Abstract

This thesis analyses the understanding of sex trafficking in the League of Nations as well as the ways in which the changing international environment influenced the image of sex trafficking in the interwar years, with a focus on how the League collected data, how it interpreted data, but also how it misrepresented sex trafficking. I argue that a shift in the debates within the Advisory Committee on Traffic of Women and Children can be discerned. This committee started off with a focus on mobility, which shifted to abolition and regulation, and finally to prevention and punishment. These shifts were influenced by the immediate post-war environment, the increased role of the state and the economic crisis in 1929.

The committee was faced with different challenges and tensions that shaped the knowledge that was produced about sex trafficking. The image of sex trafficking they created is still topical today. Rather than repeating this image, I will critically engage with it and point out how sex trafficking came to embody a variety of issues that were prevalent at that time, such as miscegenation, emancipation and nationalism. By treating the TWC as an example of international cooperation, of data collection during the interwar years and of experts gaining a better understanding of a 'global' issue, I will add to lively historiographical debates about transnational history, the importance of the League of Nations and the historical study of gender.

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‘Fighting a ghost’

Collecting data and creating knowledge on sex trafficking in the League of Nations between 1921 and 1939

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List of abbreviations

League of Nations archive	LoN
League of Nations	League
Non-governmental organisations	NGO’s
Advisory Committee on Traffic of Women and Children	TWC

Introduction

In 2019, Save the Children published a report about sex trafficking that was fittingly titled 'little invisible slaves'.[1] It described the victims of the traffic as mostly young girls who were poor, emotionally deprived and who had been taken from their families under false pretences. A similar image of sex trafficking has been used in the interwar period, when the League of Nations (hereafter referred to as 'League') institutionalised the argumentation that is still so familiar today. This thesis analyses the understanding of sex trafficking in the League, but also how the changing international environment influenced the image of sex trafficking in the interwar years. This thesis will focus on how the League collected data, how it criticised its own data collection, but also how it misrepresented sex trafficking.

In 1921, the League set up the Advisory Committee on Traffic of Women and Children (hereafter referred to as 'TWC') with the aim of protecting women and children from sex trafficking. This committee consisted of national representatives, non-governmental organisations and experts. The fact that a separate committee was dedicated to sex trafficking is telling of how important the topic had become in international politics, as it embodied a variety of issues that were prevalent at that time, such as mobility, nationalism and the use of scientific knowledge in politics. Furthermore, the TWC institutionalised the cooperation between states and non-governmental organisations and used the international prestige and means of the League to shape the discussion on this issue.

[1] Save the Children, 'One in four victims of trafficking and exploitation in Europe are children,' published on July 25, 2019, last accessed on April 15, 2020. https://www.savethechildren.net/news/one-four-victims-trafficking-and-exploitation-europe-are-children.

Historiography

Over the last fifteen years, historians who work on transnational history have changed the image of the League by looking at it from different angles. The work of these historians has revolutionized international and transnational studies, as well as reframed national and local histories. Seen in a transnational perspective, they no longer consider the League narrowly as a political body, but rather as a cooperation of experts, states and non-governmental organisations (hereafter referred to as NGO's).[2] A focus on transnationalism is not simply a presentist reading, however. Historians such as Patricia Clavin and David Gorman have shown that an 'international civil society' was created during the interwar years and that this form of internationalism was new in 1919.[3]

A transnational approach to the history of the League has also uncovered new perspectives on the TWC, because sex trafficking was seen as an international issue at the time, reflecting the institutional framework of the League. Furthermore, sex trafficking underwent a process of internationalisation during this period, which Susan Pedersen described as the displacement of national or imperial issues into the international realm.[4] Examining sex trafficking in this context helps to highlight the transnational character of the TWC.[5] The TWC intertwines histories of medicine, crime, politics and gender, which is why the topic has been

[2] S. Jackson and A. O'Malley eds., *The Institution of International Order*: *From the League of Nations to the United Nations* (New York, 2018); R. Henig, *The League of Nations. The Makers of the Modern World* (London, 2010); D. Rodogno et al. eds., *Shaping the Transnational Sphere. Experts, Networks and Issues from the 1840s to the 1930s* (New York, 2015), pp.82 – 107.

[3] D. Gorman, *International Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century* (London, 2017); P. Clavin, 'Men and Markets: Global Capital and the International Economy', in P. Clavin and G. Sluga eds., *Internationalisms. A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017), 85 – 110; G. Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013), p.4.

[4] S. Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015).

[5] J. Pliley et. al. eds., *Global Anti-Vice Activism, 1890 – 1950: Fighting Drinks, Drugs and 'Immorality'* (Cambridge, 2016).

studied in various research fields.[6] Some authors see the TWC as a feminist body that aimed to protect women's rights, regardless of race or religion.[7] Others argued that this was a mere pretence and that the actual measures of the TWC were aligned with colonial and sexist prejudice.[8]

Historians have investigated sex trafficking in specific countries or connected to specific topics, such as the role of Jews or women's labour.[9] Sex trafficking in colonial areas has especially been studied in depth, because they showed how different forms of power intersected.[10] Sociologist Stephanie Limoncelli deepened this research by studying the international movement that fought against sex trafficking.[11] Her work was innovative in differentiating the movement, dividing the delegates of the TWC between feminists and nationalists, or abolitionists and regulationists. It is my contention that such clear-cut divisions obscure the differences within these heterogenous groups as 'these [transnational] networks defy easy categorisation.'[12] I intend to nuance these distinctions and highlight how the aims of the delegates changed over time, using the scholarship on sex trafficking.

As the League shaped the debate, I will use the studies on sex trafficking and studies of the League to provide new insights into the interwar period, the image of women and sex

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[6] P. Knepper, *International Crime in the Twentieth Century: the League of Nations Era, 1919–1939* (London, 2011); I. Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation, 1921 – 1946* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009); N. Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship: Women's Rights and International Organizations* (London, 1999).

[7] K. Leppänen, 'Movement of Women: Trafficking in the Interwar Era', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 30 (2007); B. Metzger, 'Towards an International Human Rights Regime During the Interwar Years: The League of Nations Combat of Traffic in Women and Children' in K. Grant et al. eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1860–1950* (London, 2007).

[8] L. Kozma, *Global Women, Colonial Ports. Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (New York, 2017).

[9] M. Yarfitz, *Impure Migration: Jews and Sex Work in Golden Age Argentina* (New Jersey, 2019); P. Sharpe ed., *Women, Gender and Labour Migration: Historical and Global Perspectives* (London, 2001).

[10] P. de Vries, ''White Slaves' in a Colonial Nation: The Dutch Campaign Against the Traffic in Women in the Early Twentieth Century', *Social & Legal Studies*, 14 (2005); H. Fischer-Tiné, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class, and "White Subalternity" in Colonial India* (New Delhi, 2009).

[11] S. Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking. The First International Movement to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Women* (Stanford, 2010).

[12] P. Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 14 (2005), p.422.

trafficking during the interwar years and the collection of data in an increasingly international world. My research builds on the studies mentioned above, focusing on the creation of knowledge in the TWC.

Theory and methodology

The TWC believed that collecting data and gaining knowledge about sex trafficking would allow them to prevent and eradicate it. Instead, this knowledge was shaped by their own image as well as the social, political and economic changes that took place during the interwar period. Their image of sex trafficking was transnational, but shaped by nationalism and the want of states to look good on the international stage.

In analysing the debates, I will question how data was produced and who interpreted it in which way, in order to understand how sex trafficking was defined, legitimized and sensationalised, using the approach of gender historians who have shown that rather than understanding sex as a private activity, sexual relationships are socially ordered.[13] If sexuality is understood as a social construct, then changes in the image of sex workers reveal societal, moral, political and economic changes.[14] This thesis will understand sex trafficking in this broad context.

Sexuality and gender are part of a web of power relations and the variety of factors that shaped the image of sex workers are relational and dynamic. An intersectional analysis of sex trafficking reflects how anxieties such as miscegenation, emancipation, moral and physical decline were intertwined and strengthened each other during the interbellum.[15] Race and the

[13] M. Schrover and W. Schinkel, 'Introduction: The Language of Inclusion and Exclusion in the Context of Immigration and Integration', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 36 (2013), p.1126.

[14] M. Rodríguez García et. al, eds., *Selling Sex in the City: A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s-2000s* (Leiden, 2017).

[15] C. Whyte, '"Praise Be, Prostitutes as the Women We Are not." White Slavery and Human Trafficking – an Intersectional Analysis' in: V. Kallenberg et al. eds., *Intersectionality und Kritik. Neue Perspektiven für alte Fragen* (Wiesbaden 2013).

colonial context are central topics to intersectionality, which is why the racial and colonial aspect of sex trafficking has been studied in depth. Since these issues are well studied, I will only refer to the literature where necessary.[16]

Sources

The TWC produced a wide range of source material between 1921 and 1939, including correspondence, reports, minutes and resolutions. The analysis in this thesis focusses in particular on the questionnaire from 1921 and its later versions, as well as on the two reports from 1927 and 1932 respectively. The minutes of the debates about setting up these investigations, the annual reports containing government data and the follow-up investigations are also consulted to complement and contextualise the reports mentioned above. This thesis cannot capture the breadth of the work of the TWC, but I have attempted to provide more insight into it in the annexes. In the first annex, all the key players are mentioned – some of whom will be familiar to specialists of the League – while the second annex includes the topics on the agenda of the TWC. I have collected this information and made it easy to consult so that the debates can be placed in the long time period that this thesis covers.

Regardless of the richness of the sources, they vary greatly in length and scope, depending on the time and political circumstances of when they were produced. Annex 2 shows that the TWC became increasingly occupied with the fate of children, an aspect that has been excluded from this thesis. The name of the TWC changed several times. In 1924, they added 'Protection of Children' to their title, which in 1925 changed to 'Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People', to finally be included as part of the 'Advisory Committee on Social Questions (1936–1939).' According to Magaly Rodríguez

[16] M. Calahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929 – 1946* (Brighton, 2004); M. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, 2009).

Garcia, this reflects the 'shifting focus, from a specific issue within commercialized sex – trafficking – to prostitution in general.'[17]

The role of children causes difficulty, as the TWC was concerned with the traffic in underage girls, but also used the term 'girls' to describe women that were considered naïve, uneducated or in need of re-education. Traffic in women and girls further included different kinds of women's migration, but in this thesis, I have chosen to use 'sex trafficking' to describe all these instances. It is a modern term that was not used in the sources, but I use it to be as inclusive and precise as the sources allow me and to distinguish it from traffic in opium and other topics covered by the League. With regard to other terms, I have chosen to follow the terminology used in the sources. Many of these terms contain moral judgements or define people by their social or economic position. While I do not share this personally, changes in these terms are integral to my analysis. Therefore, using sex work instead of prostitution is not simply a more acceptable way of describing the same phenomenon.[18] Instead of defining these terms, I will highlight the problematics and strive to look beyond them to explain why they changed.

Structure

In order to uncover how data was collected and subsequently knowledge was produced in the League, I will analyse in a first chapter the earliest questionnaire from 1921 to find out how the TWC collected data and what their image was during the first meetings. In a second chapter, I will connect this analysis to the debates about the 'special report of experts' from 1927, which was the product of a lengthy research done by the TWC into the presence of sex trafficking

[17] M. Rodriguez Garcia, 'The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women', *International Review of Social History,* 57 (2012), p.99.

