



Social connectedness between Drugs runners

Research into the network of drugs runners

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Preface

Dear reader,

I am proud to present you my thesis. My graduation felt like an adventure. It all started with the selection for an opportunity to write my thesis within the Dutch Police Organization. I went successfully through this selection and the next step was to formulate a research assignment. After several months, it became clear that the path I had chosen and also was chosen for me, was not the right one.

During my graduation I have had some amazing experiences. One of these experiences was presenting my results in front of many members of the police organization at a conference on the practical implementation of research.

My graduation gave me the opportunity to meet some wonderful people who have supported me while I was writing my thesis. It was not always easy, but I am happy with the results. There are several people I would like to thank. First of all I want to say thank you to my supervisors at the police station of Enschede, Mark Broekhuis and Krista Smid. They have supported me from beginning to end. I also want to mention the department of Analysis and Research in Enschede. I have spent many moments together with you and you have made me feel very welcome. A special words of thanks I want to give to my third supervisor Ingrid Oostenenk, head of Research and Advice group and research coordinator Oost- Nederland. She coached me, and helped me to develop the research design. Someone I want to thank for helping me with my personal development is Jana Smit, communitymanager Blueboard who has not only helped me with my thesis but also helped me to understand the police organization. I want to thank both of these professionals for helping me and making me smile every time we were in contact with each other.

I also want to thank my supervisors, Guus Meershoek, assistant professor Safety Governance, and Jörgen Svensson, assistant professor of Sociology at the University of Twente for their feedback on my thesis. They supported me to continually develop my thesis and make it something of which I can be proud of.

Of course, my biggest supporters, my family and friends I will not forget. Without you, I would not be where I am now. Thank you!

Enjoy reading my thesis!

Kind regards,

Mariëlle Klaasen

Abstract

They do it for the power, they do it for the money, they do it for the excitement.' (Thie, 1996). Young men in police district Rotterdam get into illegal drug trade searching for clients to whom they could sell drugs in public areas. They are labelled drugs runners in the Dutch media and are part of illegal drug trade. Illegal drugs trade is causing problems on a global level. One area in the Netherlands which is having trouble with illegal drug trade is district [...]. Here, the presence of many Cannabis plantations, dealers and drugs runners cause problems regarding the level of safeness and order.

The police and other actors who are involved, want to have a better understanding of drugs runners. They are interested in the social connections between these drugs runners. Therefore, the goal of this thesis is to provide insights into drugs runners and their connection with each other. This thesis will focus on the social relations between these drugs runners and their place in the process of illegal drug trade. The social relations between drugs runners are researched by doing a network analysis. Understanding connections between drugs runners might give new insights which help with the deactivation of a part of illegal drug trade. The main research question of this thesis is: *To what extent do drugs runners [...] form a criminal network and in which phases of the process of illegal drugs trade are drugs runners involved?*

To answer this question, data from the police information system are used. Within this police system, there are both reports from observations of police officers and interrogations with drugs runners. These documents are analysed. The information is used to see to what extent social connections are present between drugs runners. Next to that, this research looks into common/sociodemographic features of drugs runners to see what might be socially binding them together.

After the analysis of the data, a network of drugs runners was found. Not every drugs runner was connected to many other drugs runners. [...] Drugs runners have several common socio/demographic features. Based on the results, a profile of a drugs runner could be made. [...] However, how a drugs runner is described here does not count for every drugs runner which was part of this research.

[...]

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1. Introduction

‘They do it for the power, they do it for the money, they do it for the excitement.’ (Thie, 1996). Young men in police district Rotterdam with an migration background get into illegal drug trade searching for clients to whom they could sell drugs in public areas. They are labelled drugs runners in the Dutch media and are part of illegal drug trade. Drugs runners do not sell drugs themselves but drive around with buyers of drugs to places where drugs dealers are. Drugs runners who work for these drugs dealers are paid per buyer. These runners choose specific areas like the central train station of Rotterdam to find potential buyers of drugs. According to one of these drugs runners, they move to other places to find buyers, as soon as the number of potential buyers decreases in one area (Thie, 1996). [...]

1.1 Illegal drug trade in the Netherlands

Illegal drug trade happens on a global level. The Dutch Opium law states which drugs are illegal. The opium law in the Netherlands divides two types of drugs: soft drugs and hard drugs. There are two lists which contain the exact drugs which are labelled as soft drugs or hard drugs. Article two of the Dutch Opium law states that it is forbidden to transport hard drugs from or to the Netherlands, to produce hard drugs, to possess hard drugs, to sell hard drugs and to buy hard drugs. In article 3 of the Opium law, the same rules are mentioned for soft drugs (Rijksoverheid, 2016). Articles 2 and 3 clarify that the actions of drugs runners are illegal. Both the selling and transporting drugs are actions drugs runners seem to be involved with and which are against the law.

1.2 Drugs runners

Drugs runners are not only active in district Rotterdam but are also in other areas in the Netherlands. District Gouda and district Zuid- Limburg are two examples of areas in which drugs runners are also known to be active and present. In Zuid- Limburg, the presence of these drugs runners has been further analysed and in the end, this resulted in a report about drugs runners in Zuid- Limburg (Bremmers and van Wijk, 2011). In this report, drugs runners were defined: Drugs runners form a link between customers and dealers of illegal drugs. Their most important activities are recruiting and piloting of customers, but they also get the drugs from safe-houses (storage places for drugs), they deliver ordered drugs to customers and transport drugs for dealers. Many tasks they perform are visible and this causes risks. Drugs runners are more in the public eye: dealers count on it that once in a while, drugs

runners get caught by the police' (Bremmers and van Wijk, 2011, p.115). The definition of drugs runners is changing. In the past, drugs runners were more or less involved in illegal drug trade as a contact person between buyer and drugs dealer. The report of Bremmers and van Wijk (2011) also mentions that drugs runners are no longer always the middleman between dealer and buyer. They can also possess drugs themselves and sell these directly to buyer of drugs. [...]

1.3 Drugs runners in [...]

Not only Rotterdam and Limburg see the negative influence of illegal drug trade in their area. Illegal drug trade is also present in district [...] . Here, the presence of many Cannabis plantations, dealers and drugs runners cause many problems regarding the level of safeness and order. Between the 1st of January 2015 and 30th November 2016, there have been at least 290 incidents concerning illegal drug trade according to the police information system. These are incidents which are labelled as trade in softdrugs and trade in hard drugs. Drugs runners have a negative influence in this district. First of all, drugs runners are involved in conflicts. Because of competition, drugs runners battle for clients and these can cause conflicts (Bremmers and van Wijk, 2011). These conflicts can bother citizens and give these citizens an unsafe feeling.

Secondly, Drugs runners can also be aggressive when they are recruiting clients on the streets or in traffic. [...]

Thirdly, drugs runners make contact with other citizens [...]
[...]

