owners. They decide when they will work, how much they will charge for services, which men they will accept as clients, and how they spend their time inside the window rooms. Exceptions to this general rule are found in window rooms where a manager is present, as in the Brussels RLD discussed below.

One universal feature of window prostitution is the sex workers' conspicuous efforts to attract customers in a public location. They dress in revealing outfits—miniskirts, bikinis, lingerie—and their demeanor is designed to catch men's attention. They pass the time by listening to music, dancing, eating, doing their makeup, chatting on the phone, and signaling or calling out to men on the street to attract their attention. Walking through the area, the visitor will observe some who look bored and are disengaged from the street scene, but most engage in some type of body language or animated "performance" to attract men's attention and business (Aalbers 2005).

Visitors' street-level behavior reveals some common patterns from place to place. The vast majority of individuals walking through European window districts are spectators rather than customers (Aalbers 2005). Most quietly walk through the area and generally avoid contact with other visitors unless they are friends on a group outing. If few partake sexually, a fair number do initiate conversations with a window worker. These conversations typically revolve around services and prices, and most are quite routinized and civil (Aalbers 2005). However, I have occasionally overheard men asking for sex without a condom, "kinky" sex, and haggling over price, time, or services. The sex workers have little patience for this and will quickly end the conversation, though there is sometimes shouting or cursing as well. The men who buy sex in these areas report a range of experiences in and observations of specific RLDs in online forums, which can be useful in helping researchers understand the dynamics of these zones.

Brussels

Brussels' Red-Light Landscape

Brussels' RLD is located next to the city's north train station, concentrated on Aarschotstraat and a few nearby streets. Aarschot hosts 58 window buildings, with between 230 and 350 women working there depending on the time of



Figure 1. Brussels red-light district, showing train station far left, Aarschotstraat left, ethnic neighborhood right.

Source. Photo by author.

year (Seinpost 2008). Almost all of the women working on Aarschot are eastern European, whereas those working on the nearby streets are almost exclusively from Ghana and Nigeria, numbering around 100 (Seinpost 2008). The window rooms on the periphery are much more scattered than the highly clustered windows in the core, Aarschotstraat. Window rooms on Aarschot are interspersed with some residences, two bars, and a peep show/porn shop, but the main business on this street is window prostitution.

This RLD is located in one of the poorest areas of the city, a largely middle-eastern immigrant neighborhood consisting of Turkish and Moroccan businesses and residences (see Figure 1). In the past, there have been occasional conflicts between the middle-eastern residents and the sex workers. One study (Seinpost 2008) identified three complaints from local residents and merchants: (1) prostitution-related nuisances: traffic congestion, parking problems, noise, car break-ins, and visitors' uncivil behavior (e.g., offensive language, fights); (2) building owners who let their buildings fall into disrepair; and (3) the erotic image of the neighborhood, which clashes with local



Figure 2. Brussels red-light district, Aarschotstraat.

Source. Photo by author.

Muslim sensibilities. Residents have complained about the prostitutes' scanty attire and the proximity of the sex trade to Muslim families (Seinpost 2008). Despite greater local tolerance today than in the past, tensions persist (Seinpost 2008).

My fieldnotes and photos (see Figure 2) depict the neighborhood as being in physical decay, with ubiquitous litter and graffiti, a few abandoned buildings, and some broken windows. Graffiti marks most of the window-prostitution buildings, indicating these owners' lack of upkeep of their premises. Individuals who contribute to online forums describe this RLD as "seedy," "rough," "intimidating," and "shabby," and somewhat unsafe (noting the risk of being robbed or pickpocketed), while others mention seeing drunkards, drug users, beggars, gang members, and other disreputables. A study likewise reported that some of the prostitutes working in the area "complain of a feeling of insecurity due to gangs moving into the neighborhood and lack of police surveillance in the street, especially on weekends," when visitors are more likely to be intoxicated (Seinpost 2008, p. 32). I observed a few mild altercations between visitors and sex workers, but none among the visitors themselves. Some individuals were observed drinking alcohol on the street and a few were visibly intoxicated on alcohol or drugs.

Local police play a limited role in this RLD. Their main activity is responding to trouble on the streets, less with regulating third parties or protecting the

purveyors (Seinpost 2008). Federal police, however, conduct occasional site visits to the window rooms to inquire about the prostitutes' circumstances and learn about the networks within which they work. In the 1990s, they arrested several Albanian pimps and disrupted their criminal networks; the Albanians had a reputation for coercing or abusing the women (some of whom reported abuse to the police) and for violent clashes among the pimps themselves that the police could not ignore (Sivri 2008). Yet in general, police involvement in this RLD is much more muted than in other European RLDs (Seinpost 2008; Sivri 2008).

