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**From White Slaves to Trafficking Survivors**  
Notes on the Trafficking Debate

Annuska Derks  
University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands

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The global flow of money, goods, culture and ideas has been accompanied by a global flow of people. Yet, with increasing migration levels also various exploitative and abusive forms of migration have become more prevalent. Attention for the topic of trafficking in migrants has found so far most resonance within human rights organizations, numerous non-governmental and international organizations, bodies and lobby networks, as well as in sensationalist media. The approaches, definitions and interpretations of trafficking among these different groups and organizations have varied enormously. As a result of the different foci of and associations with trafficking the term has been used interchangeably with slavery, illegal migration and especially the sexual exploitation of women.

In this paper I intend to present a background to the discourse on trafficking. In the first part of the paper I focus on the origins and developments regarding the discussion and definitions of trafficking, which has traditionally been closely related to the discussion about prostitution. In the second part of the paper I pay attention to the global and local features of the present-day trafficking phenomenon, which takes on different forms, fulfills different purposes, includes men as well as women, and is taking place across as well as inside national borders. To conclude, I discuss the ambiguities within the debate about trafficking more generally, thereby relating to the blurred boundaries between common perceptions of trafficking and illegal migration, slavery and prostitution, but also between cultural attitudes and economic needs, coercion and free choice, which also affects trafficking experiences of migrants. Although I will include diverse trafficking patterns worldwide, I have given most thought to trafficking in, from

and to Cambodia as well as trafficking for prostitution, as this is my main basis of experience<sup>1</sup>.

### *Discussing trafficking*

The term ‘traffic’ carries the connotation of transport as well as illicit trading. The term ‘to traffic in something’ can be defined<sup>2</sup> as “to carry on trade, especially of an illegal or improper kind.” What is meant here is the trade in particular kinds of illegal or improper goods, such as drugs, arms or stolen goods. When the term is used in combination with human beings, usually in the progressive form ‘trafficking’, it is commonly associated with slavery, and more specifically with women and girls being sold into prostitution. Though this is only part of the picture, these associations have clear historical precedents.

#### Historical background of the trafficking debate

The common association of trafficking with women and prostitution can be traced back to the origins of the trafficking debate. At the end of the nineteenth century feminist activists like Josephine Butler brought involuntary prostitution into the international picture under the term ‘White Slave Trade’. The term ‘white slave trade’ was derived from the French term ‘Traite des Blanches’, which related to ‘Traite des Noirs’, a term used in the beginning of the nineteenth century for the Negro slave trade. The term ‘white slave trade’ became popular and used in several treaties and laws. However, through its focus on white slaves, it neglected the traffic in people of other races and colors, and

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<sup>1</sup> Examples and ideas presented in the paper are partly taken from or based on the studies I have conducted and written on trafficking from Cambodia to Thailand, from Vietnam to Cambodia and the reintegration of victims of trafficking (see Literature).

<sup>2</sup> Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1992).

disregarded the fact that few victims of trafficking were actually slaves (Bullough and Bullough 1987: p.265).

The movement against the white slave trade grew out of the so-called abolitionist movement, which campaigned in England as well as some other western European countries and the United States against the regulation of prostitution<sup>3</sup>. Regulation of prostitution formed, according to the abolitionists, a threat to civil liberties of (prostitute) women and a sanctioning of male vice. This movement was based strongly on middle-class Christian morals and started out with a battle against the Contagious Disease Prevention Act<sup>4</sup> as well as the regulation of prostitution. Later it also took up child and involuntary prostitution, seeing in the topic of traffic in women and girls a support for their appeal to purify society from the immoral vices connected to prostitution. Their campaigns were strengthened by sensationalist media which took up the topic of traffic in women and girls from, among others England to Belgium and France with “titillating tales of deflowered innocence” (Doezema 1998: p.36). This media attention resulted in a public outrage and an increased awareness of the international traffic in women<sup>5</sup>, even though the stories were actually based on meager evidence regarding the scope of the trafficking phenomenon (Chapkis 1997). Solé (1993) pointed out that there was actually not so much new about the recruitment techniques leading (young) women into prostitution, but that improved transport and transit had made the movement of women in

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<sup>3</sup> Abolition here meant not necessarily the elimination of prostitution, but the elimination of reglementation and tolerated houses for prostitution (Bullough and Bullough 1987: p.262).