[18] J. Sanborn and A. Timm, *Gender, Sex and the Shaping of Modern Europe: A History from the French Revolution to the Present Day* (London and New York, 2016), p.17.

internationally. The information from that report, the criticism it received and international developments changed the nature of the debate and led to a further report in 1932, which will be the topic of the third chapter. The chronological structure shows how the delegates learned and adapted, based on the new data and political environment. The chronological subdivision underscores my argument that the three great turning points show a move from mobility to nationalism and science. Finally, I will come to a conclusion about what sex trafficking represented during the interwar years as well as the importance of these narratives for current debates about sex trafficking.

Chapter 1: An old debate in a new world, 1921 – 1926

The International Conference on Traffic in Women and Children created the TWC in 1921. This brought together activists, experts and state representatives with the aim to gain knowledge about sex trafficking in a world that was recovering from the First World War and adapting to new circumstances, most notably the unprecedented mobility. Nevertheless, it was this mobility that made the issue of sex trafficking more important and international than before. In this chapter, I will set out how the issue of sex trafficking was able to gain its own committee and how mobility was the main factor that depicted the image of sex trafficking in the immediate post-war period.

Sex trafficking had been discussed before the First World War, as a result of concerns related to industrialization, emancipation and immigration.[19] Opponents of sex trafficking projected 'anxieties about sexuality, contagion, race suicide, women's rights, and urbanization upon the body of the prostitute'.[20] The fight against sex trafficking led to international cooperation that united women's rights activists, purity reformers and government officials.[21] In 1904, they decided at a transnational congress that sex trafficking could only take place when national borders were crossed.[22] In 1910, forty-one states agreed to adapt their national legislation to abolish trafficking.[23]

[19] R. Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900 – 1918* (London, 1982), p.xii; A. Mooij, *Geslachtsziekten en besmettingsangst. Een historisch-sociologische studie 1850 – 1990* (Amsterdam, 1993), p.71.
[20] K. Johnson, 'Damaged Goods: Sex Hysteria and the Prostitute Fatale', *Theatre Survey*, 44 (2003), p.55.
[21] M. Constant, 'Combats contre la traite des femmes à la Société des Nations (1920 – 1940)', *Relations Internationales*, 3 (2007), p.42.
[22] 'International Agreement for the Suppression of the "White Slave Traffic", Paris, 18 May 1904', https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=VII-8&chapter=7&clang=_en (last accessed on 29 July, 2020).
[23] 'International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, Paris, 4 May 1910', https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=VII-10&chapter=7&clang=_en (last accessed on 29 July, 2020).

The aftermath of the First World War

The First World War temporarily halted these international successes, but after 1918, the issue of sex trafficking gained prominence.[24] Although the end of war was experienced differently in every country, three related developments made sex trafficking an important issue for states. First, the interwar period saw an unprecedented rise in mobility. This was facilitated by the improved infrastructure in the western industrialised world that preceded the war, such as trainlines and steamships. The chaos that followed the war drove people to move. Yet, the different experiences of tourists, refugees, soldiers and migrants should not be taken together.[25] Whereas tourists and diplomats crossed borders voluntarily and temporarily, others were forced to move, in some cases under the auspices of the League.

Second, in this chaos, states feared social unrest and wanted to find out who was part of the state, who deserved protection from the state and who was a potential threat. States hoped to achieve political stability by controlling the population, but the demography of many states had changed drastically due to mass migrations in the aftermath of the war. The anxieties grew as colonial rule was questioned, impoverished refugees immigrated, national economies collapsed and diseases spread rapidly. Concerns about the safety of women and by extension the health of the population, allowed states to introduce invasive legislation that limited women's mobility.

Finally, modernisation of the state apparatus provided the possibility of this control. Mandatory passports forced people into newly created categories, granting or withholding rights based on nationality, occupation, race and sexuality. As passports were the responsibility of the state, the passport 'emerges as a key biopolitical mechanism in this changing geopolitical

[24] S. Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking*, p.4.
[25] J. Bhabha and S. Shutter, *Women's Movement: Women under Immigration, Nationality and Refugee Law* (London, 1994); N. Green and R. Waldinger eds., *A Century of Transnationalism: Immigrants and their Homeland Connections* (Urbana, 2016).

landscape, as the documentary evidence of what relationship the state allowed the individual to claim to it.'[26]

During the transitional period from war to peace time, many people were on the move. Mobility was framed in a gendered way and the societal changes and centrality of mobility led to new images of travelling women and the (perceived) dangers of mobility.[27] However, the gender roles that were applied to female migrants were not in line with the reality of prostitutes.[28] At the same time, although crossing borders was not typical for prostitutes, they were portrayed as foreign. Mobility therefore shaped both the experience and image of female prostitutes. The League focused particularly on sex trafficking, because it saw a necessity in protecting these women, but also because it mattered to the states. Although the League declared sex trafficking as an international issue and asked states to cooperate, it did not have any tools to intervene in the state's realm.

Setting up the Advisory Committee on Traffic of Women and Children

The League was created with the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the First World War in 1919. The fifty-seven member states and their colonies sent representatives to the General Assembly where a variety of social, political and economic issues were discussed. The League had several committees that were overseen by a Secretariat, which tried to '"pacify" Europe after the First World War […] and was driven by the task of civilising non-Western regions and thus humanise colonialism.'[29] The foundation of the League was strongly based on European ideas and sex trafficking was predominantly treated as a European project.

[26] B. Chalk, *Modernism and Mobility: The Passport and Cosmopolitan Experience* (New York, 2014), p.18.
[27] M. Schrover, 'History of Slavery, Human Smuggling and Trafficking 1860–2010' in G. Bruinsma ed., *Histories of Transnational Crime* (New York, 2015).
[28] M. Schrover, *Gender, Migration, and the Public Sphere, 1850-2005* (New York, 2009).
[29] K. Dykmann, 'How International was the Secretariat of the League of Nations?', *The International History Review*, 37 (2015), p.739.

It was in this context that the TWC was created. The member states of the League had a legal obligation to deal with sex trafficking, as it was included in article 23C of the Covenant of the League.[30] This article also included the traffic in opium, which showed that the founders of the League believed these issues to be connected. The connection was forged with the idea of the 'international criminal'. The League used the increased mobility after the war to elevate illegal activities to international crimes. By doing so, it showed that trafficking in drugs, women and 'obscene publications' were connected and led by criminals that operated in international networks. The League created the TWC because it acknowledged that states were not able to fight these networks effectively without international cooperation.[31]

Moreover, in 1919, women's groups had lobbied to get the topic of prostitution on the agenda of the League, but Eric Drummond, the first Secretary-General of the League, opposed this because prostitution was a national matter and only trafficking was of international concern.[32] In 1920, the General Assembly agreed and asked the Secretariat to send a questionnaire about sex trafficking to as many states as possible. In 1921, the signatory states to the 1904 and 1910 conventions came together at a conference to discuss the replies. At that conference, the British delegate Sidney Wilson Harris suggested creating a committee with experts and assessors, 'representative of wide geographical areas'.[33] His proposal was adopted and established the TWC as part of the League's section for 'Humanitarian and Social Questions'. It was to be composed of five state representatives and three NGO's, although it

[30] The League of Nations Covenant, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp.] (last accessed on 3 March, 2020).
[31] P. Knepper, 'The International Traffic in Women. Scandinavia and the League of Nations Inquiry of 1927,' *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention,* 14 (2013), p.70.
[32] Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking,* p.73.
[33] League of Nations archive (hereafter referred to as LoN), C.484.M.339.1921.IV, p.28.

grew quickly and already consisted of fourteen delegates in 1922. It had 'no authority nor direct powers', but it acted as an advisory body to the General Assembly.[34]

The TWC consisted of two groups, namely states and NGO's. The NGO's sent activists to represent them, who had been fighting sex trafficking since before the League was created and were often female. During the first meeting, seven out of fifteen attendants were female. This was exceptional in comparison to the rest of the League, because there was little diversity with regards to gender, class and country of origin.[35] Women's organisations had been at the forefront of fighting sex trafficking, so they were represented by Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix, a well-known journalist and activist.[36] The International Catholic Association for the Protection of Girls – formed in Switzerland at the end of the nineteenth century – was represented by Baroness de Montenach, and the Federation of National Unions for the Protection of Girls by Studer-Steinhäuslin, who served as president of the Federation from 1921 until 1925.

Annie Baker represented the International Bureau for the Suppression of Traffic in Women and Children, which was created in 1899 and financially supported by several European governments, partly because they supported politics to limit immigration and prevent foreign women from working in brothels.[37] The Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women was an exception in this regard, as it had a so-called 'gentlemen's committee' that dealt with the political work, so it was represented by Samuel Cohen, a British abolitionist who had travelled to South-America in 1914 to study the plight of Jewish prostitutes there.

These activists were experts on sex trafficking, who had to adapt to their new role within the League and cooperate alongside state representatives. Some state representatives were also

[34] LoN, C.484.M.339.1921.IV, p.83.
[35] Dykmann, 'How International', pp.728 – 732.
[36] K. Offen, 'Madame Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix, the Josephine Butler of France', *Women's History Review*, 17:2 (2008), p.242.
[37] Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking*, p.58.

experts, such doctor Estrid Hein for Denmark, an oculist who had been active in debates about raising the legal age of marriage, and Paulina Luisi for Uruguay.[38] Luisi was a renowned activist who was educated in Uruguay and became its first female doctor.[39] The secretary of the TWC was Dame Rachel Crowdy. Trained as a nurse and chemist, she headed the social questions and opium traffic section of the League until 1931, making her the highest ranking woman in the League.[40] The other state representatives were mainly male and chosen for their diplomatic experience rather than their involvement in the fight against sex trafficking.

When the TWC was created, both the USA and Germany had not been included. During the first debate, Baker 'proposed that Germany and the United States should send official representatives'.[41] The French delegate opposed a German delegate, but when Harris suggested voting separately about the USA and Germany, the Italian representative feared that by doing so, 'a political element would be introduced which was incompatible with the nature of the Committee.'[42] This supports the argument that the TWC should not be political, but made up of neutral experts. Objectivity and impartiality were important values of the League, because it wanted to override national competition and prejudice. Experts and NGO's were expected to provide this impartiality.[43] In the end, it was decided that both states should send a representative, because regardless of their politics and membership of the League, the TWC needed their data.

The TWC consisted of experts to collect information and approach the topic from a scientific perspective. They produced knowledge and believed that – thanks to scientific

[38] L. Neergaard, 'Dr. Estrid Hein appointed member of the Advisory Committee to the League of Nations on the question of Traffic in Women and Children', *International Women's News,* 16: 10 (1922), pp.150 – 151.
[39] K. Marino, *Feminism for the Americas: The Making of an International Human Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, 2019), p.14.
[40] A. van Ginneken, *Historical Dictionary of the League of Nations* (Lanham, 2006), p.69.
[41] LoN, C.445.M.265.1922.IV, p.6.
[42] Idem, p.26.
[43] D. Gorman, 'Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children in the 1920s', *Twentieth Century British History* (2008), p.203.

progress – this could eradicate sex trafficking. This explains why state representatives relied heavily on the opinions of the NGO's, as they were 'composed of persons who have in many cases made a life study of the subject now under discussion.'[44] NGO's provided the transnational network necessary to conduct international studies and had access to more information, as states were recovering from the war or were too new to have collected any data, as the Ottoman empire had collapsed, the Weimar republic replaced Imperial Germany, Austria-Hungary was dissolved and the Russian Revolution brought the end to Imperial Russia. The NGO's carried much of the work in these early years and the TWC depended on their data.