The Managers

Window prostitution in Brussels is largely controlled by networks of procurers, pimps, and madams. In the 1990s, most of the sex workers on Aarschot street were Albanians linked to Albanian pimps (Seinpost 2008), but the ethnic complexion has changed radically since then. An independent investigation found that 70% of the women working on Aarschot in 2008 were Bulgarian (most of whom had Bulgarian pimps), while the remainder consisted of Romanians (15%), Albanians (10%), and other nationalities (5%) (Seinpost 2008).⁶ Two-thirds of the Bulgarian pimps come from the city of Sliven, where they launder the money earned in Belgium through their ownership of residences, hotels, and other conventional properties in Bulgaria (Sivri 2008). On rare occasions, Bulgarian pimps have been arrested and convicted of trafficking (Novinite 2011, 2013).

Unlike the Albanian pimps who preceded them, Bulgarian pimps and traffickers are reportedly much less coercive toward the women they recruit and manage (Petrunov 2010). They enter into contracts with the women and allow them a measure of freedom regarding working hours, what they can do when off work, and by providing them with cell phones to call their families back home (Sivri 2008). Prostitutes keep roughly half of their earnings, which can far exceed what they could earn in Bulgaria (Sivri 2008). These practices reduce the chances that any given sex worker will complain to the police. Some of the workers become independent operators after working for a pimp, but at work, most of them continue to be managed by a madam.⁷

A "madam" is present in many of the window buildings on Aarschotstraat. It is the madam, not the sex worker herself, who rents the window room from the owner (Sivri 2008). In this respect, Brussels differs from the windowed RLDs in other cities that I have studied. In the past, the madams were mostly older Belgian women, but today mostly Bulgarian (Seinpost 2008). Some of them are ex-prostitutes who aged out of the profession, while others have no history of selling sex themselves. Relations among madams are not

competitive or conflictual; interviews with them indicate that they work in close partnership with other madams (e.g., placing sex workers in particular rooms and relocating them subsequently).⁸ Madams serve multiple functions: In addition to renting the room, they take the client's payment, inform workers when their time is up with a client (some set timers for this purpose), and are available to intervene if a client becomes unruly and their very presence may deter this from happening in the first place. Their most important function, however, is that of *direct supervision and control* over the workers, allowing pimps to remain off-site and relatively secure (most of the pimps conduct their operations from the safety of their home country). Moreover, the madams' gender and age (45–60) give the impression that they are more "innocent" than male pimps on-site might be, thus attracting less attention from the authorities. For the most part, madams are invisible from the street; they sit in the rooms out of public view and only occasionally venture outside. They do not solicit passersby on the sidewalk nor do they speak to clients, leaving all negotiations to the sex worker.⁹

Workers, Clients, and Spectators

The vast majority of women working in this RLD today are Bulgarian, with the remainder Romanian and Albanian. Three-quarters of them are in the 18 to 24 age range; none are under 18 according to a recent study (Sivri 2008). Interviews in Bulgaria with 85 women who had been involved in sex work in Belgium and elsewhere in Western Europe reveal that many of them had previously engaged in prostitution in Bulgaria and most knew what kind of work they would be doing in the West (Petrunov 2010).

In the window rooms on Aarschotstraat, the women work 8- or 12-hour shifts (e.g., from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.). They do not live in the rooms, residing instead in apartments outside the RLD. One to four women occupy the window rooms; if there are two or more, they typically sit together in front of the windows.

Like other window-prostitution zones in Europe, sex workers in Brussels engage in a variety of performances to entice men who walk or drive past their rooms. From my observations, almost all of the pedestrians and vehicle occupants passing through the area are either white men of various ages or young middle-eastern men. No children and almost no women were visible on the street during my site visits. A single traffic lane congested with bumper-to-bumper cars traverses Aarschot. The cars, whose occupants are typically men, cruise the street slowly, sometimes stopping for a few minutes to view or negotiate with a window woman via hand signals (some of these motorists then park and visit a woman); cars stopped behind them sometimes

honk their horns in frustration but mostly remain quiet, perhaps enjoying the hiatus that allows them to gaze at the women. Noise and exhaust fumes from the idling cars are ubiquitous. Especially at night, the predominant sound is that of idling cars. One online poster elaborates on this scene:

During the nights, [the cars] can get very distracting as you get a lot of young groups of guys driving up and down the road trying to negotiate with the girls. A lot of girls are actually concentrating on the cars that are passing, as they seem to get a good response from them.