<sup>4</sup> A series of Contagious Disease Prevention Acts were designed by the British parliament in the 1860s in order to prevent the spread of venereal diseases. The Acts required (forced) medical inspections of women who were labeled as prostitutes (whether they were one or not) and who, after examination, were given a certificate indicating their freedom from venereal diseases. Infected women could be detained (Bullough and Bullough 1987). Such interventionist practices became also adopted in other European countries (Solé 1993).

prostitution in different countries easier. Solé brought the increased awareness regarding trafficking of women therefore in connection with the migrations waves that were taking place within Europe at that time. These migration waves also caused prostitutes to move in order to respond to the increased demand for sexual services among male migrants in the hope to find a better life elsewhere.

Like movement of people in general also the struggle against the white slave trade became organized on an international level. In 1904 thirteen states<sup>6</sup> attended a meeting held in Paris, resulting in the first international agreement against white slavery. This ‘International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Trade’ aimed to combat the compulsive and abusive procuring of women or girls for immoral purposes abroad. In 1910, the scope of the convention was broadened with the agreement to include the traffic of women and girls within national boundaries (Wijers and Lap Chew 1997: p.20). The agreement bound the contracting parties to punish any person who, “to gratify the passions of others, hired, abducted or enticed for immoral purposes, even with her consent, a woman or girl under twenty years of age, or over that age in case of violence, threats, fraud or any compulsion; notwithstanding that the acts which together constituted the offence were committed in different countries” (United Nations 1959). In 1921, during a meeting held under the auspices of the League of Nations – later the United Nations – the traffic of boys also became included within the convention. In 1933 a new convention was signed in Geneva. Within this International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age the condition of coercion at the

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<sup>5</sup> Initially the movement was concerned with western women trafficked between western European countries and the United States and from these countries to the colonies. (Truong 1990: p.83).

international level was removed, thereby targeting trafficking as leading a woman of any age to another country for immoral purposes, even when it takes place with her consent. Punishable offences under this convention were “the acts of procuring, enticing or leading away, even with her consent, a woman or girl of full age, for immoral purposes to be carried out in another country” (United Nations 1959). Though the traffic or recruitment of persons for prostitution was hereby treated as an offense, the question of the exploitation of prostitution as such was not included.

This changed with the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (Resolution 317), adopted in 1949 by General Assembly of the United Nations. This convention combined and superseded all previous conventions. According to the preamble “prostitution and the accompanying evil of the traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community.” Punishable, under this convention, was any person who to gratify the passion of another 1) procures, entices or leads away, for the purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person; 2) exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person; as well as any person who 3) keeps or manages, or knowingly finances or takes part in the financing of a brothel; 4) knowingly lets or rents a building or other place or any part thereof for the purpose of the prostitution of others. The inclusion of the exploitation of prostitution as such, even with the consent of the woman, was one of the reasons why a

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<sup>6</sup> The original countries were France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Norway and Switzerland. Later also Austria-Hungary, Brazil and the United States adhered to the terms. (Bullough and Bullough 1987: p.360 n.30)

number of states who were party to the preceding conventions did not accede to this convention (Wijers and Lap Chew 1997: p.21).

In a later study of the United Nations (1959) consolidated this abolitionist policy referring to “extensive research” which had indicated that the abolishment of the regulation of prostitution was as a necessary prerequisite to any program of action to combat the traffic persons. This study elaborated that in order to achieve successful results, the abolitionist policy would need to be supplemented by other measures aimed primarily at the maintenance of public order, the prevention of venereal disease, the suppression of the exploitation of the prostitution of others, the prevention of prostitution, and the rehabilitation of persons engaged in prostitution (United Nations 1959: p.9). This viewpoint influenced the discourse on trafficking in women and prostitution for the following decades, though by then the general attention for the traffic in women and prostitution had diminished considerably. A renewed interest in trafficking took place under the influence of the international developments regarding migration flows, the feminist movement, spread of AIDS, child prostitution and sex tourism in the 1980s (Doezema 1998; Wijers and Lap Chew 1997).

#### Controversies in defining trafficking

The increased attention for trafficking is above all reflected in the statements and conventions of international conferences, organizations and bodies. Trafficking “in women and children” (re)appeared on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly and Commission for Human Rights, the World Conference on Human Right in Vienna (1993), the World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), and is included in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW). Also international organizations and bodies like IOM, ILO and UNICEF as well as the EU have taken up the issue. Furthermore, numerous local and international NGOs as well as specific international networks, such as GAATW (Global Alliance Against the Trafficking in Women), CATW (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women) and CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking), are now working on the combat against trafficking. While the attention for the issue of trafficking has grown, so has the number of definitions and interpretations of the phenomenon. In the following I will discuss the most important issues and discrepancies in an attempt to shed light on the underlying views regarding trafficking<sup>7</sup>, and how these are related to the discussion about prostitution, human rights, illegal migration and the different purposes of trafficking.