Collecting data in the post-war reality

The TWC used the questionnaire from 1921 to establish itself and stress the importance of sex trafficking. The questions focused on legislation and migration, two topics that shaped the early focus of the TWC. Migration mattered to the TWC not only because it provided the international aspect, but also because mobility was a key concern to member states, which allowed the TWC to gain cooperation from states. The TWC further demonstrated the necessity of international cooperation by uncovering the diversity of national legislation. The TWC consequently aimed to limit the mobility of unaccompanied women and collect data about legislation, to fight sex trafficking effectively.

Fifty-five countries replied to the 1921 questionnaire. Nineteen replies came from European countries, also replying for twenty-six of their colonial territories in Africa and Asia. Three came from South-America and four from Asia. The remainders came from Canada, Haiti and South-Africa. As the meeting took place right after the war, the replies varied greatly. Some were very short and only mentioned that there was nothing to report.[45] The former parts of the

[44] LoN, C.510.M.275.1922, p.1; L. Kozma, *Global Women, Colonial Ports. Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (New York, 2017), p.23.
[45] LoN, C.346.M.197.1922.IV, p.1.

Ottoman empire explained that they were still working on a new jurisdiction and other replies read that they could not provide information because records had been destroyed during the war.[46]

Contrary to these circumstances, other countries such as the USA sent elaborate tables with the nationalities, ages and numbers of women that were trafficked into the country. These replies, however, provided no further information on how states had collected data in the first place. Also, the voices of prostitutes were absent and information about sex trafficking proved difficult to obtain, since it was too much of an underground activity to be documented properly. Yet, the TWC received some useful information. As with any questionnaire, the questions shaped the responses. The formulation of the questions shows that to the delegates, sex trafficking could be halted by unifying national legislation that limited the mobility of unaccompanied women. According to the replies, ages of consent varied, immigration controls differed and in countries without regulations specifically dedicated to sex trafficking, there was confusion about the exact meaning of terms such as 'procuring' and 'traffic'.[47]

The image of sex trafficking

The members of the League's Secretariat wrote the questionnaire with a particular image of sex trafficking and prostitutes in mind, but also of women more generally. They already felt that 'immoral' women were tempted by the promise of a life filled with luxuries, so their mobility must be halted and they should be re-educated to obtain a more 'respective' occupation or to be eligible to marry. This was reflected in the choice of words, as the question of consent of women was deemed irrelevant and women should be 'watched', 'checked' and 'protected' when they

[46] LoN, C.499.M190.1922.IV, p.4.
[47] LoN, C.484.M.339.1921.IV, p.75.

travelled.[48] The replies from 1921 stated that the motives of foreign prostitutes for going abroad were 'greed of money' or 'the prospect of an easy and joyous life'.[49]

Most delegates had an idea of who these women were, but in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of sex trafficking, the TWC needed more data. The delegates were not entirely content with the replies they had received in 1921. Besides the fact that some states had not replied at all, the replies were difficult to compare and did not provide enough exact information.[50] Considering that many states denied the existence of sex traffic, NGO's raised questions about the reliability of the data provided by states. The different approaches of states and NGO's created tension, because the NGO's often found higher numbers of sex trafficking with their hands-on approach than states did through regulation or prosecution.

The learning process that followed the replies to the questionnaire was more about the lack of comparable data than about the actual replies. Therefore, the TWC adapted the questionnaire in 1922. The TWC hoped to achieve a more structural and direct approach to collecting data, so it enquired into whether states had created a 'central authority' that was responsible for collecting information on sex trafficking. These authorities should stay in touch with other central authorities and with the Secretariat of the League. This was a similar strategy to NGO's that worked with a central committee that collected data from different local and national committees. This is how they thought international cooperation should work and the TWC followed suit.

With the adaption of the questionnaire in 1922, the TWC used the term 'victim' to describe prostitutes. The TWC believed that women did not know how bad a life abroad was, which was why they were – by definition – seen as passive victims, rather than active agents

[48] LoN, C.227.M.166.1921.IV, p.5.
[49] LoN, C.484.M.339.1921.IV, p.77.
[50] LoN, C.184.M.73.1924.IV, p.3.

trying to improve their circumstances or seeking new opportunities abroad.[51] Their voices were not heard by the TWC, which had created a specific victim narrative about them. Still with a focus on migration and legislation, the TWC decided to rephrase the questionnaire again in 1924, when it asked states to distinguish between 'foreign prostitutes' and 'women and children who have been victims of the offences'.[52] In doing so, the TWC presented two different images of prostitutes, namely victims and professional prostitutes who chose to travel, accepting the risks involved. Again, this change of image influenced the questions asked and subsequently the data produced.

The role of women in society had changed during the First World War, as they joined the workforce or took to the streets to protest. The attainment of suffrage and access to new jobs had not led to a radical reinterpretation of 'a woman's place'.[53] In fact, the backlash that followed emancipation and post-war insecurity meant that some states wanted to put women back into the household. Producing data about them was a way to gain control over them, but emigration was outside the reach of states, so women who travelled alone caused discomfort for states, especially because this mobility included women who migrated for sex work and women who were trafficked for a variety of other reasons. Despite their differences, international activists saw all these women as victims of sex trafficking.

Mobility and sex trafficking

The TWC saw mobility as the biggest cause of sex trafficking and approached it from several perspectives. Based on the 1922 replies, the TWC produced a report that listed all new legislation, deportations and convictions, including the nationality of the women mentioned. When the TWC asked states to inform them which central authority collected information, it

[51] LoN, C.445.M.265.1922.IV, p.42.
[52] LoN, C.217.M.L.1924.IV, p.2.
[53] A. Taylor Allen, *Women in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 21 – 41.

became clear how differently states approached the issues. Usually, it was the police, but in some instances immigration officers, legal professionals or the ministry of foreign affairs collected the data.[54]

The TWC further inquired into which countries supplied the 'victims' and which were preferred destinations for traffickers.[55] The TWC was mainly interested in foreign women, which meant that they discussed issues such as the prohibition of foreign prostitutes, repatriation and extradition. Luisi stressed that states were too eager to get rid of foreigners and that prostitutes were particularly targeted. In fact, 'she wondered whether the task of this TWC was to defend society against prostitutes'. However, the Rumanian delegate 'thought that too many difficulties should not be raised against expulsion if the result of this procedure was to prevent the traffic and, in consequence, prostitution itself.'[56]

The replies to the questionnaire showed that not nearly all states had legislation in place to prevent sex trafficking. Rather, they referred to immigration rules that included measures to examine the health and morality of immigrants, that asked them whether they had arrived by their own will or that checked if there were any 'suspicious circumstances' associated with their travels.[57] These circumstances included the reason for travelling, such as for jobs in entertainment or for marriage.[58] Young girls who sought employment in 'immoral' industries, such as theatres and cafés, were questioned more thoroughly, just like women travelling unaccompanied.[59] In fact, some delegates wanted to prevent girls from travelling at all, arguing that the end of sex trafficking should be achieved 'by means of immigration regulations.'[60] The

[54] LoN, C.382.M.126.1925.IV, p.42.
[55] LoN, C.445.M.265.1922.IV, pp.7 and 9.
[56] LoN, C.382.M.126.1925.IV, pp.14 and 15.
[57] LoN, C.164.M.40.1924.IV, p.6.
[58] LoN, C.225.M.129.1923.IV, p.12.
[59] H. Self, *Prostitution, Women and Misuse of the Law: The Fallen Daughters of Eve* (London, 2003), p.47.
[60] LoN, C.225.M.129.1923.IV, p.22.

TWC saw migration and sex trafficking as 'intimately connected', so they consulted resolutions produced by the International Emigration Commission and asked the International Labour Organisation to share legislation about migration. [61]

Limiting mobility, limiting sex traffic?

The TWC had to find its place in this new international platform in terms of how to engage with other committees and with states. It was discovering which questions it could ask and which data to use without alienating states. Most of the data was collected by NGO's, which had set up a network of volunteers to wait at ports and train stations, seeking out women who were unaccompanied, poor and did not speak the language.[62] They later extended this vigilance and also approached girls during their travels, as girls could be tricked on boats and trains, 'especially when travelling third class'.[63]

While this all happened under the guise of protecting women, it limited women's mobility. The TWC hoped that strong immigration control like during the war could prevent sex trafficking and make it an effective means for the future. They feared that loosening such regulations would lead to the resurface of sex trafficking, especially with the many refugees looking for a better life.[64] However, the TWC also discussed that female volunteers needed free passage, which reveals the dilemma surrounding mobility. In order to limit the mobility of certain women, other women needed easier mobility.[65] If strict border control was necessary to stop sex trafficking, it should be noted that it also impeded the work of NGO's, which depended on the free movement of people.

[61] LoN, C.445.M.265.1922.IV, p.22.
[62] Idem, p.8 and C.225.M.129.1923.IV, p.42.
[63] LoN, C.382.M.126.1925.IV, p.8.
[64] LoN, C.445.M.265.1922.IV, pp. 38 and 47.
[65] Idem, p.40.

In conclusion, the turmoil of the war brought the issue of sex trafficking to the League and created the need to gain a better understanding of sex trafficking. The TWC framed sex trafficking as a negative consequence of the increased mobility, with women as passive victims. As a consequence of the war, the TWC believed that refugees, poor women and widows were at risk to be enticed by traffickers, but on the other hand, that mandatory passports and border control hindered traffickers from crossing borders easily. The foundation of the League offered new opportunities to shape the debate about sex trafficking. To the TWC, mobility was the main issue, a concern that was shared by many states. This allowed them to stress the need for a transnational platform.

The first years of the TWC's existence proved challenging as cooperation with states and other international organisations was difficult. The primary aim of the TWC was to collect data about existing legislation, but states all had different ideas, definitions and legislation. The TWC depended on national data, but data collection was limited due to war and upheavals that followed in post-war years. States were inward looking and focused on preventing social unrest and undoing the wartime economy. It becomes clear how much the League was a new organisation that was still looking to find its position. Yet, the TWC succeeded in collecting data about the current national legislation and about the consequences of the war, creating an image of women as victims of increased mobility.

Chapter 2: A turning point, 1927 – 1928

1927 marked a change in how the TWC understood sex trafficking. It challenged how the issue was approached and revealed disagreements about how data should be collected. While the intention of the TWC was to collect objective, scientific facts, the varying responses demanded from the TWC careful analysis of the collected data. With time, the TWC got more ambitious

as the delegates became more acquainted with the issue and had a more continuous budget. Most significantly, the delegates started to challenge states to focus on the questions of regulation and abolition. That topic was about national sovereignty, competition between states and the role of the TWC. In this chapter, I will introduce the 1927 report, as well as the reactions to it and its lasting influence on the debate within the TWC.