At the same time, men in the vehicles sometimes annoy the women as well as the pedestrians: One man observed car occupants making “obscene gestures at the girls who sit in windows. Some of the guys are pretty nasty and get the girls upset.”

Unlike window-prostitution rooms in other cities that I have observed, Brussels’ windows do not open and most of the doors do not face the street, so clients must walk up a few steps to a side door to speak with a worker. For this reason, fewer men converse with the workers in this RLD than in other places that I have observed. Instead, their interactions are often nonverbal, including the use of hand signals. When a man enters a room to buy sex, the sex worker will ask for payment and a tip for the madam, transfer the money to the madam, and then retire to a back room for a brief (15–20 minute) sexual encounter.¹⁰

As indicated earlier, most visitors are simply spectators or voyeurs rather than clients. Their behavior naturally varies to some extent: It can be pleasant or amusing such as the man I saw blowing kisses at each woman he saw in a window. Others are best described as pests, like the man who stared at one woman for a long time, his face pressed against her window, as she repeatedly tried to brush him off while a crowd looked on and laughed. As noted above, this RLD attracts a fair share of disorderly individuals, but the majority simply cruise the zone, looking at the women and perhaps briefly interacting with some of them.

A distinctive feature of many of Brussels’ (and Ghent’s) window units is a small bar inside the room. (In the local lexicon, the window rooms masquerade as “bars,” and some buildings have signage suggesting that these are bars.) These rooms are licensed for alcohol consumption, and prostitutes are registered for tax purposes as “waitresses,” while the madams are technically working as “bartenders” or “cleaning ladies.”¹¹ A customer can buy a drink at the bar (a price list is pasted on some of the windows). Unlike a regular bar, these bar areas are not places to relax, drink, and chat with people, but instead just offer a drink for sale.¹² Another distinctive feature in Brussels is the presence of couches instead of beds in many of the

window rooms. It is illegal to have a bed in the room because that would suggest that sex was taking place and would put the site in different category (a hotel or brothel), so proprietors have installed couches to give the appearance of a lounge (Seinpost 2008). For the same reason, showers are lacking in some of these places, rendering them rather unhygienic. These three arrangements—the bars and their “waitresses,” couches instead of beds, and the lack of showers—are designed to rebrand the window brothels as nonsexual settings (recall that brothels are technically illegal in Belgium). The rules are violated in some buildings (where there is a bed and/or no bar) and the authorities generally ignore these departures from the norms (Seinpost 2008).

Curtains instead of walls partition many of these shared window rooms, providing separate venues for sex—an obvious profit-maximizing strategy on the part of managers, but an arrangement that clients complain about in online forums, because of the lack of privacy (overhearing or being overheard by someone on the other side of a curtain). Other clients complain about the couches, describing them as unsuited for comfortable sexual activities. In other words, the arrangements in these rooms make it difficult for clients to form even a brief emotional connection with a woman—something sought by many clients of indoor sex workers (Milrod and Weitzer 2012; Sanders 2008).

The social ecology of this sexual landscape clashes with the appearance of many of the sex workers themselves. Popular notions of down-market vice areas typically imagine prostitutes as desperate, unhealthy, or drug-addicted. This is not the case in Brussels: Although the women naturally vary in their appearance, many of those on Aarschot street would be deemed attractive or strikingly so by conventional standards.¹³ Thus, it would be mistaken to assume a correspondence between a RLD’s physical conditions and the appearance and biography of those who work there.

Antwerp

Antwerp has long had visible prostitution in its dockside area, the *Schipperskwartier* (Skippers Quarter), where sailors stayed while in port. The 1948 law banning third-party involvement in prostitution (e.g., pimping, running a brothel) was not enforced in the city for decades, as long as the activity did not cause a public nuisance or generate complaints from residents. However, prostitutes and their managers remained vulnerable to selective law enforcement, and the authorities occasionally acted to drive them out of certain parts of the city (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011).

Reinventing the City's Sex Sector

In the 1990s, prostitution was abundant on Antwerp's streets and in indoor settings throughout the city. Window prostitution existed on three streets behind the central train station (about 60 windows at that time) and in 17 streets in the Skippers Quarter (about 280 windows). The number of sellers grew significantly during the decade, as women from the former Soviet empire migrated to Antwerp. Meanwhile, organized crime groups proliferated and gained a foothold in the prostitution sector. Occasional outbreaks of violence occurred between competing crime groups, driving "normal" businesses and some residents out of the affected areas. Other types of disorder included the serious dilapidation of buildings and noise and traffic congestion on the streets hosting window and street prostitution. In the 1990s, approximately 4,000 cars drove through the Skippers Quarter daily (Willems 2009). A client writing on an online discussion board recalled the flavor of the place in the 1990s: "At four in the morning the place was packed with slow moving cars, horns blasting, the lads in the cars shouting at the girls in the windows dancing about."