Since trafficking has traditionally been associated with prostitution, the debate about it is closely related to the debate about commercial sex work in general. A main topic of disagreement is whether trafficking should be defined to include only the abusive procurement practices (coercion) for prostitution, the procurement of prostitutes as such (even with her consent) or whether the recruitment practices and the end-situation, i.e. prostitution, are part of the same problem. The fundamental difference in opinion here, so Doezema, is the question “whether or not a person can choose prostitution as a profession” (1998: p.37), which basically relates to perceptions on force and free choice within sex work.

Within the anti-trafficking movement some support the view that all prostitution is a violation of human rights. Barry, founder of the CATW, stated that “[w]hen the

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<sup>7</sup> Wijers and Lap Chew gave in their book on *Trafficking in Women , Forced Labour and Slavery-like Practices in Marriage, Domestic Labour and Prostitution* a good overview of the developments and themes regarding trafficking definitions among different international organisations and institutions. I have partly based my analysis on this overview.



human being is reduced to a body, objectified to sexually service another, whether or not there is a consent, violation of the human being has taken place” (1995: p.23). In this view, it is irrelevant whether the recruitment was “free” or “forced”, as prostitution for such is never free, but part of the structure of patriarchal domination over female sexuality. Barry considered trafficking as the oldest, most traditional form of procuring for prostitution. Trafficking prevails, according to Barry, especially in rural, poor and pre-industrial societies. It relies on the feudal privatization of women in the family, where wife and children are property of husband. Under the conditions of marital feudalism, traffickers can either buy women from husbands, buy children from parents, fraudulently promise them well-paying jobs or lucrative marriages, or they abduct them (Barry 1995: p.165). The economic disparities between rich and poor states and regions, as well as the power relations between men and women, and rich aristocrats and poor peasants make women in such societies vulnerable to trafficking for prostitution (ibid.: p.175). The form of procurement for prostitution changes, so Barry, with urban and economic development of a country through which eventually neither traditional customs nor overt coercion is necessary to prostitute large populations of women. When a developing country has been targeted for military prostitution or sex tourism, or when the economy is relying on foreign exchange and on immigration of its labor force, trafficking in women eventually gives way to a sex-industrial economic sector (ibid.: p.196-197). This leads women migrating to the cities and, finding no other way of existence, into prostitution. Barry observed that with even higher levels of development, in post-industrial, developed societies, prostitution becomes normalized. Sexual exploitation becomes then individualized to fit the domination of economically independent women (ibid.: p.53).

Thus, prostitution as such is, according to Barry, the foundation of women's sexual exploitation and subordination, and trafficking is the form of procurement for prostitution taking place in societies where women's subordination is based within marital feudalism. This view not only disregards the different contexts of gender relations within so-called pre-industrial societies, but it also ignores the various and discontinuous local developments regarding gender relations and commercial sex work in a globalizing world. Most of all, this view has been criticized for the absence of the recognition of the right to self-determination for women who voluntarily engage in prostitution. Critics of this view, among them GAATW, distinguish between women who chose to enter prostitution and women who were forced, deceived or tricked into prostitution. Yet, such use of the distinction between "free" and "forced" is not limited to the recruitment process as such, but also to the conditions of work. Forced prostitution is then equivalent to forced labor in prostitution (Wijers and Lap Chew 1997: p.30). Such a differentiation between forced or exploitative recruitment practices and forced or exploitative labor in prostitution collides with the popular view that trafficking is a form of slavery (Ohse 1984; Asia Watch 1993).

The distinction between freedom or consent and force or coercion has now become an important and more and more applied elaboration within the discussion on trafficking and prostitution. Within the 1949 UN convention on trafficking and exploitation of prostitution no such distinction is made between forced and voluntary prostitution and initially also not in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as this convention was based, among others, on the 1949 UN convention. Article 6 of the CEDAW convention calls upon all state

parties to “take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.” However, in a later recommendation of CEDAW there is a shift in focus away from a focus on repressive measures to eliminate the practice of prostitution as such to a focus on the prostitute whose rights can be violated (Doezema 1998).

Though the abolitionist viewpoint on prostitution has in the past ten years been replaced by the acceptance of the idea that women have a right to choose, that sex work is a job, in other words that there are women voluntarily entering prostitution, critics like Doezema question the usefulness of the distinction between free and forced prostitution. Such distinction has, so Doezema, led to a dichotomization between forced prostitutes who are children, innocent victims, in need of protection, help, and whose human rights are abused, and the voluntary prostitutes who are seen as the whores and therefore deserve what they get. Various sex workers’ rights activists have therefore dismissed the free and force distinction altogether and argue that the harms of prostitution are actually caused by moral attitudes and their legal consequences (Murray 1998). For them, the context and conditions of sexual labor becomes of paramount concern (Chapkis 1997).