1.4 Legal methods against illegal drug trade

When it comes to soft drugs, many Cannabis plantations are discovered by the police [...]. The police [...] also arrests dealers and drugs runners and is gathering information about both of these groups. At present, the police [...] and other actors who are involved as for example the municipalities [...], want to have a better understanding of drugs runners who are active in [...]. They are interested in the social connections between these drugs runners. In order to understand drugs runners [...], more research is therefore needed. In the end this information can be used to form specific actions to lower the number of drugs runners [...].
[...]

1.5 Goal thesis

The goal of this thesis is to provide insights into drugs runners [...]. This thesis will focus on the social relations between these drugs runners and their place in the process of illegal drug trade. The social relations between drugs runners [...] are researched by doing a network analysis. The ultimate goal of this analysis, is to find out to what extent drugs runners are socially connected with each other. Do drugs runners know each other, do they work together? The answers to these questions can influence the decision as to which actions will be used to lower the level of drugs runners [...]. If drugs runners work on an individual level, this could ask for an individualistic approach. But if drugs runners work together and know each other, the group as a whole might need to be disrupted in order to solve the problems with this group [...]. There can be one or several person(s) who are holding the group together for example.

1.6 Research Question

Based on the subject of this thesis a research question is formulated. First of all there is the main research question which can be divided in several research questions. The main research question of this thesis is:

To what extent do drugs runners [...] form a criminal network and in which phases of the process of illegal drugs trade are drugs runners involved?

The main research question will be answered by answering the following questions:

- a. *Do drugs runners [...] have common socio-demographic features?*
- b. *To what extent do drugs runners form a criminal network [...]?*
- c. *What methods do drugs runners use within the network when they perform their tasks?*
- d. *What phases are there in the process of illegal drugs trade?*
- e. *In which phases of the illegal drug trade are those people involved who are active as drugs runner [...]?*

1.7 Relevance

This thesis is relevant in several ways. This thesis is relevant for society, but also for science. Below, both types of relevance are discussed.

1.7.1 Societal Relevance

As stated before, the presence of drugs runners [...] causes problems. Eventually, the police and other actors want to see these drugs runners gone. In order to be able to do that, these actors need information about the way drugs runners operate to be able to disrupt them. This thesis gives new information which will help when it is time to choose the right policy to go against these drugs runners. This thesis looks at the social connections between drug runners. Next to that, with the information that can be found on drug runners, the tasks of these drug runners will be analysed. This will make it more clear as to what it is drug runners do and which departments of the police need to be involved when handling these drugs runners.

1.7.2 Scientific Relevance

This thesis is scientifically relevant for multiple reasons. First of all in previous research on drugs runners in the Netherlands, there was a focus on the individuals and everything that could be said about them. Within this thesis however, the focus is not on these individuals who are active as drugs runner [...], but on all of these drugs runners together. This means that instead of just describing many personal features of these drugs runners, insight is given into how this group of drugs runners [...] might work together or not. In short, how are their tasks executed on a cooperative level.

Secondly, by looking at what those persons, who are drugs running [...], do within the process of illegal drug trade, it becomes more clear as to what it is drugs runners do in this part of organized crime. Does this part of organized crime have specialists who focus on one thing, or are drugs runners an example of those persons on the lowest level within organized crime, who do all kinds of tasks. A lot of research can be found on the subject of organized crime and its individuals within that world, but this has not been done with the concept called drugs runners.

Thirdly, in the Netherlands, many research has been done on the illegal trade of cannabis. This has led to a clear idea of how this trade in cannabis is organized. However, the same cannot be said about trade in hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin, while drugs runners are mainly dealing in hard drugs. This world remains somewhat vague as it seems harder for organizations like the police, to get information. This thesis might give insights into illegal trade of both heroin and cocaine. In the next chapter, the process of trading in cocaine and heroin in the Netherlands will be described. On the basis of this information, the place of drugs runners in this process can be stated.

2. Process of illegal drug trade

Illegal drugs trade is said to be responsible for one fifth of all criminal activities. The top three of drug types which are sold most and consumed most by customers are cannabis, heroin and cocaine. Cannabis is mainly produced within Europe while Cocaine and Heroin are imported to Europe. Part of this import arrives firstly in the Netherlands (EMCDDA, 2016). In the Netherlands, drugs are either produced or imported from outside of the Netherlands. Examples of drugs which are produced in the Netherlands are XTC and Cannabis. After its production, parts of it are sold in the Netherlands and another part of XTC and Cannabis is sold to other countries (CVV, 2016a). Hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin are produced outside of the Netherlands and are imported. When these drugs are imported to the Netherlands, they are either sold for the Dutch drug market or are sold to foreigners from other European countries. Even though there are no exact numbers which give information as to how many drugs actually come into the Netherlands and where this goes, based on what is known, the Netherlands can be called a distributor of drugs. Drugs presumably arrive in Rotterdam or Schiphol and are divided within Europe or other areas on the world (van Dun, 2016).

Cocaine and heroin are drugs which are imported the most. As soon as imported drugs arrive in the Netherlands, there are several phases between the arrival of drugs in the Netherlands and the selling of drugs. Most of the drugs are sold to other countries but some of the drugs are also sold in the Netherlands. In this thesis there is a focus on drugs that arrive in the Netherlands and are sold in the Netherlands. Part of this drugs eventually ends up in [...] where for example heroin and cocaine are sold by drug criminals. The selling of cannabis, cocaine and heroin causes problems in [...], which was already discussed in chapter 1. To give an example of the process of illegal drug trade, a recent model of cannabis production (CCVb, 2016) shows the steps from production to selling. It gives an example of what phases there are before cannabis is sold to customers. However, the process of drug trade, focussing on cocaine and heroin, differs from the model of cannabis because cocaine and heroin are not produced in the Netherlands.