Abolition versus regulation

With the focus of the TWC on mobility and legislation, two approaches of how sex trafficking and prostitution were dealt with, could be identified, namely abolition and regulation. This debate was difficult to interpret, as those terms have carried different meanings. Regulationists supported some form of legislation aimed at protecting public order or public health, by for instance limiting brothels to a certain area or forcing prostitutes to undergo medical examinations. This required the state to register prostitutes, which had become possible due to the increased infrastructural and bureaucratic possibilities of the state.[66]

Their opponents called themselves the 'abolitionists', consisting of mostly women's rights activists, medical professionals and purity reformers. The term 'abolitionist' has a rich history. It stems from the context of anti-slavery protests and the success that this movement generated.[67] Similar to the fight against slavery, abolitionists hoped that stopping sex trafficking would also diminish prostitution. Furthermore, by stressing the dangers of sex trafficking they hoped to convince regulationists to introduce legislation to abolish it.

When the TWC had focused on mobility, it mainly avoided the issue of regulation or abolition. However, the laws that were supposed to stop sex trafficking differed from country

[66] Mooij, *Geslachtsziekten en besmettingsangst,* pp.42 – 44.
[67] F. Van Drenth and A. De Haan, *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands* (Amsterdam, 2000), p.42.

to country. Traffickers used those differences, for instance by taking young girls to countries without an age of consent, or by travelling via countries where there were less border controls. It was the intention of the TWC to unify these national laws with the aim to limit sex trafficking, but seeing as the TWC consisted of regulationists and abolitionists, there was no consensus on which laws were most effective.

New methods, new data

Studying prostitution was easier in countries where it was regulated, because there was more information available about the prostitutes. Abolitionist states usually obtained this kind of information from national criminal records, but prostitutes were often convicted for disturbing public order or vagrancy rather than prostitution, which excluded them from the statistics. Meanwhile, no country wanted to be seen as a popular destination for prostitutes and regulationists stressed that even in countries where prostitution was abolished, it was still going on.[68] Both systems had a different understanding of the consequences of prostitution and a different approach in collecting data, so abolition versus regulation was also a debate about knowledge. The TWC needed new data to overcome these differences, so they had to come up with a new approach that did not just depend on government data. They hoped to provide objectivity in the highly sensitive matter.

The question of objectivity was a difficult one, as the majority of state representatives in the TWC were regulationist, namely France, Italy, Spain, Japan and Rumania. They were not interested in criticism of their national laws, a feeling that abolitionist countries, such as the UK, the USA and Denmark, mutually shared. Both sides were firmly rooted in their systems, but newly created states such as Poland and Czechoslovakia were interested in more data to find out what the best approach was in dealing with sex trafficking. In 1923, the American

[68] LoN, C.338.M.113.1927.IV, p.33.

delegate Grace Abbot, a renowned social worker, argued that it was necessary 'to obtain official and accurate information regarding the existence and nature of the traffic in women and children'. Following the example of studies that had been conducted in the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century, Abbot looked for 'impartial and experienced experts' because according to her, governments could not take the broad, transnational view that was essential in combatting sex trafficking.[69]

The TWC was in favour of an investigation, but there was a discussion on the composition of the committee of experts in terms of how many abolitionist and regulationist experts should be included. The TWC worried about its objectivity. The idea was that the report should consolidate the two approaches and give both legal systems an equal chance to be studied. However, the division between abolitionist and regulationist countries was too big. Harris was concerned that the French delegate would try to include a majority of regulationist experts, so he worked together with Crowdy to create a balanced subcommittee to lead the investigation.[70] Harris himself was appointed, as well as a French expert from the police. The other members were Italian, Belgian, Japanese, Uruguayan and Swiss, which were all regulationist countries, except for Uruguay.

The TWC did not have the funds to realise a project of this size, but Abbot was quick to provide a solution. In the USA, John Rockefeller Junior had set up the Bureau of Social Hygiene in 1911, through which he hired investigators to study the scope of prostitution and to offer a different perspective on life to prostitutes. He was a firm abolitionist and used investigations to prove the importance of it. This method proved successful at a time when faith in science and statistics increased. A group of sociologists, psychologists and physicians studied prostitution

[69] LoN, C.225.M.129.1923.IV, pp.16 and 27; A. Jabour, '"Uphill All the Way". Grace Abbott and Women's Work in Building the Welfare State,' *Social Service Review* 90 (2016), p.552.
[70] Limoncelli, *Politics of Trafficking,* 77.

and undertook some of the first large scale investigations to understand why women ended up in a profession that was illegal in the USA.[71]

Abbot was a member of the board of the Bureau of Social Hygiene and used her connections to secure funds from there. A sum of seventy-five thousand dollars was made available so that none of the money would have to come from the League or the member states.[72] Individuals were driving the agenda of the report and the American influence is clear. The investigation was headed by William Snow, professor of preventive medicine at Stanford University. He put the American lawyer Bascom Johnson in charge of the fieldwork, who appointed American undercover agent Paul Kinsie. Together, the three men had been involved in this kind of fieldwork before 1914 and made use of their own – American – researchers. They were all opponents of prostitution, which challenged the ideal of an neutral investigation as proposed by the TWC.[73]

The American style investigation also introduced new methods. Rather than relying on questionnaires only, the experts interviewed non-state actors, undertook fieldwork and went undercover, presenting themselves as 'members of the underworld'. This grass-roots approach highlighted the role of NGO's rather than just the opinion of the states that replied to questionnaires. The TWC felt that this new approach was needed due to the lack of replies to the earlier questionnaires, as well as to present a more neutral view that was not shaped by governments. It was, however, also a way for Rockefeller to avoid the influence of regulationist governments and use the people on the ground to stress the horrors of sex trafficking.

Still, the investigation of the experts was preceded by sending out a questionnaire that asked member states for specific information about both traffickers and prostitutes, such as age

[71] J. Jack, "The Piety of Degradation": Kenneth Burke, the Bureau of Social Hygiene, and *Permanence and Change*', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 90 (2004), p.448.
[72] LoN, C.694.1923.IV, p.3.
[73] Idem, 56.

and social status. This preliminary investigation should give information on how to properly set up the investigation, where to start and how to proceed from there. The idea that certain conditions prevent sex trafficking was reflected in the questionnaire, because it enquired into legislation, the work of NGO's and the role of migration in the prevention of sex trafficking.[74] The replies to this questionnaire led the experts to decide where to start, although their own stereotypes were also influential. The places visited were almost exclusively in Europe and South America. This can be explained by the fact that they started their investigation 'in cities and countries to which women are alleged to have been sent for purposes of prostitution' and then followed the information of the people they met there.[75] While it may seem that this resulted in a limited approach, following those routes was based on their idea of an 'international underworld'.

The investigators visited 112 cities in 28 countries, where they interviewed 600 officials, such as police and immigration officers, and 250 members of NGO's. What makes the report unique was that they spoke with 5000 people belonging to this 'underworld.'[76] These were pimps, madams and even prostitutes, who – according to the report – shared a vocabulary, tactics and information about law enforcement, as they were actively involved with the sale of alcohol, drugs, sex and 'obscene publications'. Interviewing these people was a vastly different approach from sending questionnaires to governments, which did not sit well with some delegates, especially as it led to a new image of sex trafficking.

The notion of an underworld is relevant here, because brothel keepers and madams were believed to belong to this network. Although prostitution was not a crime in regulationist countries, people that were involved in it committed a variety of immoral acts. That allowed

[74] LoN, C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV, p.196.
[75] LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.5.
[76] Knepper, 'The International Traffic in Women', p.98.

the experts to stress that sex traffic was not necessarily a cross-border activity, but that instead, they should study both national and international traffic. Further, it highlighted that while sex trafficking was an international issue, it came down to the local and national conditions, which became more of the focus of the TWC. As a result, the experts broadened the definition of sex trafficking, because according to them: 'It is the conditions in a country which excite a demand for prostitutes and which the trafficker is not slow to meet; it is the internal conditions, again, which will provide a supply of women and girls ready to fall victims to the trafficker.'[77] This illustrates a shift from the focus on mobility towards a focus on local and nationals conditions. In setting up this investigation, the TWC debated about objectivity, new approaches and equal representation of regulationists and abolitionists, but in the end, money was decisive in the choice of approach.

Report of the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and Children in 1927

The 1927 report was divided into two parts, of which the Council of the League decided that the first part should be published instantly.[78] This first part opened with a short history of the fight against sex trafficking in which it was already stated that in the UK and the USA, strong legislation had limited the occurrence of sex trafficking. The investigators clearly felt that the fight against sex trafficking had mainly taken place in the Anglo-Saxon world, where abolition had improved the situation.[79] This was followed by a summary of the findings of the experts and recommendations to the TWC.

According to Limoncelli, the 1927 investigation resulted in 'an in-depth report that confirmed the existence of trafficking, identified its geographical trends, and tied it to the state

[77] LoN, C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV, p.8.
[78] LoN, C.422.M.156.1927.IV, p.1.
[79] LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.7.

regulation of prostitution.'[80] According to the experts, regulation was an incentive to international sex traffic and encouraged by economic gain. The fewer money people could make from 'immoral behaviour', the less sex trafficking would occur.[81] This marks a shift from sex trafficking as a consequence of mobility and lawlessness, to trafficking as a business. As a result, the focus shifted from the victims to the perpetrators, as the experts acknowledged that it was not the prostitutes, but the traffickers that made money of this business.

According to the report, the existence of so-called 'vice districts' created a demand for foreign women, which provided traffickers with an incentive.[82] Furthermore, the sale of alcohol, drugs and obscene publications was usually undertaken by the same people from the 'underworld' and stimulated sex trafficking.[83] Such reasoning led to a conclusion in line with the ideas of Rockefeller, namely that all forms of vice should be outlawed. It is difficult to assess the influence of donors on the outcome of the 1927 report, but it is telling how much this report resembles earlier work done by the Bureau of Social Hygiene.

The experts soon found that traffickers avoided countries with 'a policy of exclusion of undesirable characters' – naming the USA as an example – and that 'the demand for foreign women governs both the extent and direction of international traffic.'[84] In order to provide insight into this, they divided the 'victims' into four categories, with varying degrees of personal responsibility. The biggest group were professional prostitutes, closely followed by girls 'who are sometimes known in the underworld as "semi-professionals".'[85] Those girls were tricked with the promise of fame and riches. Artistes were equally seen as seeking fame, but the experts believed that they were often tricked. The fourth group, 'inexperienced girls', were described

[80] Limoncelli, *Politics of Trafficking,* p.77.
[81] LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.9.
[82] Idem, p.15.
[83] Idem, p.17.
[84] Idem, p.12.
[85] Idem, p.19.

as naive, poor and desperate.[86] It is significant that the experts saw all these women as victims, even when they had consented to travelling abroad.

Although the experts denounced the exploitation of all of these women, they described them in much more negative terms than the traffickers. One trafficker with 'wide experience and fearless cunning' outsmarted officials 'showing flashes of genius' and another was a 'good business-woman' and 'skilled associate'.[87] The experts divided the traffickers into four groups, namely 'principals', 'madames', 'souteneurs' and 'intermediaries'. The souteneurs were the main object of the TWC, as they sought out women to take abroad. Principals were usually retired souteneurs who earned a lot of money 'securing girls' and 'advising traffickers'.[88] They were brought into contact with madams, who owned brothels and were therefore always looking for new employees, preferably from abroad. This contact was often secured by the intermediaries, a broad category that included everyone involved with the trade, sometimes even doctors who faked clean bills of health or lawyers who forged birth certificates.