This criticism calls for attention for the rights of women in (sex) work in general. Trafficking has thereby also become more and more linked to the violation of women’s human rights. Within the declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna (1993) it is stated that “[g]ender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated” (United Nations General Assembly 1997). This attention for trafficking as

a violation of human rights is part of a general move from the conceptualization of women's problems solely as a private issue or as violence against women, to the view that such violations should be considered as a violation of human rights (Wijers and Lap Chew 1997: p.31; Doezema 1998). Important in this regard is that by defining trafficking as a violation of human rights, states as the protectors of human rights on their territory and of their citizens, are being held accountable for the combat against trafficking. This accountability is as such not new. States who signed international convention on trafficking and who designed national laws against trafficking were under these terms already accountable for the combat against trafficking. However, the reference to trafficking as a violation of human rights can be seen as an attempt to raise the issue of the responsibility of states regarding the combat against trafficking, as this responsibility has now also been laid down in national and international human rights laws.

Not only the awareness of trafficking as a human rights issue has included the state in the trafficking debate. The association of trafficking with illegal migration, in for example the earlier IOM definitions as well as in statements of several (western) countries, has led to its connection with national boundaries, illegality and criminality. Williams writes that "illegal migrant trafficking is a large and growing industry, facilitated by the ease of travel, corruption or laxity of immigration officials in a significant number of countries, and driven by the asymmetry between the number of people wanting to migrate (for whatever reason) and the restrictions imposed by governments on the number of immigrants legally allowed to enter their countries" (1999: p.2). This connection of trafficking with illegal migration cannot be separated from the issue of national and regional (in the case of the European Union) boundaries.

Migration as such is an age-old phenomenon, but the illegality of it came up especially with the creation of such boundaries and national and regional laws dictating who is illegal and who is not.

From the side of the receiving countries, the issue of trafficking of migrants has, as a consequence, come to be viewed as a potential “national security threat”. As Beare put it, “[t]he imagery is often of floodgates giving way in front of a sea of criminals, as waves of immigrants enter the country” (1999: p.18). As a response countries have sought to solve the problem with rhetorics on the crackdown on illegal migration and quick deportation of illegal aliens (ibid.). Critics of this approach have pointed at the unjust reversal of the problem, when victims of trafficking become criminalized and treated as illegal aliens, whereas the state is viewed as the victim and in need to protect itself against illegal migration movements. Besides, such an approach does not tackle the issue of trafficking in all its facets. Victims of trafficking are not always illegally entering the country of destination, since they might have obtained tourist visas, temporary work permits or legal status as a bride. Moreover, trafficking is not only an international problem, but also takes place within national boundaries, as several studies in Thailand, Cambodia and other countries have indicated.

Connected to the issue of trafficking and illegal migration is the recognition that the trafficking phenomenon is not limited to prostitution. Other forms and purposes of trafficking have become more and more visible. Wijers and Lap Chew claimed that these new manifestations of trafficking predominantly occur in informal, unregulated and unprotected labor sectors that are traditionally, and still, considered women’s work, such as domestic labor, entertainment, but also the commercial marriage market (1997: p.33).

Though this recognition certainly broadens the vision on trafficking, getting away from the necessary connection with prostitution as it has been since the earliest conventions, it still excludes other purposes of trafficking, such as for various forms of labor or begging, as well as male victims of trafficking.

#### Coming to definitions

The different issues that are discussed and associated with trafficking have given rise to varying opinions with regard to how the phenomenon of trafficking should be defined. For example, a Cambodian non-governmental organization described trafficking as “the practice of taking people outside their support structure and rendering them powerless” (CWDA 1996: p.1) Such a broad description of trafficking is, however, difficult to use as it could apply to a variety of practices. GAATW has used a more specific, though still broad definition of trafficking, being “the recruitment and transportation of (a) person(s) within and across national borders, by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of actual or perceived authority arising from a relationship, or deception, in order to subject them to the actual and unlawful power of (an)other person(s).” This definition includes the process of recruitment and transportation, the means of recruitment (violence, abuse, deception) of persons as well as the final circumstance in which they end up after being recruited and transported (often described as slavery-like circumstances) and therefore suggests that in trafficking all three elements can be found.