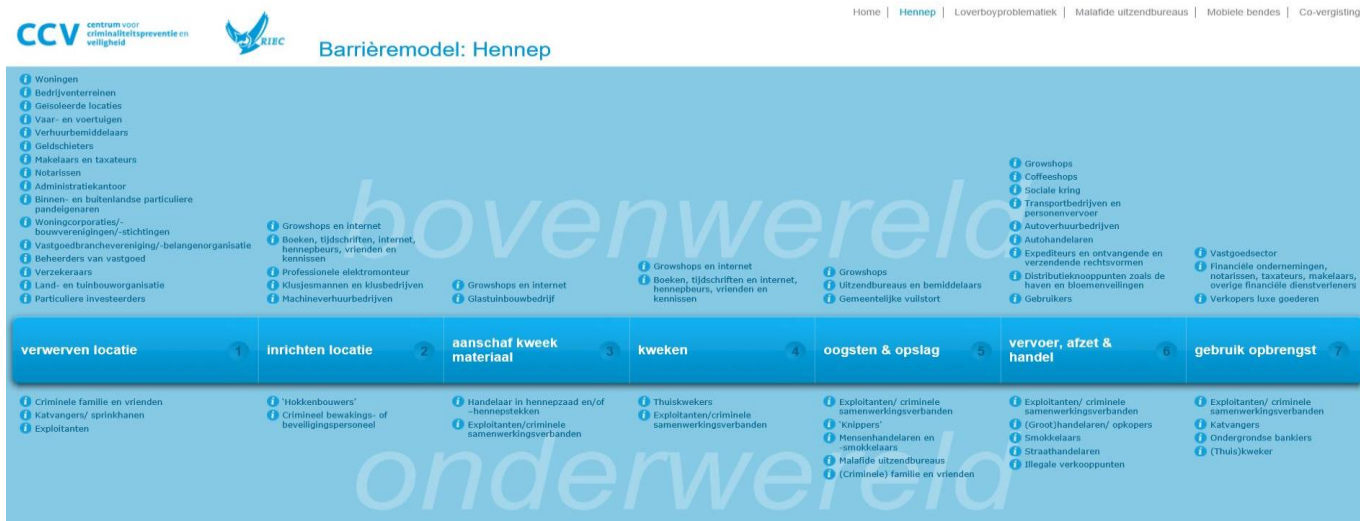


Figure 1. Barrier model of Cannabis

In the second paragraph of this chapter, the criminal process of illegal drug trade will be discussed with a focus on cocaine and heroin being sold in [...]. Cannabis, cocaine and heroin arrive in [...] and are sold by drug criminals who can be dealer, drugs runner or both. This thesis looks at the group of drugs criminals who work as drugs runner and sell hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin.

2.1 Process of illegal drug trade: Step by step

The process of illegal drug trade can be divided into several steps. In this paragraph the focus will specifically be on the trade in cocaine and heroin [...](Bremmers and van Wijk, 2011). The process of illegal trade in heroin or cocaine can go several ways. However, the start of the process is the same. Drugs runners are expected to be involved either at the end of the process or from the middle of the process when drugs have arrived in the Netherlands to the end of the process when drugs are sold.

2.1.1 Production

At the start of the process is the *production* of the drugs. Heroin and cocaine are not produced in the Netherlands, but come from places outside of the Netherlands (UNODC, 2015). Cocaine, for example, is partly made of a plant which can be found in South America (Meerten, 2009). Multiple countries within South America produce cocaine. Colombia is known to be the biggest exporter of cocaine. As for heroin, the production also starts with a plant. From this plant, pure opium is collected which at the end of the heroin production

proces, ends in heroin. Afghanistan is still the biggest manufacturer of heroin. After the production of both cocaine and heroin, both are transported to other parts in the world to be sold to customers.

2.1.2 Import

Both cocaine and heroin are imported to the Netherlands. Both are imported in several ways. Cocaine and heroin are hidden amongst legal products or somewhere in the shipping containers. Both large and smaller ships are used for the transportation of drugs to the Netherlands. The second way of importing cocaine and heroin is using airports. Small amounts of cocaine are imported by individuals who carry cocaine inside themselves or close to their body. The third way of importing drugs is by means of the motorway. Via Germany and Belgium, cocaine and heroin arrive in the Netherlands. The fourth and last way to import cocaine and heroin happens through the post. This is mainly used for transporting small amounts of drugs (Gruter and van de Mheen, 2005).

2.1.3 Distribution

The *distribution* of these drugs is the second step in the criminal process. When the drugs arrive in the Netherlands they need to be stored somewhere. For example, drugs like heroin and cocaine are stored in garage boxes which are owned or rented by people like drug addicts. This way the police cannot prove that the actual drug owner, is the owner of that drugs. Storage facilities in general are popular amongst drugs criminals as these facilities have minimal control (KLPD, 2012). The drugs will be sold in big numbers to drugs criminals who distribute the drugs in the Netherlands or other countries in Europe.

2.1.4 Transport

The fourth step is the *transportation* of drugs to other places in the Netherlands. Drugs that have been bought in Rotterdam or Amsterdam will need to be transported to other places to be able to sell it all. There are not only customers in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, but everywhere in the Netherlands. [...] There are several possibilities to transport the drugs [...]. The transport can be accomplished by train or by car. Drug criminals can use trucks to transport drugs to areas in the Netherlands [...].

2.1.5 Selling drugs

The fifth step is *selling* the drugs to customers. [...] . [...]

All this information about the organization around illegal drugs trade can be summed up in the following model. This model gives an overview of the steps that are being taken before the drugs get to the customers in the Netherlands.

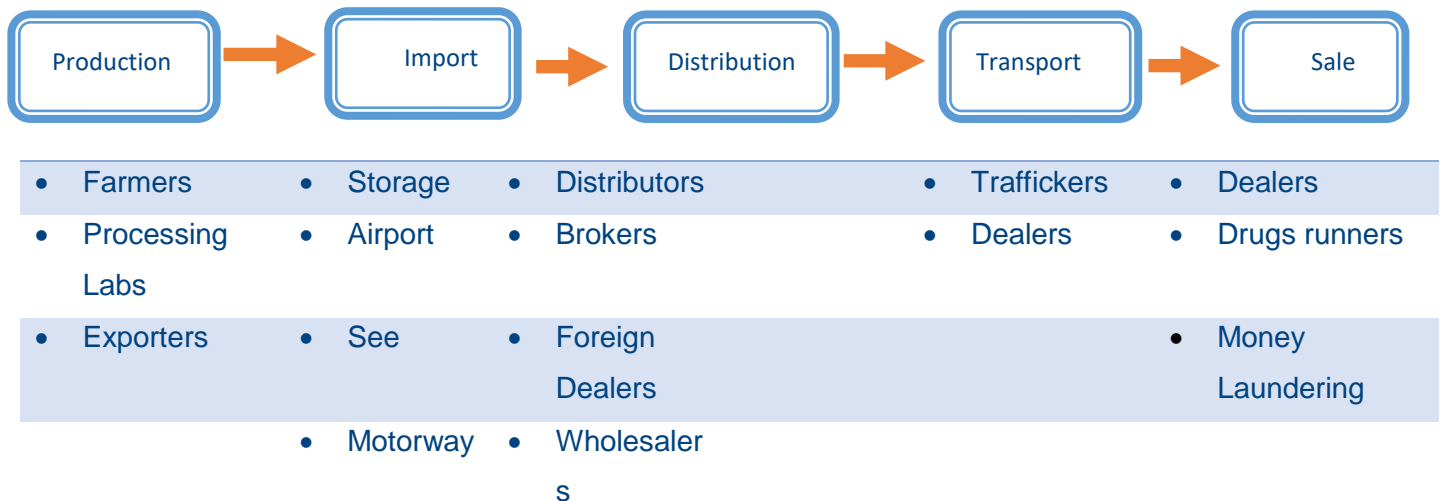


Figure 2: Model of the process of Illegal drug trade

3. Theory

In this chapter both the concept criminal network as well as the concept social network will be discussed. This thesis looks at the network of drugs runners [...]. Eventually this thesis focusses on social network analysis as a tool for looking at the network of drugs [...]. The second paragraph of this chapter explains what social networks are and what information social network analysis can give.