In the 1990s, residents increasingly demanded that the city deal with the increasing public disorder and crime, just as the influential prostitutes' rights group, Payoke, was pressing for greater protections for prostitutes and a crackdown on criminal involvement in the trade (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011).¹⁴ These demands led the city council to adopt a four-point plan in 1999: to restrict prostitution to a single red-light zone and remove it from other parts of the city, reduce public nuisances, eliminate organized crime's involvement in prostitution, and improve working conditions for prostitutes (Willems 2009). In 2000, the city began the process of squeezing prostitution out of certain areas and confining it to a three-block "tolerance zone" of window rooms in the Skippers Quarter. In 2001, the police closed down all the window units (about 150) outside the new tolerance zone and launched a robust effort against street prostitution, which was considered a public nuisance. Prostitutes who were operating illegally were arrested in police raids and roadblocks were erected to disrupt car traffic into areas where prostitution was now banned (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011). These efforts met with resistance from some of the affected parties such as window owners whose buildings were being closed.

Importantly, the city committed a great deal of resources to the project of redressing the problems associated with prostitution and remaking the city's erotic landscape. The cost of law enforcement actions alone was sizable and the government-supported renewal of the remaining RLD required substantial resources. Federal subsidies were used for the revitalization of the entire

Skippers Quarter, inside and outside the RLD proper; €10.5 million was spent on this venture between 2000 and 2007 (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011). Few cities have been willing to embark on such an expensive, multi-faceted scheme—one that is not simply prohibitionist—when dealing with their RLDs.

Today, owners who rent windows to sex workers are required to apply for a permit, which is signed by the mayor. There is a separate building code for window-prostitution buildings (stipulating rules for sanitation, comfort, and exterior appearance), and compliance is monitored by city officials. The mandatory renovation of these houses in recent years means that “the working conditions for prostitutes thereby improved drastically” (Willems 2009, p. 5). City officials meet with all window owners twice a year, informing them of any new policies and asking them for input on improving the RLD. As an official told me, “We make sure every owner knows our policies and *why* they exist.”¹⁵ Most owners do not resist the authorities’ requests for improvements in their buildings, perhaps because they realize they have no legal standing to oppose official dictates. About five times a year, some owner is fined by the city for failure to comply with regulations—for example, a defective shower, faulty electricity, or unhygienic facilities.

The reforms prohibit owners from renting premises to minors and undocumented immigrants. Today, no minors or illegal immigrants operate in Antwerp’s RLD.¹⁶ The city has also tackled the large organized crime groups. After 2000, police launched investigations of persons suspected of organized crime—focusing on their sources of income, tax payments, and suspicions of trafficking—and successfully prosecuted them in court. Pimps still exist, however. An official told me: “We got the big organized crime groups out of the picture, but the individual pimps are more common and it’s very difficult to get rid of all the [third-party] in-betweens.”¹⁷ If not totally eliminated, trafficking and exploitation have been greatly reduced within this RLD (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011).

In 2002, the city installed a health clinic (Ghapro) in the heart of the RLD, which offers prostitutes free, anonymous psychological counseling; tests and treatment for sexually-transmitted diseases; and assistance for those who wish to leave the trade. The center’s website states that its mission is to promote “safer sex work and empowered sex workers” and that “anonymity is guaranteed,” with visitors identified only by their working names and birth-dates, and test results remaining confidential.¹⁸ The health center provides a large number of consultations every year—2,785 in 2008 (Willems 2009). It also sponsors a mobile outreach worker who visits prostitutes at their workplaces. If she learns of problems, she can pass the information along to the police or other authorities.