These were only two examples of possible definitions, while some other approaches have also been discussed above. Wijers and Lap Chew have analyzed in more detail various definitions and issues related to trafficking and developed a definition of trafficking that has come to be accepted among many authors. I find these definitions

very valuable, though I argue for a gender-neutral definition. Wijers and Lap Chew argued that the overwhelming majority of the victims of trafficking are women and that therefore trafficking is in practice not gender neutral. Though I recognize that trafficking affects mostly women, there is evidence of practices of male trafficking and therefore I do not want to exclude beforehand male victims of trafficking in the definition. As such, trafficking in human beings can be defined as “*all acts involved in the recruitment and/or transportation of a person within and across national borders for work or services by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt bondage, deception or other forms of coercion.*” Furthermore, forced labor and slavery-like practices can be defined as “*the extraction of work or services from any person or the appropriation of the legal identity and/or physical person of anyone by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt bondage, deception or other forms of coercion.*”

Important in these definitions is that a distinction is drawn between forced and free recruitment and forced and free labor, thereby getting away from the view that traffic in persons is necessarily a form of slavery. As Wijers and Lap-Chew noted regarding the trafficking of women “[t]rafficking can be a means to bring women in slavery-like situations, but this is not necessarily the case. On the one hand, women can be recruited and transported under conditions of coercion but not end up in a forced/slavery-like situation. On the other hand, women may find themselves in forced labour/slavery-like situations without having been trafficked” (1997: p.37). Besides, the definition acknowledges trafficking across as well as within national boundaries, which means that trafficking cannot simply be associated with illegal migration. Furthermore, the definition

does not bring trafficking in connection with prostitution per se, but with work or services in general.

Crucial in the definition of trafficking is the concept of coercion, which, according to Wijers and Lap-Chew, can take place in variety of forms. A first form of coercion is violence or threat of violence, including deprivation of freedom (of movement, of personal choice). A second form of coercion refers to deception with regard to, amongst other things, working conditions or the nature of the work to be done. A third form of coercion is the abuse of authority or dominant position, which can range from confiscating personal documents in order to place another person in a dependent position to abusing one's dominant social position or natural parental authority or abusing the vulnerable position of persons without legal status. A fourth form of coercion is linked to different kinds of debt bondage, which means pledging the personal services or labour of oneself or another person as a security for debt, if the value of those services or labour as reasonable assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt, or the length and nature of those services or labour are not limited and defined (ibid.: p.38).

This enunciation of forms of coercion might call on one's imagination of 'typical' victims of trafficking, yet, in reality it is much more difficult to define violence, deception, abuse of authority or debt bondage when analyzed within the context of trafficking processes. Trafficking may be defined through certain similar characteristics, but the context and underlying patterns vary between countries and regions as they take place in different locations and cultures, for different purposes and under different economic, political and international conditions.



### *Trafficking: global and local linkages*

In the past decade there has been an increasing awareness of the global dimensions of trafficking. These global dimensions are not new, as the example of the forced migrations in the form of the slave trade in the sixteenth century, and similar practices in other historical epochs and localities reveal (Skrobanek et. al. 1997). However, the structural conditions, the means of transport and communication, and the new interactions and influences between local and global spheres have changed the forms and directions of trafficking. Some hold the view that nowadays migration and the growing business of trafficking takes place mainly from Asia, Africa, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe towards Western Europe, the United States and Japan (Boidi, 1996). Indeed, migration streams tend to flow from less affluent to more affluent countries or region. Yet, these flows are not restricted to the global South-North movements. With rising migration levels, also the number of destination countries is growing and illegal migration and human trafficking are thereby increasingly prevalent.

#### Trafficking and migration

Migration, as well as its exploitative and abusive forms, has often been connected to processes of globalization, which spread money, goods, ideas and people across the globe. Migration and globalization have become intertwined concepts. Getting away from the micro-level view on push and pull factors in migration studies, analyses of migration processes now focus on the structural circumstances leading to different forms of migration. These structural circumstances are created as local units become integrated in the global world economy, leading to the disintegration of the economic, social and cultural systems of local units. The resulting disparities, the economic and social

dislocations, and the international division of labour are conditions under which migration are thought to develop. Though poverty is usually seen as an important stimulus leading increasing numbers of people to seek employment somewhere else in urban areas or even abroad, growing expectations brought about by economic growth and influences of globalization also play an important role. In this framework, migration flows are thus explained in terms of structural economic and political changes in sending and receiving countries or regions, the influence of market economy and labour markets as well as new opportunities and desires provided under processes of globalization. This is furthermore facilitated by chain relations and social networks, or other kinds of economic, political, or military linkages as well as by the improved travel and communication facilities through which migration is stimulated and organized.