3.1 Criminal Networks

3.1.1 Criminal network: legal business structure

Criminal cooperation is often compared to legal entrepreneurship. Kleemans (2012) suggests that there are differences between legal and illegal entrepreneurs. While legal entrepreneurs have many means to hold on to while doing business with other organisations, with criminal cooperation, this is not the case. Within illegal entrepreneurship, there are no warranties. Cooperation between criminals is without contracts to fall back onto as is the case with legal entrepreneurship. Compared to legal entrepreneurship, there is no trust and there are many risks within illegal entrepreneurships. Criminals who cooperate with each other know that they are at risk. One criminal can decide not to cooperate anymore and leave the other, involved in the cooperation, with the effects of that decision. At that point, there is no contract to hold on to minimize the damage of that decision to stop with the cooperation.

Because of these trust issues and the risks, social relations are very important for criminal cooperation. Social relations can ease the cooperation between criminals as it can lower the risks of misleading each other. Local criminal cooperation uses social relations by meeting each other on specific places. Social relations happen at microlevel. Social relations do not depend on ethnic homogeneity. Criminal cooperation often happens at transnational level and deals with many criminals from many countries (Kleemans, 2012).

Social relations are necessary for criminal activities. Especially when it comes to organized crime, social relations are needed. Often as with legal entrepreneurships, there is a whole process which is followed to make profit. For example with illegal drug trade. If you want to sell drugs, you need to know how to get drugs yourself. You need to have or you need to make contact with someone who can give you what you need. In order for drugs to come to

the Netherlands, when it is produced outside of the Netherlands, social relations with those people outside of the Netherlands who produce drugs like cocaine and heroin, are necessary.

3.1.2 Criminal networks of organized crime

Illegal drug trade is considered to be organized crime. Criminals work from an organization in which they cooperate and share resources to perform criminal activities (RIEC, 2017). Criminals operate together mostly with those persons who are similar to themselves on the basis of age, gender, ethnic and social background. But although cooperation is important for criminal activities, research has given indications that the relationships between criminals who work together are not strong because of trust issues and competition. This is partly resolved by criminal cooperation's between family members or friends. (Kleemans and Weermans, 2002). Bremmers and van Wijk (2011) showed that drugs runners can be family related or know each other from their past. Next to this, trust issues have resulted in drugs runners performing trafficking tasks. Runners pick up the drugs in for example Rotterdam and then travel back to the place where the drugs are sold, for example Limburg.

Criminals can be locally embedded or not. Having social ties within the area in which criminals are active can come of use in terms of information and criminal cooperation. But sometimes criminals choose not to be locally embedded to make it more difficult for law enforcement agencies to find them (Kleemans and Van de Bunt (2007). Information about drug runners so far suggests that drug runners choose to stay below the radar as much as possible.

3.1.3 Network versus market/hierarchy with illegal drug trade

When it comes to the organization of illegal drug trade, research and media have suggested the existence of many cartels in the 1970s. For example, there were indications that drugs trafficking was organized by one or several big organisations (Kenney, 2007). Research has indicated that this was the case in the past. But today, the organization around illegal drug trade has changed. Instead of having a hierarchy with leadership at the top, illegal drug trade is now characterized by network structures. Drugs criminals work in smaller groups independently of each other. Rather than working horizontally, these groups work vertically (Benson and Decker, 2010). This means that drugs runners would be connected with each other, but within the overall network of drugs runners [...], there should be smaller interconnected groups in which drugs runners are working together.

Within these smaller networks, resources are exchanged. Criminals use networks instead of hierarchies and markets because within the network, the relationship is not tide. This reduces the chance that drug criminals get caught, because they are in contact for many times. Relationships within the criminal network are based on family ties and friendship (Kenney, 2007). Drugs runners are involved in a network where there is less control from someone who has a higher position within the network. Instead, drugs runners organize their own activities.

3.1.4 Chain and wheel network of illegal drug trade

Within the process of illegal drug trade there are multiple ways as to how drugs eventually end up with the user of drugs. Kenney (2007) mentions two kind of networks based on the process of illegal drug trade. Within both networks, members have specific roles. Wheel networks contain a core group which coordinates all activities within the network. These core groups have a leading role within the network of illegal drugs trade. The core nodes, those who are most central within the groups, are the facilitators. Core nodes perform multiple tasks for the core groups. Core groups organize the whole process of illegal drugs trade by giving specific task to groups of drug criminals.

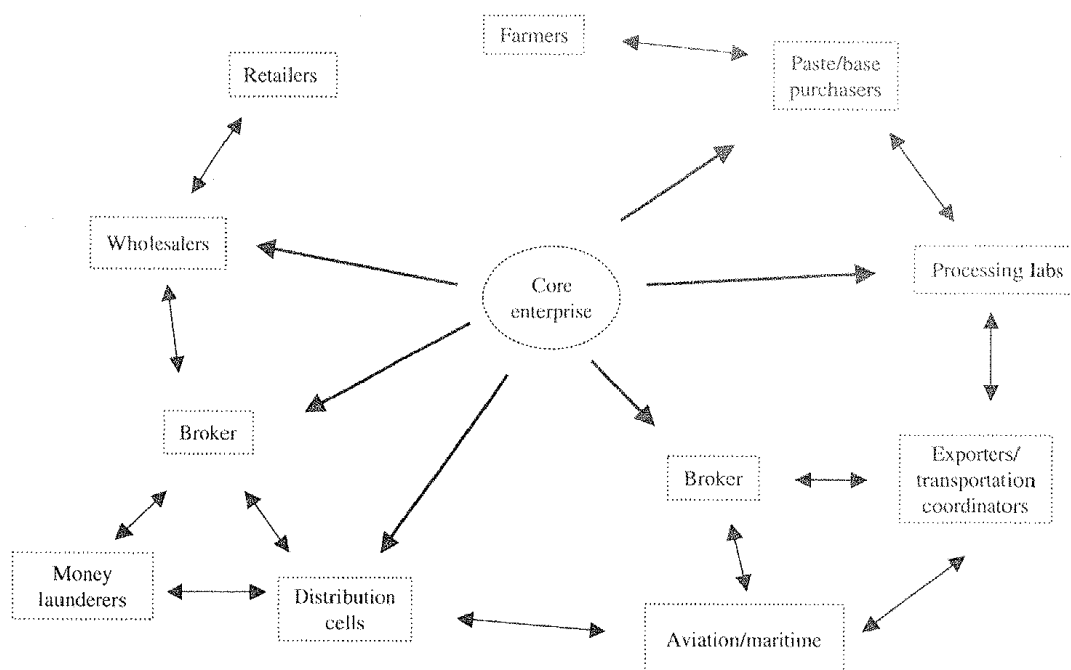


Figure 3: Wheel Network (Kenney, 2007)

Within the chain network, tasks are more divided within the process of illegal drugs trade. Chain networks are self-organising. Each group within this chain performs specific tasks and is accountable to other groups within the network on a horizontal level. There is no oversight of the process of a core group. Over time, trust and reciprocity develop between the different groups within the chain network. Interpersonal relationships within the network are often based on kinship- and friendship networks that crisscross the chain network of illegal drug trade. It is hard for law enforcers to deal with the network, because there are no high value core groups and participant of the network who are detained and can easily be replaced (Kenney, 2007).