According to the official in charge of the city's prostitution policies, Antwerp has largely succeeded in achieving the goals of the original four-point plan, including removing most organized crime involvement and redistributing window prostitution into a single, orderly, and fairly tidy RLD. Most street prostitutes relocated to other cities. By 2006, Antwerp's mayor, Patrick Janssens, described the changes in upbeat terms:

We have concentrated prostitution into three streets and that means we can put in place tough criteria. Most of these people are working in extremely good conditions. It was not like this five years ago. Now we have been able to create a situation where women are more independent [and] they are safe. (Janssens, quoted in Castle 2006)

An academic study concurred, "By 2007, the Schipperskwartier had completely changed character. From a highly mixed, unruly, and dilapidated area, it was turned into a totally segregated, highly regulated, and fashionably renovated sex work district" (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011, p. 558). In 2006, the city government won a prize for its successful reinvention of this RLD. The award was given by a national association in recognition of the city's creative approach to urban planning, and a documentary was produced showing how the city successfully reconstructed this red-light zone.¹⁹

Antwerp's Red-Light Landscape Today

The RLD's distance from the city center—a 20-minute walk from the historic town square—renders it much less noticeable than a centrally located zone (e.g., Amsterdam) or Brussels' RLD that is quite visible from trains entering the city from the north. But like Brussels, Antwerp's is single use, almost entirely revolving around window prostitution. Inside the RLD, there is one tattoo parlor, one nightclub, a Chinese restaurant, and two peep shows that also sell pornographic materials—but no other businesses. Some bars and restaurants dot streets outside the RLD. The RLD is now strictly a pedestrian zone, with cars banned to minimize public nuisance; there is no seating in the area, thus reducing the opportunity for visitors to linger. The RLD is well kept, clean, and remarkably quiet (see Figure 3).

Although the RLD is considerably smaller than before, the same number of window rooms are available as previously (when 280 windows were scattered across 17 streets). Today, there are 283 windows, with about 400 women working in them either on the day or night shift (Seinpost 2008). Sex workers are not allowed to reside within the RLD but some live nearby. The



Figure 3. Antwerp red-light district, showing health center on far left.
 Source. Photo by author.

going rate for renting a window room is €800 per week. Split between two women working different shifts, this amounts to €400 per week (US\$520).

Police patrol the area in either uniform or in civilian clothes, looking for problems and monitoring anyone they think might be a pimp. (A city bylaw allows officers to stop, question, and search anyone in the RLD.) A small police station sits in the center of the RLD with a visible *Politie* sign (see Figure 4). The station is an unstaffed base of operation, used for interrogating suspects or troublemakers when the need arises, but visitors have no way of knowing that it is not staffed and its presence serves a symbolic function: giving the impression of a constant police presence.

Foot patrol officers walk the area day and night, and teams periodically visit each sex worker and examine passports to confirm that they are adults and citizens of Belgium or another European Union nation and possess documents allowing them to work in Belgium. Crimes in the prostitution sector, including assault and rape, have decreased substantially since the RLD was reinvented in 1999 to 2001 (Bilefsky 2005), and the police report that they have a generally positive relationship with the workers. According to a member of the prostitution squad, “Rather than being an enemy, the girls know we are here to help them and that helps us to gain their trust so we can prevent crime” (quoted in Bilefsky 2005). In addition, residents’ “complaints related



Figure 4. Antwerp red-light district, showing police station on left.

Source. Photo by George, used by permission.

to prostitution have stopped almost completely,” according to an official report (Willems 2009, p. 5).

The lack of vehicle traffic, scarcity of attractions apart from prostitution, and the fact that this RLD is an enclave some distance from the historic city center (and the tourists who flock there) contribute to its tranquil atmosphere. Further reinforcing public order is the above-mentioned “community policing” in the form of foot patrols and a visible police station in the zone.

Workers and Clients

Out of the 1,060 prostitutes surveyed by the city’s health services in 2010, Romanians and Bulgarians comprised the largest number, with Nigerians third.²⁰ Most of the remainder come from elsewhere in Europe or Latin America. These are citywide figures; the windowed RLD itself is even more homogeneous in composition, almost entirely consisting of eastern Europeans. A small fraction of the 400 window workers are transgender women; male prostitutes work elsewhere: in saunas, bars, and parks.

Like Brussels, almost everyone visiting the zone is male, and most are white or middle-eastern. I saw no minors or single women, no groups of tourists, and only an occasional couple walking through the area. The zone is surrounded by residential areas that have been gentrified (gentrification began in 1985), and some local residents pass through the zone when walking to another place in the area. Given the distance of this district from the city’s

tourist-filled central square, the women are “on display” to a lower proportion of the general public than in cities where the RLD is in the town center, where cars crawl through the area, or where the zone is next to a train station. The visible objectification of women is thus more restricted in a semi-isolated RLD like Antwerp’s. As mentioned above, public complaints about Antwerp’s RLD all but evaporated after the area was refashioned a decade ago.