The case of Cambodia illustrates more or less the processes described above. The recent development of migration patterns in Cambodia has been strongly related to national changes in relation to international and regional economic, political and military developments and influences. After decades of civil war, dictated ideology and political instability, Cambodia has since the beginning of the 1990's experienced a transition from a closed socialist system to a capitalist open market system, which has created new opportunities, expectations and goals for many Cambodians. It brought economic growth, though this growth did not benefit the whole population. Under influence of poor conditions in the rural areas, as well as the rising opportunities in the urban areas or in more affluent Thailand migration was increasingly chosen to fulfil certain needs and desires. About half of the migrant population within Cambodia are women. These female migrants moved not only as dependents on their husbands or other family-members, but

also as independent migrants in search for employment elsewhere, most often in the sales, service and the growing industrial sectors.

This increased movement of people in search for better employment opportunities has also been accompanied by exploitative and abusive forms of migration. Trafficking in, from and to Cambodia has due to the specific circumstance during the past decade become a topic of concern for governmental, international and national organizations. Attention initially focussed especially on the trafficking of women and girls for commercial sex work. The practice of prostitution, which had been banned under the Khmer Rouge regime and practised sporadically during the 1980's, had experienced an unprecedented growth in the 1990's. This growth was stimulated through the arrival of approximately 20,000 civilian and military personnel during the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992 and 1993. Brothels, bars and nightclubs flourished in Phnom Penh and the major provincial towns. Although the number of prostitutes has somewhat decreased after UNTAC left, studies have indicated that problems related to it, like the number of young girls in prostitution, the number of trafficked women and HIV/AIDS infection rates among prostitutes, have risen.

Almost ten years later, the commercial sex industry forms a non-negligible part of the service sector, catering for a variety of customers, among them local Khmer, overseas Chinese and other business men as well as international tourists. The women working in this service sector serve a demand for commercial sex services in the different categories, but contribute also to the financial gains for the urban-based profiteers who control the commercial sex business and to the possibility to remit funds to their rural-based families

of origin.<sup>8</sup> The women are not only recruited within Cambodia, but also from neighbouring Vietnam, using and abusing existing connections, possibilities and expectations in order to bring Vietnamese women to Cambodia where restrictions regarding prostitution and economic initiatives are less tight. Trafficking is, however, not restricted to commercial sex work and to urban areas in Cambodia, but has, along with other forms of migration, extended to diverse purposes and to more affluent Thailand. The economic boom in this neighboring country led in the 1990's to a growing demand for skilled and especially unskilled laborers. The higher incomes for work in construction, fishery, logging, domestic and other kinds of labor, as well as for prostitution and begging had stimulated illegal and also exploitative forms of labor migration from Cambodia to Thailand.<sup>9</sup> From Thailand trafficking linkages sometimes extended further to third countries in Europe, Australia, the United States or Japan. Most stories, however, focus on the diverse purposes of trafficking to Thailand. In addition to the better known practice of young women trafficked into Thai brothels, tragic stories account of old women and handicapped boys who were trafficked to Thailand to earn money as beggars, without being themselves able to keep any of it. Yet, also men found themselves deceived by recruiters who made them pay high recruitment fees which had to be paid back through hard labour under abusive circumstances in construction or on fishing boats.

This limited and incomplete picture of trafficking in Cambodia shows that trafficking is not limited to one group, sex or ethnicity only. Women and men, young and old are recruited from different regions for different kinds of work and services within and across national boundaries by means of violence, abuse of authority, debt bondage,

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<sup>8</sup> See Muecke (1992) for a similar analysis of prostitution in Thailand.

deception or other means of coercion. Though trafficking affects as such a cross-section of the population, age and especially gender play an important role in the patterns, directions and purposes of trafficking.

### Gender and trafficking

Gender is an important organizing principle in migration. This has been broadly recognized through the analyses of the growing levels of migration among and labour force participation by women. Some migration streams are almost exclusively composed of women, for example migration of domestic workers, certain kinds of entertainers, marriage partners and migration for specific industries. These processes are also connected with the practice of trafficking. Murray (1998) stated that the increasing female migration and labor participation are accompanied by an increasing degree of coercion and exploitation of women due to prevailing systems of sex and gender in sending and receiving countries. The systematic undervaluation of females in terms of property and ability to earn in the market (WEDO 1996) has thereby often been described as one of the root causes of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Williams (1999) argued in similar terms when he analyzed trafficking of women in terms of market dynamics, whereby the supply of women is generated by poverty as well as social and economic dislocation, whereas the demand for their services and work is large enough to generate large profits for the traffickers. Cultural factors encourage thereby, according to Williams, the treatment of women as little more than objects for sexual gratification and provide the underpinnings for the demand side (ibid.: p.154). Generalizations about gender relations and the links to trafficking are, however, difficult to make, for gender

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<sup>9</sup> Several of these forms of labor migration came somewhat to a halt during the economic crisis in Thailand

relations crosscut class, race and ethnic relations. Analyzing gender in connection to individual trafficking experiences should take this broader context into account.