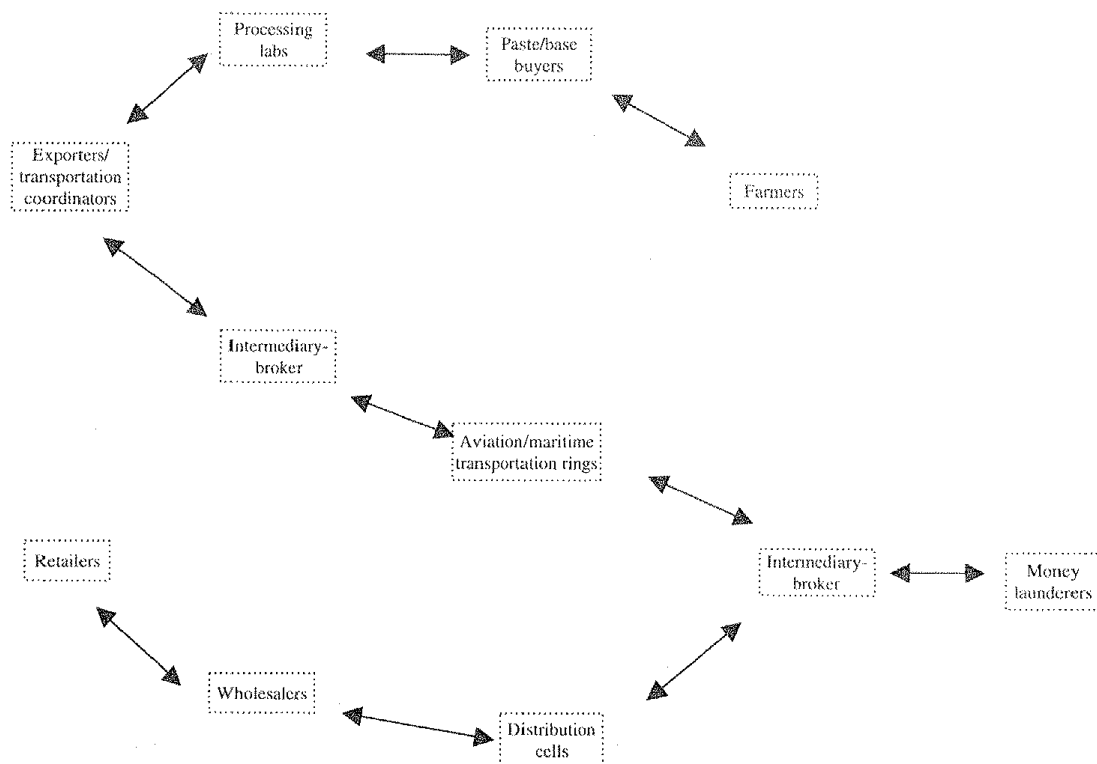


Figure 4: Chain Network (Kenney, 2007)

Whether or not drugs runners belong to a wheel network or to a chain network, cannot be said with certainty. The information, found within the data might lead to a conclusion as to what kind of network drugs runners belong. Although there is information on drugs runners, information about the whole organizations of illegal drug trade in the Netherlands is hard to find. Drugs runners are often used so that higher level drug criminals are not discovered by the Dutch Police.

3.1.5 Roles within the criminal network of illegal drug trade

Within the criminal network of illegal drug trade, drugs runners can have different roles. Initially, drugs runners were the contact person between the buyer and seller. Today, drugs runners also sell drugs themselves and move from being a drugs runner to becoming a dealer. This means that they have drugs with them instead of leading a client to the person who has drugs, the dealer. Next to that, drugs runners can also perform the function of trafficker. They move larger amounts of drugs from locations such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam, to other regions within the Netherlands. In short, drugs runners can function as a broker, seller or trafficker (Bremmers and van Wijk, 2011). It cannot be said with certainty as to what extent drugs runners are managed at all or are acting on an individual level. Indications in literature give idea of an individualistic network where everybody works more or less on their own. Whether or not there are facilitators within the network, will become clear after the social network analysis of drugs runners in [...].

3.2 Social Networks

Actors are involved in one or several social networks. The social network consists of two important elements: the actors themselves and the links between. Actors within the network are either connected with all members of the network or only connected with some of the members of the network. At least two actors are needed to form a network. The actors which form the network do not have to be human beings. They can also be departments, part of an organization. This thesis focusses on human beings within a social network, namely drugs runners. These drugs runners are connected to family, friends or other people (McIlwain, 1999). Social networks form an opportunity which makes it easier to commit crimes. How mobile a drugs runner is, is partly depending on what happens within the social network of drugs runners (Hulst, 2008).

3.2.1 Social Network Structure

A network consists of at least two nodes and a link (relationship) between them. These nodes can either be human beings or for example organizations. The link can be directed or symmetric. A directed relationship is a relationship which goes one way. This means that node 1 has a link with node 2, but node 2 does not have a link with node 1. In terms of links

between drugs runners this would mean that drugs runner 1 knows drugs runner 2, but drugs runner 2 does not see a link with drugs runner 1.

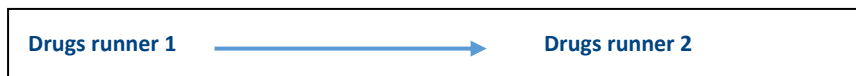


Fig 1. Directed Relationship

When both node 1 and 2 have a link with each other, the link is symmetrical.

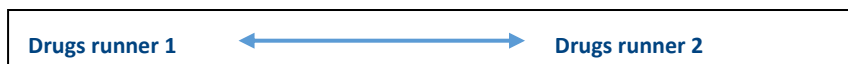


Fig 2. Symmetrical Relationship

A third possibility of a relationship is a link between nodes by through an intermediary. This means node 1 has a link with node 2 and node 2 has a link with node 3 (Kadushin, 2012).



Fig 3. Relationship through an Intermediary

- *Network Types*

Within social sciences, there are three different types of networks described. These types of networks are either ego-centric, socio-centric or an open system. The *egocentric network* exist of a network which is linked with one person. This would mean that drugs runners within the network are all linked to one drugs runner within the network. But it depends on the way these drugs runners are linked with that one person, to be able to say that it is a network. The *socio-centric network* is a closed network. These networks can be seen as a box. One example is a classroom in which all students are connected. Drugs runners would be connected together as one group.

The *Open system network* is network which has no clear boundaries in comparison as to when the network is closed. When drugs runners [...] would be involved in an open system network, they would be involved with other groups like a group of drugs runners in Rotterdam or Maastricht (Kadushin, 2012).

- *Density, Centrality and Cliques*

The structure of the network depends on both the level of density, the level of centrality and how many cliques are present within the network. The level of *density* within the network is an indicator for the level of connectedness within the network. The level of density depends on how many drugs runners within the network are directly connected to each other. As more drugs runners have direct links with each other, the level of density will be higher. This can say something about the level of collaboration between drugs runners. If there is more collaboration between drugs runners, they will have a stronger position against those who want stop them. Collaboration gives drugs runners the opportunity to exchange information and advice. This can make the positions of drugs runners [...] stronger as they might have more knowledge about the way the police works etc.