As in Brussels, Antwerp’s window arrangement allows for some fraternization among workers. Some of the rooms have separate doors and windows, but many others are clustered into blocs of three, five, or seven units—each with its own glass door. This has two important advantages: the women can socialize with each other and they can collectively assert control over troublesome men. In other words, proximity to other workers can enhance working conditions by facilitating camaraderie and empowerment. At the same time, such close quarters can create tensions such as disputes over music choices, smoking, and other things.

Although several women stand next to each other at their respective windows or doors, the backrooms are discrete, single-occupancy. There are no Brussels-style cubicles separated by curtains, no couches or interior bars, and no madams in the rooms. The lack of madams means that the workers are subject to much less control over their daily activities than in Brussels, and the lack of bars and couches shows that building owners do not feel obliged to portray their commercial sex sites euphemistically. Also unlike Brussels, where some of the rooms have signage suggestive of bars or clubs, signs are absent from Antwerp’s windowed buildings.

In online discussion boards, posters describe Antwerp’s zone in glowing terms: “very laid back and well policed”; “modern and clean”; “probably the best RLD that I’ve visited”; “a gem. Fantastic place. Clean, safe”; and “the best window-shopping environment that I’ve been in. No gangs . . . hanging around, or any noticeable pimps.” Posters compare Antwerp quite favorably with Brussels’ RLD. One declared, “I’d highly recommend Antwerp before Brussels as the amenities [room sizes] are much bigger and there is no ‘madam’ to break your balls.” Another said, “Whereas the Antwerp area is quite clean and heavily patrolled [by police] and its visitors are mainly white, the Brussels RLD indeed might look intimidating and look more like an Arab city than a European city.” One client rated Antwerp superior to any other RLD he had visited,

This place is as classy as a window RLD can be. Very clean. Windows are stylish! Everything is taken good care of, so that it looks new. [Rooms are] very spacey, with all necessary things for a girl to keep herself and the customer tidy. High ceiling. Big bed. These are the best working conditions for a girl, and also the best visiting places for the customers, among all RLDs mentioned.

Clients who visited this RLD prior to its modernization in 2000 compare its current incarnation favorably to what existed before. The old RLD was characterized as less safe, less hygienic, and in disrepair. Describing the “old days,” one online poster recalled the window rooms as being “slums” and the hygiene therein “Third World” (quoted in Loopmans 2004).

Current positive client assessments are consistent with my field observations. But, as one might expect, the overall tranquility of the zone is occasionally disrupted by visitors who sometimes have verbal altercations with a particular sex worker. On one occasion, I observed a man standing outside a woman’s door for 10 minutes, calling her name repeatedly and pleading with her to open the door. Another time, I saw a group of five young men, one of whom knocked on every woman’s door on the street, saying things to each woman that sparked an altercation. His friends observed from the background, laughing at his antics. But aside from these rare events, the zone is remarkably free of disturbances. Almost all of the visitors are quiet and well behaved.

The general lack of physical and social disorder helps to explain why Antwerp’s RLD is relatively uncontroversial among the city’s residents and elites. Nearby residents do not complain about it; clients are attracted to it because it is clean and safe; youths and the general public are largely shielded by virtue of this RLD’s isolated location; working conditions for the prostitutes have improved significantly over the past decade; and the authorities have assumed a greater role in this RLD than their counterparts in Brussels.

Conclusion

The study sites examined in this research are located within the same society and legal order and feature the same type of sexual commerce: window prostitution clustered in discrete geographical zones. Yet, the two cities’ RLDs differ substantially in physical appearance, social organization, and in how they are evaluated and experienced by visitors. Antwerp’s RLD has been thoroughly modernized and cleansed of its former skid-row attributes. As a reinvented or “planned” red-light zone, it received substantial government funding expressly designed for its renovation. Brussels’ RLD, by contrast, is entirely unreconstructed. Indeed, Brussels mirrors Antwerp’s problem-plagued zone prior to its makeover at the end of the 1990s.

In many respects, physical decay and social disorganization characterize the Brussels case:

- it is located alongside a major train station (transience) in one of the poorest areas of the city;

- auto congestion, and the corollary noise and air pollution, is ubiquitous (a type of social disorder);
- buildings are in disrepair and are tainted by abundant graffiti, broken windows, and litter (physical disorder);
- madams fronting for pimps exercise tight (and potentially criminal) control over the sex workers, dictating working conditions; and
- police presence on the street is intermittent and their information-gathering visits with window workers far from optimal (a social control deficit).