It is interesting to note that all these groups were related to brothels. Again, this links sex traffic to regulation and shows how much the experts were in favour of abolition. If the traffic was undertaken by the same people that worked in regulated brothels, than surely the TWC should address brothels and regulation too. Still, abolition was not the only solution mentioned. The report also stressed that countries with strict immigration controls saw less sex trafficking, demonstrating that the experts found migration suspicious.[89] This was also the reason why certain countries were not studied, such as Scandinavian countries, Morocco and

[86] LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.21.
[87] Idem, p.24.
[88] Idem, p.25.
[89] Idem, p.38.

the British West Indies, which had 'favourable conditions', such as strong immigration control, active NGO's and high sentences for procurers.[90]

The main causes of sex trafficking were – according to the 1927 report – those that created a demand, such as a surplus of men in a society and the movement of people, as prostitutes travelled along the same routes as soldiers, sailors, tourists and seasonal workers. Such demand was stimulated by vice districts and licensed houses. These houses were always unfair, with exceptionally low wages, exploitation and blackmail. The experts claimed to 'have definite evidence that licensed houses create a steady demand for new women and that this demand is met by traffickers and causes both national and international traffic.'[91]

The 1927 report concluded that most women working in brothels were foreign and had arrived there with the help of traffickers.[92] Furthermore, they argued that there was an international cooperation between traffickers and that sex traffic was facilitated by the entertainment industry and licensed houses. The image in the report is one of sex as a business that can be halted by limiting mobility, but not stopped. As long as women were tricked into working as prostitutes, sex trafficking would continue. The shifting image was partly created by the people that were interviewed. NGO's wanted to prove their usefulness while data provided by states was questioned and traffickers had to make a living from the revenues of their business. While traffickers enjoyed some sympathy from the experts, there were also calls for punishment, as a sign that this was an illegal trade. Most clearly though, this report recommended abolition.

[90] LoN, C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV, p.5; LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.40.
[91] LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.14.
[92] Knepper, 'The International Traffic in Women', p.99.

Response to the report

The Council published the first part of the report in 1927 on the recommendation of Sir Austen Chamberlain, member of the Council of the League and UK's foreign minister.[93] It sold over six thousand copies and received lots of public attention that put the TWC into the limelight.[94] Again, this was a turning point in the approach of the TWC, which received more public attention than before. This meant that TWC still discussed the report when it had already been read by state officials, NGO's and the press. The resonance of the public was immediate, demanding more information, because in the first part, the experts regularly referred to the second part, but often remained vague. This reflected badly on the TWC, because it was accused of hiding information when it did not immediately publish the second part that provided evidence such as interviews, researchers' notes and elaborate statistics.

The TWC hesitated to publish the second part, as making the information public was not always favourable for the countries under investigation. Transparency was a difficult matter for the TWC. In Wilson's fourteen points, secret diplomacy was opposed, as he saw it as one of the causes of the First World War. Some delegates of the TWC were unwilling to share information as this issue was too delicate to discuss openly. Furthermore, openness about sex trafficking in one's country would lead to criticism and loss of prestige in the international community, which was why several countries chose not to let NGO's in. While the TWC tried to uphold the ideal of transparency, it did not want to anger or estrange those countries and therefore continually struggled to find a compromise.[95] The TWC eventually decided to publish the second part only after governments had commented on it.

[93] LoN, C.126.1927.IV, p.3.
[94] LoN, C.221.M.60.1927.IV, p.70.
[95] M. Donaldson, 'The Survival of Secret Treaty: Publicity, Secrecy, and Legality in the International Order', *American Journal of International Law*, 111 (2017), pp. 575 – 627.

The TWC lost some control over the message, especially because it was not happy with the report either and criticised its approach. The French delegate argued that confidential information received from persons of 'dubious morals' should not be published. The delegates of Rumania and Poland agreed and argued that the report contained 'erroneous statements' because traffickers had an incentive to spread false information.[96] Already since 1923, they had stated that the experts should not include 'statements from the underworld', but instead that only information from the governments was to be trusted.[97]

The Rumanian delegate further criticised the report for favouring regulation, according to him a matter of national legislation. Avril de Sainte Croix disagreed with the criticism, because she was convinced that the TWC should not shy away 'from enquiring into its origin and its destination.'[98] While the Japanese and Spanish delegate agreed, they pressed the TWC to not estrange regulationist countries. This showed that while they believed in the experts, they worried about public opinion and the prestige of the TWC, which influenced their interpretation of the data.

Finally, some delegates considered the data that was collected insufficient. As a response to such criticism, the TWC had sent the second part of the report to the governments under discussion, asking them to provide additional information. Abolitionist countries such as Cuba, Great Britain and the USA replied positively, as the experts had put them in a positive light.[99] Other governments, such as Canada and Italy, agreed with the conclusions of the report, but felt that the experts had not understood their legislation or had not visited their country long

[96] LoN, C.221.M.60.1927.IV, pp.10 and 11.
[97] LoN, C.225.M.129.1923.IV, p.31.
[98] LoN, C.221.M.60.1927.IV, p.10.
[99] LoN, C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV, pp.211 and 223.

enough.[100] The Rumanian and Hungarian governments asked for the statements from the underworld to be removed, as 'prostitutes are in every respect unreliable'.[101]

The Spanish delegate disagreed with this debate, because 'in a subject like this the question at issue was not that of the prestige of one country or another but the honour of one of the sexes.' According to him, these critiques were the reason why the TWC had to undertake this investigation, rather than states themselves. Harris agreed with him, stating that the intention had not been to accuse anyone and that the second part of the report had been sent to governments for corrections, not for censoring.[102] Still, the criticism cannot be disregarded as political protectionism. In the 1927 report, very few abolitionist countries were studied, clandestine prostitution was often ignored and the experts wanted to prove that abolition works.[103] The delegates were not wrong to question the data, and even when using the data provided, it was difficult to prove that abolition was the best option.

Asking states to check the evidence report was a way to keep the cooperation running smoothly, but it also disrupted the TWC's approach. States countered the collected data and they questioned the acquired statements. The approach was highjacked by national agenda's and proved unable to overcome the dichotomy of abolition and regulation. The new approach as well as the criticism it received, changed the TWC irreversibly.

New information, new debates

After the first years of the TWC, the 1927 report moved the debate from mobility to regulation and abolition. Because this was a very delicate issue of intervening in national legislation, the TWC had avoided this topic before. To pacify the two opposing sides, but also to overcome the

[100] LoN, C.52(2).M.52(1).1927.IV, p.207.
[101] Idem, p.214.
[102] LoN, C.221.M.60.1927.IV, p.12.
[103] Knepper, 'The International Traffic in Women', p.77; LoN, C.184.M.59.1928.IV, pp.19 and 32.

lack of data provided by the governments, the TWC tried a new approach that focused on NGO's and the 'underworld'. The intention was to approach the issue of sex trafficking in a rational and scientific, rather than in a political way. Nevertheless, when the TWC presented their conclusion that traffickers mainly came from European countries and worked in South-America and Northern Africa, certain countries felt unjustly attacked, as they could no longer blame the issue on foreigners.

The new approach caused a different debate that was much more public, because this was a sensationalist report that focussed on the business that caused and facilitated this traffic. This reflects a change in the image of prostitutes. Rather than victims of mobility, the TWC came to see the women as victims of an international underworld, which could only be stopped by a vigilant state. However, for this they needed the cooperation of states. The TWC had hoped to include states in its approach, but states were often unhappy with the collection of data, because the international world was about reputation. The hesitance of states to cooperate with and publish the report was a result of the conclusions of the report, which were too strong for regulationist states to accept. The aim of finding a compromise between abolition and regulation was missed, which was in part based on where the money came from. The TWC was faced with the challenge of how to continue their work on from there.

Chapter 3: 'More sinned against than sinning', 1929 – 1939

The debates which followed the 1927 report revealed that the delegates had different views of the role of the TWC. Whereas the TWC had focused on trafficking because it was an international question, investigations brought to light that national legislation was key in the understanding of sex trafficking. The debates were further shaped by the changes in

international politics and the world economic crisis of 1929, which changed the social make-up of countries. The focus of the TWC shifted to Asia and the Middle East, where political instability made sex trafficking more visible. The economic crisis pushed social and economic issues to the forefront of the debate in the TWC, issues they had not treated before.

The aim of the TWC was to unify national legislation and hold states responsible for the well-being of women and the punishment of traffickers. However, the dialogue between the TWC and states depended on cooperation, which became more strained in the 1930s. The role of the state also changed with the rise of fascism and nationalism, and increasingly states were unwilling to share information. At the same time, the economic crisis had resulted in limited available funds, which meant that the delegates had to change how they went about collecting data and, more importantly, what kind of data. To circumvent the lack of information, the TWC focussed on prevention and punishment. They wanted to learn how to prevent women from becoming prostitutes and how to stop the business of prostitution, by punishing those 'living on the immoral earnings of women'. Based on the advance of scientific knowledge, the TWC acknowledged the complexity of the causes of sex trafficking, such as poverty, displacement and mental issues.

Impact of the economic crisis

As a consequence of the economic crisis in 1929, the TWC had to be more careful with their spending. This was the case for all committees in the League, because states also dealt with the consequences of the economic crisis and pushed for lower contributions to the League. As a result, the General Assembly requested the TWC to remove topics from its agenda because the TWC had fewer days to meet, minutes were no longer printed and reports had to be shortened.[104] The TWC faced the challenge of how to undertake investigations without money and how to

[104] LoN, C.390.M.220.1932.IV, p.2.

collect data in times of financial strains, as their budget was cut significantly.[105] The consequences of the economic crisis made the TWC, but also the League, dysfunctional.

The crisis did not just affect the work of the TWC and the NGO's, but also the image of prostitution. With the rise in unemployment, poverty and migration, the TWC saw a concurrent rise in clandestine prostitution. Luisi suggested in 1932 that the TWC should undertake an enquiry into 'the dangers involved by the present unemployment and economic depression'.[106] The consequences of the financial crisis led to the early developments of welfare states, based on the principle that states and citizens carried a shared responsibility for the well-being of all citizens. It led to the introduction of public pensions, healthcare and education. The NGO's and religious institutions were no longer able to provide sufficient relief due to the economic crisis and thus states needed to step up in order to prevent chaos and protests.[107] As a result, the TWC saw a strong role for the state in preventing sex trafficking.[108] In an attempt to keep as many states cooperative as possible, the TWC shifted the debate from regulation to the causes of prostitution.

Prevention and criminalisation

In their annual reports, the TWC started to investigate the social and economic circumstances that led women into prostitution. While the circumstances were not new, the economic crisis worsened the situation of prostitution and made it more visible to the general public. The TWC recognized a variety of causes that made prostitution more attractive than other jobs, such as high unemployment, low wages for unschooled labour and 'wholesale dismissal of women'.[109]

[105] LoN, C.246.M.121.1930.IV, p.61.
[106] LoN, C.390.M.220.1932.IV, p.4.
[107] S. Legg, "'The Life of Individuals as well as of Nations": International Law and the League of Nations' Anti-Trafficking Governmentalities', *Leiden Journal of International Law* 25 (2012), p.753; G. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 22 and 55.
[108] LoN, C.204.M.127.1936.IV, p.7.
[109] LoN, C.184.M.59.1928.IV, p.8.