Centrality has three different types of centrality. The first type is *degree centrality*. Degree centrality can be defined as the number of ties a node, in this case a drugs runner, has within the network. The second type of centrality is closeness centrality. *Closeness centrality* can be defined as the distance between one drugs runner and all the other drugs runners. Closeness centrality gives indications as to how central each drugs runner within the network is. If one drugs runner is more central within the network, he or she might have a higher position of different role than the other members within the network. The third type of centrality is *betweenness centrality*. Betweenness centrality can be defined as ‘the number of times a node needs a given node to reach another node’ (Otte and Rousseau, 2002, p.443). Together these three types of centrality measure the overall concept centrality. How many drugs runners have a central position in the network or not, does not only say something about the network structure, but also about the way the drugs runners [...]work. Do they work alone, do they work with leaders, etc.

Within the network, groups can be formed. These groups are called *cliques*. Cliques exist of nodes who are all directly connected with each other. There need to be at least 3 nodes to form a clique. The network can have multiple cliques. When there are cliques within the network that could mean that the members of these cliques might work together or are otherwise linked. The network could have one big clique or several smaller cliques (Otte and Rousseau, 2002). If this is not the case and the network has barely any cliques, big or small, this could indicate that there is less close contact between members of the network.

3.2.2 Relationships

Drugs runners [...] are involved in at least one social network. Within this network they can be part of different cliques. Runners might work for the same dealer and hence find themselves involved in a network with other drugs runners in which the dealer plays a central part. Next to having relationships with other runners, drugs runners are also linked with family members and friends. Sometimes these family members or friends are also active as a drug runners. When a person has these ties, the chance that this person will become a drugs runner increases (Bremmer en van Wijk, 2011).

[...]

4. Methodology

In the introduction, several questions were formulated and this chapter will focus on how these questions will be answered. The first step is the decision as to which research design fits best. After this, there is an explanation as to how data are collected and analysed. Hereafter, the restrictions of this method will be discussed. The last part of this chapter is focussed on the operationalization which explains how the research questions in the end will be answered.

4.1 Research Design

To be able to answer the research question, data need to be collected. The first step is to decide which data. The main research question is: *To what extent do drugs runners who are active in [...] form a criminal network and in which phases of the process of illegal drugs trade are drugs runners involved?* To answer this question, data from the police information system are used. Within this police system, there are both reports from observations of police officers and interrogations with drugs runners. These documents will be analysed. The information given in these documents is used to find social connections between drugs runners. Also, information about drugs runners is used to describe common socio/demographic features of drugs runners. The information can say something about the phases of the illegal drug trade process drugs runner belong to. Are they specialized in one task or do they perform multiple tasks?

4.1.1 Network structure

To be able to answer the first part of the research question of this thesis, information about the criminal network of drugs runners [...] is conducted by use of Social Network Analysis (SNA). This is a quantitative research method. As this thesis looks first at the question whether or not the drugs runners [...] are within a network with each other, there needs to a basic question to be able to link drugs runners together. This basic question is whether or not drugs runners know each other. Based on this question, the links between drugs runners can be researched.

4.1.2 Criminal process of illegal drug trade

The second part of the main research question is about the position of drugs runners in the criminal process of illegal drug trade. Information on what drugs runners do already exists. But this research also wants to see whether or not drugs runners also perform other activities which can be linked to illegal drug trade.

4.2 Data Collection

To be able to answer the questions which were stated in chapter 1, it is necessary to collect data about drugs runners. Both observations of police officers as well as interrogations of drugs runners are used as data for this thesis. Within the collected data, people are not always specifically labelled as drugs runners, but because of what they do, they can be labelled as such. A combination of different criteria are used to be able to specify someone as a drugs runner. Paragraph 4,4 will go deeper into this

Information which is used for this research dates from January 2015 until December 2016. Police officers see the presence of drugs runners, see what they do and with whom they are active. This information is reported and can be found in the police information system. Most of the time they will already know the name of these runners, but with new drugs runners, they will have to find out at first.

Especially the information about which drugs runners are active [...] and about contact between drugs runners can be used for the social network analysis. What drugs runners actually do, is relevant for answering the second part of the main research question. Interrogations of drugs runners might say nothing about contacts with other drugs runners and about what it is drugs runners specifically do. But, some drugs runners might have said something in the past during interrogations about contact with other runners and their tasks. As soon as names are available of the drugs runners [...], police officers can find information about these individuals. Their age, residence, criminal record and nationality says something about the individual and perhaps about common features of drugs runners.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data which are collected from the police information system are used for analysis. The first step in the analysis is to gather names of drugs runners [...]. As soon as there is a list with names of drugs runners [...], these names can be used to look up personal information.

Social network analysis is done with the help of a software programme which is called Ucinet. This programme first of all visualizes the criminal network of drugs runners [...] with the help of Netdraw. Ucinet can measure both the density and centrality of the criminal network. It also shows the cliques within the criminal network of drugs runners. With this programme, the structure of the network of drugs runners [...] can be described. The programme looks at ties between drugs runners. In this research, the focus lies on one type of tie specifically: contact between drugs runners. Because of limited available data, not more ties will be analysed and focus of this thesis is mainly on contact between drugs runners. This scale of measurement is binary. This means that either a person knows someone or not. If a drugs runner knows another drugs runner, this tie is coded with a 1. If they do not know each other, they are coded with a 0. The level of measurement is nominal as this type of measurement, does not measure the strength of the relationship. Although this thesis only looks at one type of relationship, the analysis of the network of drugs runners [...] is a full network analysis. This means that all ties of each individual within the network are part of the analysis. This thesis will eventually give a complete overview of the criminal network of drugs runners, next information about common features of drugs runners and their place within the process of illegal drug trade.

4.4 Population

[...] All the drugs runners who are known by the police, are subject of this research. Within the data, people are not always literally named drugs runners. On the basis of a combination of indicators, people can be labelled as drugs runners. In the first chapter of this thesis, a definition of drugs runners was given and within that definition, several features of drugs runners were mentioned. Next to that there are several situations which are typical for drugs runners, based on the behaviour of known drugs runners. These are:

- Contact between person and drug dealer
- Contact with buyers of drugs
- Driving too fast
- Being in contact with known drugs runners
- Having multiple telephones
- Carrying drugs
- Carrying a lot of money

With the help of these types of behaviour, persons are selected and labelled as drugs runners. The main criteria which are used in combination to define someone as a drugs

runners are carrying drugs and contact with buyers of drugs. If someone has not been knowingly near drugs, this person at least needs the other criteria to be able to label him a drugs runner. The next step is to link these drugs runners to each other and to see what it is drugs runners actually do. Eventually this will give ideas about the functioning of drugs runners as a group and about the position of the drugs runners in the overall criminal process of drug trade.

4.5 Limitations

Although the intention of this research after drugs runners is to do this research as thorough and correct as possible, this research has its limitations.