Brussels thus conforms in key respects to the conventional image of red-light areas—characterized by physical decay, social disorganization, and involvement of at least some parasitical actors (madams and pimps).

Antwerp's RLD is the antithesis of Brussels' on each of these variables:

- it is situated in a quiet area surrounded by a middle-class residential neighborhood and upscale restaurants and shops;
- it is accessible only to pedestrians;
- its buildings are well kept, with owners subject to penalties for code violations;
- third-party exploitation is limited due to local government oversight of the sex sector, thus creating the conditions for greater worker control over working conditions than in Brussels;
- police maintain a visible presence on the street and with an on-site police station, enhancing order maintenance and public safety; sexually-oriented businesses do *not necessarily* suffer from a “low police presence,” as claimed by Weinstein and McCleary (2011, p. 586); and
- police routinely visit window workers to monitor their situation and to build trust with them, which may increase workers' willingness to contact the authorities if a problem arises; this proactive “community policing” stands in stark contrast to Brussels' intermittent, reactive approach.

Although not entirely without problems, Antwerp's RLD can be described as a world apart from the Brussels model.

I argue that the differences between the two settings can be explained largely by the distinctive policies and practices of local officials—reform-oriented intervention and ongoing oversight in Antwerp, and laissez-faire tolerance and disregard in Brussels. But why do the respective city authorities have such different orientations? Recall that Brussels' RLD is nestled in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, populated largely by middle-eastern

immigrants. Their ethnic background and socioeconomic marginalization translate into a lack of political clout. As Reckless (1926) noted long ago, “In the slums the vice emporia . . . experience practically no organized resistance from [residents of] the decaying neighborhood adjacent” (p. 168; cf. Symanski 1981, p. 129). The area in general and the RLD in particular can thus be ignored by the local power elite, except on the very rare occasions when residents have successfully mobilized to demand some kind of change (e.g., the closure of window rooms near a school on one of the peripheral streets a few blocks from Aarschot). Antwerp’s RLD, by contrast, is surrounded by gentrified, predominantly white, middle-class neighborhoods and some trendy businesses. In the 1990s, residents in various parts of the city successfully pressed the local government to address what they defined as “out of control” prostitution, marked by public disorder, physical decay, and organized crime—all detracting from the quality of life in nearby neighborhoods.

The two contexts thus differ dramatically in the ethnic and class status of local residents and their capacity to successfully pressure local authorities. This is not the entire explanation, however: Government officials in the two cities have played an independent role as well. The advent of a reform-oriented new regime in Antwerp in the late 1990s contrasts with Brussels, where the authorities prefer to take a hands-off approach to the city’s RLD and have publicly questioned the legality of Antwerp’s interventionist policy.²¹ The relative lack of public pressure on Brussels’ officials and the marginalized status of residents living near the RLD allow the city to continue its policy of minimal engagement and general tolerance of the status quo. As other research has demonstrated, local government and law enforcement authorities play an absolutely crucial role in shaping the spatial distribution and social ecology of vice districts, but their policies are also influenced by the presence or absence of influential political and economic interests or collective mobilization on the part of local residents (e.g., Aalbers and Deinema 2012; Hubbard 1999; McKewon 2003; Shumsky and Springer 1981; Weitzer 2012).

My findings point to the advantages of a regulated and well-monitored prostitution system (Antwerp) over a more lax approach with negligible oversight (Brussels). The findings are therefore pertinent to the larger debate on legalization, particularly the question of what kinds of regulation are ideal in a legal prostitution system. Recall that Belgium’s red-light zones are only *de facto* legal; third-party ties to sex workers remain unlawful though tolerated. In the absence of formal, nationwide legal regulation, each municipality intervenes in prostitution as it sees fit. *De jure* legalization, by contrast, typically involves at least some minimal standards that all jurisdictions are obligated to abide by, even if decisions regarding additional rules are delegated

to local authorities (Bretons, Jackson, and Hausbeck 2010; Sullivan 2010; Weitzer 2012). Absent this, Brussels' policy makers could follow Antwerp's lead and radically remake the city's RLD by (1) eliminating graffiti, broken windows, and abandoned buildings; (2) banning car traffic from Aarschotstraat; (3) forcing building owners to improve the conditions of their window units, including minimum standards for amenities and hygiene; (4) capping the number of working hours per day at eight; (5) increasing the number of site visits by government officials to monitor prostitutes' working conditions and confirm their voluntary involvement in this work; (6) doing routine background checks on third parties (e.g., madams, building owners) to screen out those who may have ties to organized crime; and (7) conducting more police foot patrols to visibly demonstrate a police presence at the street level, with potential dividends for enhanced social control in the zone.