Further, the TWC believed that women were pushed towards prostitution due to housing shortage, lack of education and abandonment by their families, but also due to 'idleness, coquetry, greed and bad company' as well as 'the diminution of spiritual feeling, religious indifference and the effects of alcohol'.[110]

The TWC further identified causes in early youth, as girls who left school early and came from poor backgrounds were overrepresented among prostitutes.[111] This was why Croix 'was convinced that it was necessary that the NGO's should take the place of the family of these unfortunate children, who were more sinned against than sinning.' She blamed the family of the victims for failing them.[112] Lavielle agreed with her and felt that prostitutes needed to be re-educated with the 'motherly method'.[113]

This task was taken up by the state, as the role of state changed both with regard to providing welfare and as a consequence of the economic crisis. The state presented itself as caring for its citizens, but with the rise of fascism and national socialism, welfare was used to control citizens and promote nationalism. States centralised the role of the family, put welfare in a racial context and started to monitor citizens more closely. This mainly affected women in the fringes of society, such as foreign prostitutes. As Ann Stoler has demonstrated, the regulation of sexuality was used to create boundaries and control populations.[114] States especially tried to control women that the TWC saw as potential victims, such as artistes, professional prostitutes, domestic workers and prisoners.[115] There was a fine line between protection and control.

[110] LoN, C.294.M.97.1929.IV, pp.37 and 116; C.246.M.121.1930.IV, p.25.
[111] LoN, C.204.M.127.1936.IV, p.7.
[112] LoN, C.184.M.59.1928.IV, p.17.
[113] LoN, C.246.M.121.1930.IV, p.25.
[114] A. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, 1995), p.40.
[115] LoN, C.204.M.127.1936.IV, p.5.

Another method of preventing sex trafficking was through punishment. The TWC hoped to discourage men from visiting prostitutes and more importantly, to discourage traffickers and souteneurs by prosecuting them. The Belgian expert Isodore Maus suggested making 'souteneurs' a category of international criminals, which would allow a national judge to impose harsher sentences for perpetrators who had been found guilty before in another country.[116] The TWC hoped to introduce international laws that would offer guidance for national courts, because the different definitions of souteneurs in various states made it difficult to prosecute them.[117] It was a way for the TWC to avoid the debate between abolition and regulation and to bolster the prestige of the TWC, as it was not visible enough in comparison to for instance the Opium commission.

The concept of international crime was not introduced by the League, but the League did institutionalise sex trafficking as 'a global crime problem.'[118] In order to stop international crime, however, it was not only necessary to achieve international cooperation, but states also needed to agree that it was in fact a crime. For regulationist countries, it had been possible to criminalise international sex traffic, but from 1927 onwards, the TWC was asking for more. If recruiting women for prostitution was an international crime, then every brothel keeper was potentially a criminal, even in countries where that profession was legal. Abolitionists wanted to broaden the definition of 'souteneur', but that would have gone too far as regulationist countries would not have been able to distinguish between criminal and regulated activities.[119]

[116] LoN, C.294.M.97.1929.IV, p.54.
[117] LoN, C.390.M.220.1932.IV, p.2.
[118] Knepper, 'Scandinavia and the League of Nations', p.64.
[119] LoN, C.247.M.129.1933.IV, p.30.

Cooperation and competition

Understanding sex trafficking as part of the international underworld allowed the TWC to address a variety of related issues, such as alcohol abuse, female prisoners and obscene publications. The debates about causes and rehabilitation further made the question of sex trafficking more complex. This forced the TWC to cooperate with experts from different fields, such as doctors, lawyers and psychologists. The TWC had for instance observed that '[m]any of the inmates of brothels are known to be mentally defective or otherwise abnormal.'[120] Due to the advance of medical knowledge, (pseudo-)scientific studies on sexology and the social factors influencing the mental wellbeing of people, the TWC reached out to new experts in psychology, psychiatry and sociology.[121]

However, such cooperation also led to increased competition with other bodies from the League. For instance, when the TWC discussed the question of venereal diseases, they touched upon the work of the Health Commission and of the International Union for Combating Venereal Diseases, which were also part of the League.[122] The punishment of souteneurs on the other hand was studied with the International Bureau for the Unification of Penal Law, the International Criminal Police Commission, and the Social Questions Section and Legal Section of the Secretariat.[123] The TWC struggled to prove its usefulness alongside other committees on refugees, assistance for foreigners and international labour. At the same time, the overall budget available decreased and private donors also felt the consequences of the economic crisis.

[120] LoN, C.149.M.62.1934.IV, p. 11.
[121] LoN, C.204.M.127.1936.IV.1936, p.5.
[122] LoN, C.401.M.163.1931.IV, p.47.
[123] LoN, C.187.M.104.1935.IV, p.40.

Focus on the 'East'

In an attempt to improve the prestige of the committee, the TWC decided to investigate sex trafficking in the 'Far East', which had not been treated in the 1927 report due to 'differences of race, religion, and custom'.[124] The geographical area included most of East and Southeast Asia, which opened new opportunities for the TWC to study. However, some delegates noted difficulties in studying the East. Crowdy mentioned the 'disturbed conditions' in China, as well as the considerable costs needed. Furthermore, not all countries in the East were a member of the League, so they were not receptive to an investigation.[125] Croix saw 'that progress in Eastern countries must necessarily be slow, owing to the difference between Eastern and Western ideas concerning the moral and social position of women.'[126] This illustrates their belief that prostitution was acceptable in non-European cultures.[127]

The TWC decided that funds should be secured before they continued with their work, but that it would already be useful to send out a questionnaire to find out which countries were interested in being the subject of investigation.[128] Before all the replies had been received, they found funds in a familiar place. The Bureau of Social Hygiene, funded by Rockefeller, again covered the costs, proving an important service to the TWC that had no way of securing funds via the League. Rockefeller asked Bascom Johnson to take the lead again. This raised the question whether the same experts from 1927 should repeat the investigation or if new experts should be appointed. Ito favoured the same experts, but Harris wanted experts with experience in the East who could conduct their research 'in a very discreet manner'.[129] The TWC agreed

[124] LoN, C.52.M.52.1927.IV, p.48.
[125] LoN, C.184.M.59.1928.IV, pp. 22 – 25.
[126] LoN, C.294.M.97.1929.IV, p.23.
[127] V. Crinis, 'Sex Trafficking to the Federated Malay States 1920–1940: from Migration for Prostitution to Victim or Criminal?', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48 (2020): p.308.
[128] LoN, C.184.M.59.1928.IV, p.34.
[129] LoN, C.294.M.97.1929.IV, p.61.

that the differences in 'social customs' required experts 'who have a wide knowledge and experience of Eastern conditions.'[130]

While the TWC repeatedly stressed the importance of the role of experts, national representation on the research committee, regardless of expertise, was still key. National governments further asked the experts to only consider the international aspect of the trade and to retrieve information from official government sources. While this was in part due to a lack of knowledge of Asian languages within the travelling committee, the TWC had also learned from the criticism of the 1927 report.[131] The states under investigation were only cooperating under the condition that the TWC did not study 'the underworld' and that regulation could not be studied either, which changed the approach back to state-centred information. This pressure came both from Asian states and colonial powers.[132]

In the end, the TWC decided that the expert commission made up of delegates should be joined by a 'travelling commission', made up of Bascom Johnson, Dr. Alma Sundquist and Karol Pindor. They were considered to be neutral experts whose nationality was not relevant, although the TWC did not dare to pick only Americans again. Sundquist was a Swedish doctor specialised in venereal disease and member of the 'World League for Sexual Reform', founded in 1921. She would later become the president of the Medical Women's International Association. Pindor was a diplomat who had been stationed in East-Asia.

The shift towards engaging in a non-European environment raised challenges, because the TWC argued on the one hand that sex trafficking was universal, but on the other, that the culture in Asia was so different that it could not be studied by the same experts that had studied Europe. As the TWC moved away from Europe, it moved to unknown territories. The TWC

[130] LoN, C.294.M.97.1929.IV, p.66.
[131] LoN, C.849.M.393.1932.IV, pp.11 and 17.
[132] J. Martínez, 'Mapping the Trafficking of Women across Colonial Southeast Asia,1600s–1930s', *Journal of Global Slavery* 1 (2016), p.244.

broadened its definitions and image of women, because it was unfamiliar with the circumstances they lived in. Still, its image was shaped most by political inequality and prejudice.[133] TWC realised it needed to diversify its membership base. The intention was to increase the available knowledge, but also to respond to criticism of Eurocentrism and to improve the international support when members were leaving the League.[134] The inclusion of more non-European members made race and the colonies even more important topics, while it also deflected from sex trafficking in Europe.[135]

The 1932 report emphasised the shift to the East, as it showed a decline of sex trafficking in western women, but 'a considerable stream of international traffic in women of Oriental races in the Far, Middle and Near East'.[136] Clearly, the TWC wanted to tell a success story about the west, while at the same time avoiding the issues that the 1927 report had raised. The 1932 report was divided 'into chapters treating the problem according to racial groups of victims', which showed that the women were mainly of Chinese, Russian and Japanese origin.[137] This latter group caused discomfort, as the Japanese delegates had long denied the existence of traffic in Japanese women. The Chinese delegate was not as strong in his denial, but reminded the TWC that the high number of Chinese women was due to the large population of China. Nevertheless, the number of prostitutes that the Chinese government provided, was lower than the amount of arrests made for soliciting. This suggests that China, just like Japan, was eager to present a positive image and participate in the international sphere.

[133] N. Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London, 2002).
[134] LoN, C.247.M.129.1933.IV, p.13.
[135] For more literature on the relation between race, empire and sex trafficking, see: P. Levine ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004); C. Beccalossi and Ivan Crozier eds., *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Age of Empire* (London, 2014); S. Aderinto, *When Sex Threatened the State: Illicit Sexuality, Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 1900-1958* (Urbana, 2014).
[136] LoN, C.247.M.129.1933.IV, p.16.
[137] LoN, C.849.M.393.1932.IV, p. 18.

Both Japan and China had cooperated with the experts and the experts included the provided data in the 1932 report quite uncritically.[138] The TWC was just happy to get any data and cooperation. The fate of Russian women 'in the Far East' was the most striking to the League, as they were described quite explicitly. The Soviet-Union had only just joined the League and was not particularly interested in the TWC, so it had not received the 1932 report and had therefore not made modifications to it.[139] The majority of these women had not been prostitutes before they emigrated to China and the TWC wanted to find out about the circumstances that drove them to prostitution.[140]

The TWC wanted to discuss the results of the 1932 report with a conference of the 'central authorities' of the countries under investigation. Yet many countries were hesitant towards such a conference. Iran was unable to send a delegate due to an uprising and India refused 'as this traffic does not concern India'.[141] After much debate and delay, the conference finally took place in 1937 in Bandoeng, part of the Dutch colonies. The result of the conference was that nine of the participating countries acknowledged abolition 'as a final goal', but that funds to improve the situation should be found outside the League.[142] However, in 1937, the Chinese army was defeated by the Japanese forces and the Second World War broke out in the East.[143] Japanese aggression was a difficult topic in the League, and the subsequent world events prevented the TWC from acquiring further information.