Though attention for the different forms of trafficking around the globe is growing, there is, as far as I can oversee, an under-representation of trafficking studies regarding several regions as well as several forms of trafficking, being those for other purposes than prostitution and those in which males are victims. So far, trafficking in and from Asia has best been documented. Several studies have documented the trafficking of women from the poor regions in Thailand for commercial sex work in Bangkok and other tourist centers. Also Burmese, Laotian and Cambodian women have been trafficked into the commercial sex business in Thailand, being the more affluent neighboring country where also country men work as unskilled laborers in a variety of working situations. From Thailand trafficking links extend further, leading women from Thailand and neighboring countries into commercial sex, entertainment, domestic service or as marriage partners in Japan, Middle Eastern countries, Europe, the United States, as well as Taiwan and Hong Kong. Similar trafficking purposes and directions have affected women from the Philippines, Indonesia and other Asian countries.

Studies about South Asia reported especially about the trafficking of Bangladeshi and Nepalese women into brothels in different cities of India. More difficult recognizable forms of trafficking have been found, for example, in China. National attention for the kidnapping and selling of women in China concerned, according to Biddulph and Cook (1999), mainly the domestic wife trade and here it is difficult to draw a clear line between arranged marriage and trafficking. The increased “kidnapping” of women for marriage purposes is, besides economic disparities and the position women in Chinese society,

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in the late 1990's.

described to be related to the shortage of women in some areas of China due to the one-child policy, which has also been brought in connection with the import of Vietnamese women for marriage, domestic labor or sex work in China.

More recently, there is a growing attention for the trafficking of women from Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union for sexual services in Western Europe. However, only few studies have documented the trafficking in and from Africa or Latin America, though women from these regions have long historical connections been brought into commercial sex work in France, the Netherlands and other countries in Europe (Agisra 1990). Besides, also inside these regions, women and children are reportedly trafficked from the countryside to perform work or services in cities or neighboring countries.

Along with these forms of trafficking where especially women and children are targeted, illegal and exploitative forms of migration of men have created new connections between countries and regions. China has become an important resource country, but also from India, Sri Lanka, Albania, Turkey and other countries migrants try to find employment, income and new experiences elsewhere. In Africa, the flow of illegal migrants has been to the south with South Africa becoming either the final destination or a major transit for those seeking to go elsewhere (Williams 1999: p.2). Although these could in a way all be defined as 'victims of trafficking', there are major differences in the kind and degree of choice the individuals could express before trafficking. Williams (1999) stated that trafficking in women and children overlaps with 'alien trafficking' more generally but has certain distinct characteristics. For the illegal migrants who are smuggled into, for example the United States or Europe, the decision to migrate is usually

voluntarily. Though they might encounter enormous and unexpected hardships, the demand comes, in effect, from the would-be migrants. This is, according to Williams, the other way around when it concerns trafficked women and children, as they are transported against their will in order to serve a demand for cheap or sex labour (ibid: p.146).

My studies showed that it is questionable to make such distinction between ‘voluntary’ male trafficking and ‘forced’ female trafficking, though it is a popular held view that also predominates in Cambodia. In newspapers, magazines and other popular media in Cambodia, there is a general tendency to discuss the issue of trafficking with a focus on the kidnapping or drugging of women in order to force them into prostitution. I found, however, that in practice most women left their homes voluntarily and followed their trafficker with the hope of being able to earn a higher income elsewhere. The typical story is of recruiters, usually female, who visit a village and try to gain the trust of a young woman or girl. The promises of a decent job with a high income somewhere in the city or in Thailand, for many a metaphor of excitement, modernity and pleasure, fosters wishful thinking that there is a way to escape poor living conditions at the countryside. As a young woman trafficked into prostitution commented: “the woman [i.e. recruiter] did not persuade me to leave home. I just met her at the market place, where the bus stops. She asked me where I was going and I told her that I had left home. She said that she could find me a job, so I followed her.”