Drugs runners are defined in the literature in different ways. This means that it is unclear which persons can be described as drugs runners which persons not. Beforehand it needs to be clear which criteria the police itself uses to label persons as a drugs runners. That way it will be clear as to how they label people as drugs runner. Because research is done with the names of those who are active [...], there is less chance of people being called drugs runner based on different criteria handled by different police units.

One restriction of the available data which are used for this research is the fact that these data do not necessarily give information about content of the relationships between drugs runners. Whether both drugs runners know each other or one knows the other, cannot be said. In short the relationship could either be direct or symmetrical. Next to this, these data can only give indications as to whether the relationship between drugs runners is negative or positive. Considering the fact that drugs runners compete with each other, it would be logical to say that when they are working together, the relationship is most likely to be positive. But drugs runners can also be in conflict with each other which turns the relationship into a negative one.

Another limitation of the data is its subjectivity. The data exist of observations and information provides by police officers and myself. The behaviour of drugs runners is interpreted and written down. However as these data are made out observations of multiple police officers, it reduces the chance that these data are too subjective. If all police officers have comparable observations, it reduces the chance of unreliable data.

4.6 Operationalization

In the previous paragraphs the research method is discussed. In this paragraph the operationalization of this method is discussed.

The first step of this research is to gather all the names of the drugs runners [...]. All the names of drugs runners that can be found in the police systems, will be put in one document. Within this document there will be a list of names, with their personal information, with their contacts with others and with their actions. All the data are divided into features of drugs runners. These features are put together in one document. These features are selected based on what information is available and based on previous research (Bremmers and van Wijk, 2015). The following features are used:

Socio/demographic features	Possible scores
Gender	Male = 1, Female = 2
Age during first (antecedent)	Number of age
Current Age	Number of age
Official residence	Name of residence
Place of birth	Name of residence
Nationality	Name of country
Criminal record: opium	No = 0 Yes = 1
Criminal record: weapon trade	No = 0 Yes = 1
Criminal record: violence	No = 0 Yes = 1
Criminal record: sexual offence	No = 0 Yes = 1
Criminal record: traffic offence	No = 0 Yes = 1
Criminal record: property crime	No = 0 Yes = 1

The criminal record of drugs runners is divided in 5 categories and below there are examples of offences that fall under these categories:

- Opium: possession, use and trade of hard drugs and soft drugs
- Weapon trade: possession and trading of weapons
- Violence: abuse, intimidation
- Sexual offence: sexual abuse/intimidation
- Traffic offence: Driving too fast, anti-social behaviour in traffic
- Property crime: stealing/violating property

Separate from the above features, are those who specifically focus on the network of drugs runners [...]. With the given information, a network of drugs runners can be visualized. To be able to study the structure of the criminal network of drugs runners, several measurements will be taken into account:

- Density: connectedness of drugs runners
- Centrality: the number of drugs runners, one drugs runner is connected with. There are several centrality measurements. These are degree centrality, closeness centrality and betweenness centrality. To measure closeness centrality, the eigenvector value will be used.
- Cliques: Interconnected groups within the network

Based on these measurements, the structure can be described. Information about the density, centrality and cliques can say something about the roles of drugs runners [...]. For example, if one drugs runner plays a very central part within the network that runner could have a more leading role compared to the others. All the information about the structure of the network is drawn from a software programme called Ucinet. This programme also visualizes the criminal network of drugs runners [...].

As soon as there is a list of all the drugs runners [...], these names can be used for further research next the network analysis.[...].

Because of limited time there were several social connections which are not part of the SNA. These are contact between drugs runners [...] and other criminals, drugs runners who are active in other parts of the Netherlands, adolescents and women. Instead, the available information will be used for document analysis and eventually contacts between drugs runners and others can be discussed based on what is noted in the available information.

The position of the drugs runners within the process of illegal drug trade will be described on the basis of what drugs runners do. The actions of drugs runners will be compared with the model of the process of illegal drugs trade. Based on this comparison, it will become clear in

which part(s) of the process drugs runners belong. They might belong to one specific part or perform tasks throughout the process of illegal drug trade. Below there is an overview of the information that will be used to describe what tasks drugs runners [...], have within the process of illegal drug trade.

5. Results

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, for this thesis I went through the police system in search for information about drugs runners who are active in [...], this chapter will show the results of this search. First of all, socio/demographic features of drugs runners will be discussed in order to see to what extent these features are common. The second part of this chapter will describe to what extent there is a network of drugs runners in [...]. The third paragraph will discuss the way drugs runners work when they try to sell drugs. The fourth and last part of this chapter discusses the position of the drugs runners within the process of illegal drug trade.

5.1 Common Socio/demographic features

In this paragraph the socio/demographic features of the drugs runners in [...] are discussed. This information can be used to see whether or not drugs runners have common features. Combined with the information about social relations between drugs runners, this paragraph can help to understand what criteria are used to form a social connection with each other.

5.1.1 Gender and age

Based on several criteria, a list of names was compiled of drugs runners who are active on [...]. Based on these names, information about these drugs runners was found.

[...]

5.1.2 Place of birth and (un)official residence

[...]

5.1.3 Nationality

[...]

5.1.4 Criminal record (Bluespot Monitor)

Figure 4 show the difference in age between the current age of drugs runners and the age when their criminal records started to build up.

[...]

The table below shows what percentage of drugs runners has been involved in what categories of criminal activities.

[...]

5.1.5 Work Space

[...]

5.1.6 Education and Income of drugs runners

There are only a few drugs runners who have said something about their level of education in interrogations.

[...]

5.1.7 Habitual offenders

Drugs runners are not only involved in drugs running.

[...]

5.1.7 Conclusion

In this paragraph the socio/demographic features of drugs runners were discussed. There are several features which drugs runners seem to have in common.

[...]

5.2 Social connections between drugs runners

This paragraph looks at the social connections between drugs runners in [...] and social connections with other people in [...]. The main question within this thesis is the question if there is a network and of so, what it's structure is. In chapter 3, the terms criminal network and social network have been discussed. A network exist when different people are

connected with each other. The police records have been used to see whether or not there is a network of drugs runners in [...].

Before the possible network of drugs runners is visualized, the ties between both drugs runners and drugs dealers are visualized.

[...]

5.2.1 Subgroups

There are multiple subgroups within the network. How many subgroups are present, depends on what number the minimum size of the subgroup is. In this research the minimum number of 3 persons per subgroup has been used.

[...]

5.2.2 Density

The density measurement ranges from 0 to 1. If the number is 1, then all drugs runners are connected with each other.

[...]

5.2.3 Centrality

As mentioned in chapter 3, there are several centrality measurements. The first one is degree centrality.

[...]

The second centrality measurement is closeness centrality. There are several ways of measuring closeness centrality. In this thesis, the eigenvector is used to measure the closeness centrality. The eigenvector weighs ties according to their centrality. It takes into account the pattern of the entire network.

[...]

The third centrality measurement is betweenness centrality.

[...]

5.2.4 Geodesic distance

Another network measurement is the geodesic distance between drugs runners. The most direct linkages between drugs runners are measured. The value of the geodesic distance tells how many steps there are between two drugs runners. With steps I mean drugs runners. How many connections stand between two drugs runners?