[138] C. Henriot, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai: A Social History, 1849 – 1949* (Cambridge 1997), pp.118 and 318.
[139] H. Goto-Shibata, *The League of Nations and the East Asian Imperial Order, 1920–1946. New Directions in East Asian History* (Singapore, 2020), p.115.
[140] LoN, C.187.M.104.1935.IV, p.42.
[141] LoN, C.187.M.104.1935.IV, p.40.
[142] LoN, C.516.M.357.1937.IV, p.53; Henriot, *Prostitution and Sexuality in Shanghai*, p.320.
[143] P. Harmsen, *War in the Far East: Storm Clouds over the Pacific, 1931–1941* (Oxford, 2018).

New approach

Faced with the differences between countries, the TWC pressed the need for improving the annual questionnaire. They still struggled with the differences in definitions and statistics that made it difficult to compare the data received from countries, and the difficulty only increased as the officials tasked with replying became overburdened when 'the political situation was so unsettled'. With the outbreak of the Second World War in the East, the rise of fascism, Nazism and nationalism, and growing tensions between states, the eagerness of states to protect their own image was coupled with suspicion of other states, so the delegates often did not trust the information provided. This diminished the prestige and influence of the TWC. At the same time, this only led to more refugees, for instance Jews that fled Nazi Germany, so the League focused its remaining budget outside of the TWC.[144]

States were no longer willing to cooperate, so they provided less data and experts. The NGO's were not able to pick up the work due to the lack of financial means and protective states that halted their work. In fact, in 1937, the TWC was united with the Child Welfare Committee under the title of 'Advisory Committee on Social Questions', which consisted solely of government representatives. The number of delegates was raised to twenty-one, including a subcommittee for the traffic in women and children. This subcommittee consisted of delegates from the Argentine Republic, United Kingdom, China, France, Mexico, Poland and Spain.[145] This composition reflected the shifted focus based on the 1932 report, as well as the changes that took place within the League. Mexico joined in 1931, Japan and Germany left in 1933, followed by Italy in 1937.[146] Furthermore, as voluntary organisations were pushed aside, the influence of feminist activists diminished.[147]

[144] Henig, *The League of Nations,* p.66.
[145] LoN, C.235.M,160.1937.IV, p.8.
[146] LoN, C.30.1939.IV, p.1.
[147] J. Pliley, 'Claims to Protection', *Journal of Women's History,* 22 (2010), p.103.

In 1938, the TWC decided to revise the whole questionnaire, focussing on criminal convictions, prevention and how states dealt with venereal disease.[148] For this revision, they widened the definitions to include a broader variety of women and to do justice to the situation outside Europe. Hein suggested that the questionnaire should ask states to distinguish between national and international traffic.[149] Croix disagreed, because she hoped that it would be possible to punish all types of sex trafficking, international or not.[150] Cohen wanted the same for 'procuring', because he hoped that every aspect of sex trafficking would be considered illegal.[151] There was a difference here between countries – eager to control the information they provided and wanting to create a positive image – and NGO's that intended to widen definitions to include as many issues as possible.

In conclusion, the image that the TWC created no longer saw women as dangerously mobile or naïvely tricked, but as victims of their social and economic circumstances. This was mainly the result of the economic crisis and the changes in international politics. In addition, the increased diversity of the League shifted the focus to the 'Far East' and confronted the TWC with new questions, such as prevention and criminalisation of sex trafficking. The broadening of the debate on sex trafficking meant that the TWC had to seek cooperation with experts and other committees, although this also meant that in the end the TWC became one of many that were debating the same issues in a time of financial strains. It demonstrated the increasingly diminishing role of the TWC in the League, as well as of the League itself.

[148] LoN, C.147.M.88.1938.IV, p.10.
[149] LoN, C.184.M.59.1928.IV, p.12.
[150] LoN, C.246.M.121.1930.IV, p.10.
[151] LoN, C.294.M.97.1929.IV, p.12.

Conclusion

The TWC is a prime example of international cooperation, of data collection during the interwar years and of experts gaining a better understanding of a 'global' issue. Surely, the TWC lost its prestige and the League found itself powerless with the outbreak of the Second World War, but the TWC was not a failed undertaking. Their approach was novel and is still relevant today. When the TWC was created in 1921, a small group of activists used the international stage to bring attention to the fate of mainly white European women who had become victims of the First World War and the increased mobility that followed. In the first few years, the TWC focused on mobility, which united different groups and stressed the importance of international cooperation. The end of the war provided a challenging environment for the TWC to obtain data, so they focused mainly on mobility and hoped that with the limitation of mobility, sex trafficking would decrease as well.

Financially supported by Rockefeller, the TWC was able to experiment with a new approach to data collection that could provide a more complete image than the limited data provided by states. Away from the influence of states, the focus shifted from mobility to regulation and abolition. The result was presented in the 1927 report, but the use of interviews, NGO's and undercover work proved controversial to states. After states criticised this report, the TWC had to tread more carefully and use the provided data with caution, as states had gained control over the data and became more protective of their information.

When the economic crisis hit in 1929, the TWC recognized the complexity of sex trafficking and shifted its attention to the causes. Broadening the definitions forced the TWC to cooperate with different experts and committees of the League. As the amount of players increased, so did the competition. Their focus on prevention and punishment asked for an active role of the state, which impeded the work as states became less eager to cooperate and struggled

with more pressing issues. Overall, the debates show a shift from mobility, to regulation and abolition, to prevention and punishment.

These changes can also be observed in the various reports and shaped the image of women's migration and sex trafficking. The 1921 report was straightforward and painted sex trafficking as a negative consequence of increased mobility after the First World War. This imaged shifted when the TWC started investigating whether regulation or abolition helped best to fight sex trafficking. As the TWC took a new approach to the data collection, the 1927 report created an image of women as the victims of state regulated prostitution. This was shaped by the funds provided by Rockefeller, who favoured abolition, which meant that certain countries could avoid criticism, because 'they did not have this problem'. Sex trafficking became more complex as a result of the 1932 report, which saw the causes of sex trafficking in early youth, economic and social circumstances as well as psychological issues. The social, legal, political, medical and economic aspects that the TWC had excluded in the immediate post-war environment, had still been up for debate in 1927 and became centre stage in 1932, as the debates shifted from mobility to regulation and finally to prevention.

The debates in the TWC showed a move from mobility towards nationalism, from the responsibility of the individual to the state, which they tried to resolve by stressing the role of science. The TWC wanted to be a scientific body that provided neutral data, and they hoped that science could objectify a debate that was instilled with national prejudice. However, science was not – and still is not – objective. The causes the delegates identified depended on their background and their motives for their interest in this issue. While for a lot of activists, their national identity did not play a role, for others it did. They used the concept of an 'international underworld' to exclude unwanted foreigners, whereas feminist delegates pointed out the victimhood of prostitutes to address the low status of women in society. The approach changed over the years, but the collection of data always depended on the cooperation of states,

which were critical of experimental methods. The NGO's formed a bridge between the national and international stage, and had a strong role in the data collection, but their prominence within the TWC diminished over time. Cooperation presented different challenges at different times.

The TWC was a transnational body that worked with states, experts, NGO's and activists. In their debates, discursive strategies and the production of specific knowledge obscured the differences between the women that became prostitutes for a variety of reasons, as it presented sex trafficking as a uniform crime. Rather than addressing the choices and agency of women migrating, the TWC framed sex trafficking as an issue to be countered with invasive legislation towards specific classes of women, who were seen as passive victims. The ambiguous image of women was influenced by the changing image of women generally during the interwar years.

The TWC is an example of how issues that required transnational cooperation underwent changes in the interwar period, revealing the complexities of international cooperation in an era of nationalism. This particularly concerned unifying national legislation and definitions to institutionalise sex trafficking as an international crime. Further, the example of the TWC provides new insights about how the image of women and sex trafficking changed during the interwar period. This thesis focused mainly on the production of knowledge rather than on historical realities, but this research shows that debates do not necessarily reflect reality.

Today's international organisations face the same challenges that the TWC faced at the time. This research can lay bare the difficulties of transnational cooperation, as well as the assumptions that shape contemporary debates. The current misrepresentation of women closely resembles that of the interwar period, as the causes mentioned in the 1932 report are still topical. If that image is shaped by interwar anxieties, it becomes relevant to reveal and untangle those so that we can nuance current debates and question why this image has lasted over the years. Furthermore, the data collection of the TWC is still used today and leads to similar questions

about the trustworthiness of data provided by states. To this day, there are different conceptions of what sex trafficking means. Examples such as the report from Save the Children are similar to those produced by the TWC, which created an image that should be deconstructed rather than reproduced. In order to understand the current debates about sex trafficking, we have to study historical debates and ask ourselves if these debates are still doing justice to reality, or if they ever have.

Annex I: Key players

Country	Delegate	Year(s) present
British Empire, Great Britain (after 1930), United Kingdom (after 1933)	Mr. S.W. Harris	1922, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
	Mr. Maxwell	1926, 32
	Miss J. I. Wall	1927, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
	Mr. A.S. Hutchinson	1931
	Mr. J.A.R. Pimlott	1937, 38
	Miss Z. L. Puxley	1938, 39
	Mr. J.F. Henderson	1939
Denmark	Mme Estrid Hein	1922, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39
France	M. Gaston Bourgois	1922, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39
	his excellency M. E. Regnault	1925, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
	M. Barbier	1925, 26
	M. Le Luc	1928, 29, 30, 31
	Mlle. Chaptal	technical advisor, 1934
	his excellency Count Clauzel	1937, 38, 39
	professor Bourguin	technical expert, 1937
	Mlle, Suzanne Sérin	technical expert, 1937
	Dr. J.A. Cavaillon	technical expert, 1938, 39
	Mme. Cecile Brunschvicg	technical expert, 1938
	Mme. Eliane Brault	technical expert, 1938, 39
	Mlle. M. Vernières	substitute expert, 1939
Italy	M. le Marquis Paulucci de Calboli	1922, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29
	M. Molossi	technical expert, 1928
	Dr. Fanny Dalmazzo	1929
	professor Ugo Conti	1930, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36 (from 1934 Count Ugo Conti-Sinibaldi)
	princess Donna Cristina Giustiniani-Bandini	1933, 34, 35, 36
Japan	M. S. Okuyama	1922, 23
	Yotaro Sugimura	1924, 25, 26
	M. Ito	1927, 28, 29, 30
	M. Saito	technical advisor 1929
	M. Shimuzu	1929
	M. S. Kusama	1930
	his excellency M. Setsuzo Sawada	1931, 32
	M.S. Matsumoto	1932
	M. Yokoyama	1933, 34, 37
	M. Sasagawa	expert, 1933
	M. Kosuge	expert, 1933
	M. Ishii	expert, 1934
	M. Isono	1934
	M. Munesye	1934
	M.Y. Kiuchi	1936
	M. Kanayama	1937