In their contrasting ways, Brussels' and Antwerp's RLDs can be measured against the classic Chicago School vice model. Walter Reckless (1926, 1933), in particular, assumed that vice was inherently associated with street crime, anomie, and community disintegration, perhaps because he observed no counterexamples (cf. Burgess 1925; Shaw and McKay 1942). As indicated earlier in the article, contemporary writers and policy makers continue to assume that sexually-oriented businesses inherently have adverse social and environmental effects—reflected in Weinstein and McCleary's (2011) claim that there is “always . . . an association between adult entertainment businesses and negative secondary effects” (p. 581). This model is evident in Brussels, in greater or lesser degree, but in Antwerp the main vice (commercial sex) has been detached from the conditions that characterize socially disorganized settings (crime, socioeconomic disadvantage, low social control). In Antwerp's case, a multifaceted, resourceful approach by government officials transformed the city's vice settings (previously anomic and criminogenic) into today's modernized, award-winning zone. And Antwerp is not unique: Several other RLDs in Europe resemble it on at least some dimensions of social ecology and associated outcomes for workers, clients, and local residents.²²

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Notes

1. Because male sex workers do not work in geographically clustered businesses in either city and instead operate in more dispersed locations, my analysis is restricted to areas where women sell sex to men.
2. World Values Survey, 1990: <http://www.wvsevsdb.com/wvs/WVSanalyzeQuestion.jsp>.
3. Interview with Antwerp prostitution official, Antwerp, June 24, 2008.
4. www.citypopulation.de/belgium (accessed May 10, 2012).
5. In total, 2,271,000 tourists visited Brussels in 2007 compared with 636,000 for Antwerp: www.euromonitor.com.
6. Subsequent to this count, the number of Romanians increased (Novinite 2010, 2011).
7. Research by Georgi Petrunov, including interviews with sex workers, madams, and police in Bulgaria and analysis of court cases against pimps. Email communication, June 10, 2012.
8. Petrunov research.
9. A hidden-camera investigation by two Bulgarian journalists who posed as prospective sex workers offers some revealing information on three Bulgarian madams. The madams described their role as protecting the women from unruly clients. They confided that each prostitute working in their building is required to pay them rent money, €220 (or US\$300) per shift in the case of one madam and €250 (or US\$340) for another. One of the madams also requires a €3 tip for each client and half of the profits from any drinks sold to clients. The women are assigned 12-hour shifts but may work only part of that time if they wish; they are allowed two days off per month. The three madams in this investigation clearly run an exploitative operation, with a prostitute needing to see about five men per shift just to break even. The amount of rent money each worker must pay exceeds the going rate in Antwerp (€400 per week), where women rent directly from building owners, not middlemen. I am grateful to Georgi Petrunov for informing me of the exposé.
10. The going rate in this red-light district (RLD) is €40 (or US\$52) for oral sex and one coital position and €50 (or US\$64) for multiple positions.
11. Petrunov research.
12. Decades ago, these places functioned more like genuine erotic bars, with the Belgian madam acting as barkeeper and women chatting with men over drinks prior to sexual contact. The setting later evolved into the current bar-*façade* model.
13. Clients who post in online forums consistently rate the women's appearance very favorably.

14. After its creation in 1988, Payoke “rapidly gained political strength and leverage, and was integrated into local policy networks” (Loopmans and van den Broeck 2011, p. 554). One of the two founders of Payoke was elected to the city council in 1988 and later played a key role in reshaping prostitution policy.
15. Interview with prostitution official, 2008.
16. Interview with Antwerp prostitution official, May 16, 2011.
17. Interview with prostitution official, 2008.
18. The Antwerp Health House: www.ghapro.be.
19. The website for the documentary, *Skippers Quarter*, presents it as “Antwerp’s Prize-Winning Approach to Urban Renewal in Its Red-Light District.” The film was commissioned by the Flemish Association for Space and Planning in 2007: <http://www.terenjavandijk.net/en/project/schipperskwartier/2/>.
20. Figures supplied by Antwerp government official.
21. The mayor of Schaerbeek, the Brussels municipality where the RLD is located, once criticized Antwerp authorities for facilitating prostitution via what he considered their unauthorized official regulation of this sector.
22. Assessment based on my observations in such zones and descriptions of them on clients’ online forums. Such RLDs can be found in the Dutch cities of Alkmaar, Eindhoven, Groningen, Haarlem, The Hague, and Utrecht.

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