[...]

5.2.5 Networktype

Based on the information about the structure of the network of drugs runners, something can be said as to what type of network it actually is. Looking at the three network types described in chapter three, drugs runners in [...] are involved in an socio-centric network. The network of drugs runners in [...] in itself is closed, based on which type of criminal activities they perform. However they are involved in a larger open system network as a subgroup. There is no hierarchy within the network according to the available data. Looking at the illegal drug trade network, there are indications that drugs runners belong to a chain network instead of an wheel network. They are mainly working for themselves. There are no indications that they are part of a bigger network which is controlled by one or several persons.

5.2.6 Conclusion

This paragraph discussed the social connections between drugs runners. After gathering the data necessary for network analysis, it became clear that drugs runners are within a network with each other. The network analysis shows that the network is somewhat loose. Not all drugs runners know each other.

[...]

5.3 Drugs runners: their way of working

With the help of document analysis, more information is collected to look beyond the structure of the network of drugs runners in [...]. This way, more can be said about the ties between drugs runners.

5.3.1 Roles

[...]

5.3.2 In the car, out of the car

[...]

5.3.3 Mobility

[...]

5.3.4 Collaboration within the network

[...]

5.3.5 Runners and drugs addicts

[...]

5.3.6 Runners and dealers

[...]

5.3.7 Drugs running throughout the year

[...]

5.3.8 Conclusion

[...]

5.4 Process of illegal drug trade

In chapter 1 the definition of drugs runners was discussed. This definition has altered in the last 20 years. While drugs runners were initially not involved in selling the drugs themselves, these days that is exactly what they do. According Bremmers and van Wijk (2011) drugs runners both sell drugs and are involved in drugs trafficking.

After document analysis, it has become clear that this new definition corresponds with the behaviour of drugs runners who are active in [...]. Drugs runners are no longer the contact person between the buyer of drugs and the dealer. They sell the drugs themselves. It is possible that this way they could keep all the profits of selling drugs.

As explained there is a process of illegal drug trade. This process differs per drug type. Drugs runners are mostly busy with selling hard drugs like cocaine and heroin. The production is not in the Netherlands. For the storage, trafficking and selling of drugs, there are different people.

[...]

6. Conclusions

In this chapter, all the question described in chapter 1, are answered. First, all the sub questions are answered after which the main research question will be answered.

6.1 Socio/demographic common features

The first sub-question was: *Do drugs runners in [...] have common socio-demographic features?* The simple answer to this question is yes. Drugs runners do have common socio-demographic features. Based on the results, a profile of a drugs runner could be made.

[...]

However, how a drugs runner is described here does not count for every drugs runner which was part of this research.

Given the many common features between drugs runners, this could indicate that these are criteria for entering the network of drugs runners. In chapter 3, it was already mentioned that cooperation between criminals happens when they have similar backgrounds. These common features seem to confirm this idea.

6.2 Criminal network

The second sub-question is: *To what extent do drugs runners form a criminal network in [...]?*

Drugs runners are socially connected to each other and therefore do form a criminal network in [...].

[...]

6.3 Methods while drugs running

The third sub-question is: *What methods do drugs runners use within the network when they perform their tasks?*

Drugs runners make use of each other and of other people.

[...]

6.4 Phases of illegal drug trade

The fourth sub-question is: *What phases are there in the process of illegal drugs trade?*

There are five phases in the process of illegal drug trade. Chapter 2 focussed mainly on the process of hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin. These drugs are sold mostly by drugs runners. The first phase is the production of drugs. Cocaine and heroin are both produced outside of the Netherlands. The second phase is the importation of drugs. Cocaine and heroin are both imported to the Netherlands via car, train, airplanes and the boats. The third phase is storing these large amounts of drugs somewhere in the Netherlands and distributing them. Most of the time, Rotterdam is used for storage. From this place, either drugs is sold and goes to foreign countries or drugs is sold for the Dutch market. The fourth phase is the transportation of drugs. [...] The fifth and final phase of the process of illegal drug trade is selling the drugs to customers.

The fifth and last sub- question is: *In which phases of the illegal drug trade are those people involved who are active as drugs runner in [...]*?

Drugs runners are busy with finding potential buyers of drugs and selling drugs to them.

[...]

6.5 Main research question

The main research question is: *To what extent do drugs runners who are active in [...] form a criminal network and in which phases of the process of illegal drugs trade are drugs runners involved?*

The main research question is answered in the several sub questions mentioned in the previous paragraphs of this chapter. Drugs runners form a criminal network in [...]. There is a network because drugs runners are socially connected to each other and it is a criminal network because the activities they perform are illegal.

[...]

Drugs runners are involved in the last two phases of the process of illegal drug trade. Drugs runners focus mostly on selling drugs but there is also information which suggests that drugs runners also are involved in drugs trafficking. They might do this to keep control over the products they sell. By doing this on their own, they have to depend less on social contacts which give no guaranties such as contracts within legal entrepreneurship.

7. Recommendations

Chapter 5 discussed the results of this research after drugs runners [...]. Chapter 6 gave answers to the questions which were stated in chapter 1. Based on this information there are several recommendations I would like to discuss in this chapter.

7.1 Young offenders

Many drugs runners started offending the law from a very young age. During their lives they have been in contact with the police many times. In the Netherlands, we have certain ways

when it comes to dealing with very young offenders. But this system seems to be failing. The aim is to get young offenders back on the right track but instead they keep breaking the law. A thorough evaluation of this system is necessary to see how it is possible that these young offenders are still breaking the law at a higher age. Also it might be interesting to see how these young offenders develop throughout their lives to see where it goes wrong and why it keeps going wrong.

7.2 National collaboration on illegal drug trade

Illegal drug trade does not happen just in [...]. Illegal drug trade is a problem in all areas of the Netherlands. Right now, there is a national policy on illegal drug trade. At a local level, further actions are taken against illegal drug trade. But this does not stop illegal drug trade. It just moves illegal drug trade to other places. It might be better to take actions on a national level at the same time, so drugs runners have no place to hide. Examples of actions are area bans which are now being used on a local level. Another example is putting up barriers for drugs runners. The police has to focus on the different phases of illegal drug trade. If each of these phases are disrupted, the other phases cannot take place. For example, if the distribution in Rotterdam is disrupted, drugs runners cannot get the drugs which is used for selling [...]

7.3 Further research

This thesis only is the start of research the concept of drugs runners. So much more can be researched. So much more information is needed to know the place of drugs runners within the illegal drug trade process. Further research can give more insight into the cooperation between drugs runners, the Dutch network of drugs runners and to what extent drugs runners are working in their own or get ordered by others. Right now this still remains unclear. The data which were used for this thesis, gave indications that drugs runners [...], have many social ties with drugs runners who are active elsewhere in the Netherlands. It will be interesting to see to what extent drugs runners are a national network are part of local networks. This might have consequences for the strategy of stopping illegal drug trade. If there is a national network, actions on a national level are needed.

8. Literature

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