Poland	M. F. Sokal	1922
	M. Stanislas Posner	1923, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29 (lawyer, senator from 1927 onwards)
	Dr. Chodzko	1930, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39
	Mme. Wanda Woytowicz-Grabinska)	1930, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39
	M. Grzegorzewski	1931
	Mme. Siemienska	expert, 1933
Rumania	His excellency Margaritesco Greciano	1922, 23
	His excellency M.N.P. Comnène	1924, 25, 27
	Madame Sadovano	1925
	M. Ciuntu	1926, 27
	Mme H. Romniciano	1928, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33
	Princesse Alexandrine Cantacuzène	1934, 35, 37, 39
	his excellency professor M. V. V. Pella	1934, 35, 36, 37, 39
Spain	M. Avelino Montero Rios y Villegas	1922, 23
	Don Pedro Sangro y Ros de Olano	1924, 25, 26, 27, 28
	Don Emilio Martinez Amador	1925, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35
	the Marquis de Guald-el-Jelu	1930
	M.J. Sanchez Dominguez	1930
	Mme. M.L. de Martinez Sierra	1932, 33
	Doña Matilde Huic	1935, 36, 37, 38
Uruguay	Dr. Paulina Luisi	1922, 23, 24, 25, 29, 31, 32
	His excellency M. Enrique E. Buero	1933
	Dr. J.A. Bauza	1934
	his excellency M. Benavides	1935, 36, 37
	his excellency M.A. Guani	1937
	his excellency M.J. Nogueira	1939
United States of America	Miss Grace Abbot	1923, 25
	William Snow	1924
	Miss Lenroot	1933, 36
	dr. Martha Eliot	1935
	Mr. Henry B. Hazard	1937
	Miss E. Castendyck	1939
Belgium	His Excellency le Comte Carton de Wiart	1925, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
	M. Xavier Carton de Wiart	1925
	M. Isodore Maus	technical expert, 1927, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37
	Mlle. M. Baers	technical expert, 1939
Germany	Dr. Gertrud Baümer	1927, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32
	Dr. Elsa Matz	1927, 28, 30, 31
	Professor Jadassohn	technical expert, 1930
	Mme. Elizabeth Zillken	expert, 1931, 32
	Professor Polligkeit	1933
	M. Wagner	1933
India	Mrs. Subbarayan	1934
	Begam Shah Nawaz	1935
	Sir Abdul Qadir	1936
	Mrs. K. Bose	1939

Chile	M. E.J. Gajardo V. His Excellency M. García-Oldini	1934, 35, 36, 37 1937
Turkey	Djelal Hazim Bey M. Celâl Hazim M.N.T. Seymen	1934 1935 1936, 37
Canada	Miss Charlotte Whitton Mr. A. Rive	1936, 37 1939
Argentine	His excellency M. Ruiz Guiñazú M.C. Pardo M. de Veyga	1937, 38 1937, 38, 39 1937
China	His excellency M. Hoo Chi-Tsai M. Hsu lady Abdul Qadir M. Hsu Fu Yun Mlle. E.L. Lutai	1937, 38, 39 1937 1937 1939 1939
Hungary	M.B. Johan M.L. Bartok	1937, 1939 1937
Mexico	His excellency M. Isidro Fabela M.M. Tello Mlle. Palma Guillen M.M. Garza Ramos	1937 1937 1938, 39 1939
Netherlands	M. H. De Bie	1937, 38, 39
Switzerland	M. Camille Gorgé Mlle Böschenstein M.W. Rickenbach	1937, 39 technical expert, 1937 technical expert, 1939
Greece	M.M. Melas	1939
Ireland	Mr. H.A. MacCarthy	1939
Lithuania	Mme. J. Tubelis	1939
Yugoslavia	Mlle. M. Atanatskovitch	1939

Voluntary organisation	**Delegate**	**Year(s) present**
Federation of National Unions for the protection of girls, International Federation of Girls' Friendly Societies (1930)	Mme Studer-Steinhäuslin Eugénie Dutoit Mme Curchod-Secretan Mlle Andrée Kurz	1922, 23 1924 1926, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 1933, 34, 35, 36
International Bureau for the Suppression of traffic in women and children	Miss Baker, Rev. R. Hoffmann de Visme Dr. F.A.R. Sempkins	1922, 23, 24, 25, 26 1927 1928, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
International Catholic Organisations for the protection of girls, International Catholic Girls' Protection Society (1932), International Catholic Association for the Protection of Young Girls (1934)	Baroness de Montenach Mme Thurler Mme. de Diesbach Mlle. De Meyer	1922, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 36 1923, 24, 25, 31, 33, 35 1934 1935

International Labour Office (Liaison officer)	M. Ferenczi M. Varlez Mr. G.A. Johnston Mlle. M. Mundt Mme. Marguerite Thibert	1925, 26, 28 1927, 28 1929, 30, 31, 33, 37, 38 1932 1934, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39
International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues	Mlle. Lavielle miss Balfe	1929, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36 1933
International Women's Organisations	Mme G. Avril de Sainte-Croix Madame Chaponnière-Chaix	1922, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, in 1937: 'invited for the discussion on rehabilitation of adult prostitutes' 1925
Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women	Mr. S. Cohen	1922, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, in 1937, 38 and 39: 'invited for the discussion on rehabilitation of adult prostitutes and the prevention of prostitution'
Others	Mr. Bascom Johnson Professor von Overbeck Mr. M. P. E. Louwage Dr. Hoo Chi-Tsai Dr. René Sand Dr. Kemp Dr. Cavaillon Professor Donnedieu de Vabres professor J. Parisot M.J.A. Roux M. K. Pindor Dr. T. Kemp	1928, 33, 34: appointed in a personal capacity 1931: expert 1931, 37: International Criminal Police Commission 1934, 35: Director of the Permanent Office of the delegation of China to the League of Nations 1935: the League of Red Cross Societies, who acts as liaison agent with the Health Organisation 1936: University Institute, Copenhagen 1936, 37: Secretary-General of the " Union internationale contre le péril vénérien " 1936: International Bureau for the Unification of Penal Law 1937, 38, 39: Health Organisation 1937: International Bureau for the Unification of Penal Law 1937: former Member of the Travelling Commission of Enquiry into Traffic in Women and Children in the East 1938, 39: director of the University Institute for Human Genetics, Copenhagen
Secretary	Dame Rachel Crowdy M.E.E. Ekstrand Major G.H.F. Abraham	1922 – 1931: Chief of the Opium and Social Questions Section, from 1932 onwards 'nominated in personal capacity' 1932 – 1937 and 1939: director of the Opium Traffic and Social Questions Sections 1938, acting director of the Social Questions Section

Annex II: Items on the agenda

Item on the Agenda	Year
Invitation to Germany and the United States	1922
Juvenile Courts	1922
Meetings of the Committee	1922
Method of utilising Information derived from Other Sources	1922
Minutes of the First Meeting	1922
Opening Speech by the Secretary- General	1922
Ratification by Great Britain of the Convention of 1921	1922
Report of the International Emigration Commission	1922
Resolutions of the International Emigration Commission	1922
Title of the International Women's Council	1922
Consideration of the Rules of Procedure	1922, 1923
Replies to the Questionnaire	1922, 1923
Budget	1922 – 1936
Reports from the International Voluntary Organisations	1922 – 1937
Additions to the Agenda	1922 – 1936
Election of the Chairman	1922 – 1928, 1930
Report of the Committee to the Council	1922, 1923, 1925 – 1931
Employment of Women abroad by Theatre, Music-Hall, Café-Concert and Cinema Agencies	1922, 1928, 1930, 1931
Central Authorities appointed in pursuance of the 1904 Agreement. Present Situation.	1922, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1935
Signatures and Ratifications of the Convention	1922, 1938, 1939
Invitation to the Directors of the Greek and Polish Permanent Offices accredited to the League of Nations	1923
Proposal concerning a Request for Information on State Regulation	1923
Proposed Investigation into the Traffic of Women and Children	1923
Refugee camps in Greece	1923
Representation on the Committee of a Voluntary Organisation concerned with Child Welfare	1923
Employment of Foreign Women in Licensed Houses	1923, 1924
Emigration (in 1924: and Immigration)	1923, 1924, 1925, 1926
Progress Report by the Secretary	1923 – 1935
Publicity of the Meetings	1923, 1924, 1925, 1930
Women Police	1923, 1925 – 1928, 1930–1932
Obscene publications	1923, 1926 – 1931, 1939
Methods of Investigation	1924
Child Welfare	1924, 1925
Summary of Annual Reports from Governments	1924 – 1939
State Regulation, System of Licensed Houses (in 1929 and 1934: abolition of the system of licensed houses)	1924 – 1931, 1934
Propaganda (in 1927: by wireless)	1924, 1925, 1927
Changes of Membership	1924, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1935, 1936

Earthquake disaster in Japan	1925
Gift of 1500 dollar from the “Friends of the League of Nations in the USA	1925
Laws and Regulations regarding the Traffic in Women and Children	1925
Measures for the Assistance of Foreign Prostitutes who have been expelled	1925
Proposal for the Appointment of an Assessor representing the Associations of the Continent of America	1925
Reconstitution of the Advisory Committee (child welfare)	1925
Campaign against Alcoholism in its relation to the Traffic in Women and Children	1925, 1926, 1927
Age of Consent of Young Girls and Marriage of Children	1925, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931
Collaboration of the Press in the Suppression of the Traffic	1926
Compilation of all the Resolutions of the Advisory Committee	1926
Representation of the International Labour Office on the Committee	1926
Expulsion of Foreign Prostitutes	1926, 1927
Composition of the Propaganda Sub-Committee	1927
Education of the Young in Sex Matters	1927
Question of the Publication of Part II of the Report of the Special Body of Experts	1927
Question of the Wages paid to Women and their Relation to Prostitution and the Traffic in Women	1927
Resolutions submitted by the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations	1927
Welcome to Dr. Gertrud Bäumer, delegate of the German Government	1927
Consideration of the Report of the Special Body of Experts	1927, 1928, 1929
Question of continuing the Enquiry begun by the Special Body of Experts	1927, 1928, 1929
Joint Meeting of the Committee on Traffic in Women and Children and the Child Welfare Committee	1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1933, 1934
Question of discharged Female Prisoners	1927, 1928, 1930
Question of the Publication of the Minutes of the Committee	1927, 1929, 1931
Invitation to Mr. Bascom Johnson to attend the meetings	1928
Welcome to Dr. Matz	1928
Question of the Title of Supplementary Delegates	1928
Punishment of Persons who live on the Immoral Earnings of Women (from 1934: souteneurs)	1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1934, 1935
Representation of Belgium on the Committee	1929
Communication from the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drugs regarding the Connection between Dangerous Drugs and the Traffic in Women and C hildren	1929
Request from the International Criminal Police Commission to be represented at the Meetings	1929

Question of Printing the Minutes of the Committee	1929, 1930
Examination of the Annual Report prepared by the ILO	1930
Repatriation of Foreign Prostitutes	1930, 1931, 1932
Representation of the Committee at the Congress of the International Abolitionist Federation	1931
Amendments to the Conventions of 1910 and 1921	1932, 1933
Extradition	1934
Representation of Canada	1935
Position of Women of Russian Origin in the Far East	1935, 1936
Enquiry into methods of rehabilitation	1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939
Report of the Director of the Social Questions Section	1935, 1937
Suppression of the Exploitation of Prostitution	1936, 1937, 1938
Conference of Central Authorities in the Middle and Far East	1936, 1937, 1938, 1939
New Abolitionist Measures enacted in Different Countries	1937, 1938
Preventive Measures (especially with regard to minors)	1937, 1938, 1939
Standing Sub-Committee	1938
Form of Annual Report	1938

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