As in the case of this young woman who left home because of a family conflict, several factors combined with economic factors – which are more than outright poverty – put certain women and girls at risk for being trafficking into prostitution. These can be



summarized as factors related to some way of prior exposure to commercial sex work, weak or unstable family situations and personal characteristics. But most often a combination of several factors cause women to be receptive to being deceived or making the decision (by the woman herself or her mother) to follow a recruiter and to enter prostitution. This indicates that neither structural changes and the patriarchal suppression of women as such, nor individual deviance or choice alone can explain the phenomenon of trafficking. Instead, macro or structural conditions underlying the practice of migration in general and trafficking in particular are closely linked to micro or individual circumstances. This complexity of the phenomenon raises questions regarding the various concepts of coercion. What means deception and where does free choice begin? These are no clear variables, but subject to different interpretations.

#### Recruitment and criminal networks

Individual trafficking experiences are often connected to the various international or global dimensions of migration and trafficking. Yet these global dimensions can work only through local structures, situations and adaptations. This is clearly visible in the recruitment practices and networks that have been observed to further trafficking. Among the recruitment practices used by traffickers are commonly mentioned kidnapping, sale by family and false promises of work (Shannon 1999). In certain countries, such as the Philippines, Russia and the Newly Independent States, the recruitment goes through employment agencies, entertainment companies, or marriage agencies, which advertise as reputable agencies accommodating to the desires and hopes related to work abroad. For the services of these, or other less regularized “travel agents” (Williams 1999), fees have to be paid for the organization of transport, papers and recruitment. These agencies also

provide loans to cover the costs, which need to be paid back from the earnings in the new working situation and lead to a situation of debt-bondage.

In the case of Cambodia, the recruitment of prostitutes, domestic and other kinds of workers in the urban areas or in Thailand has been organized along less regularized and more personalized networks. Often neighbors, friends or family members are involved in bringing women or men from their village to work elsewhere. Besides this direct form of chain migration, recruitment takes place through the mediation of another – ideally – known and trusted person who has the experience and contacts necessary to guide migrants to places where there is a need for workers. Such a person or broker is usually referred to as a *meekcol*. Literally *meekcol* means ‘leader of the wind’, which symbolizes the impermanence and situationality of his or her capacity. *Meekcol* can be seen as a category of individuals who are considered to have certain capacities, knowledge or leadership skills that can be used to organize activities in and for the community, but also for example to recruit people for work elsewhere.

Within the studies I conducted, the term *meekcol* was commonly used to denote those who, after payment of a recruitment fee, guide laborers to Thailand for work in construction, fisheries or factories. This was to a lesser extent also the case for the, usually female, recruiters who convinced young women (and their parents) of the benefits of following her for well-paid work in the city or Thailand. In these cases also the term *neak noam* (guide) or, when it concerned recruitment for commercial sex work, *meebon* (brothel owner) were used to refer to the recruiter or broker. These recruiters responded to would-be migrants needs and desires regarding employment elsewhere, but practices of deception and exploitation by the recruiter as well as the employer are not uncommon.

Many stories actually accounted of the negative experiences with *meekcol* who appeared cheaters and ran off with the recruitment fee, who brought the labor migrants in exploitative working situations or who led young women unwillingly and unknowingly into commercial sex work. A man who had followed a *meekcol* to work in Thailand remarked: “I only went there because I was cheated. I heard it was easy to work and earn money there... But I got only a little money. I worked very hard, I worked without stopping every day. We didn’t even have time to smoke a cigarette, because the employer didn’t allow us to stop. The employer watched us all the time. It was harder work than under Pol Pot time.... I paid 3,000 baht to the *meekcol* to bring me. Then, in the first two months, I didn’t receive money for my work, because the employer cut off 4,200 baht to make me an identity card... I sold my motorbike to go to Thailand and I came back with only a little money to buy some rice and repair the roof.”

This man was not a singular case. Deceptive recruitment practices have spread throughout the country, involving different recruiters targeting different groups of people for different purposes. They target young women and girls for prostitution; old women, handicapped and young children for begging; and men and women from young to middle age for construction and other kinds of work. The recruiters use the poor living conditions as well as the ignorance regarding what to expect in the city or Thailand, the feelings of trust, or other weak conditions in the individual’s personal position to convince people of the advantages of work elsewhere. The hopes, desires, curiosity and examples of those who returned with lots of money make men as well as women, young and old susceptible to the promises of recruiters.

These deceptive and exploitative recruitment and placement processes with regard to these different purposes of trafficking are usually associated with highly organized through well-established criminal networks. Although it is hard to get a real overview of the situation behind trafficking, my studies did not confirm the impression that trafficking in Cambodia worked through such highly organized international criminal networks. There certainly exist links between brothel-owners, employers, authorities and recruiters, who are involved in corrupt and illegal practices on both sides of the border. However, these links often seemed to be based more on a personal, sometimes familial, set of relationships than part of a well-established criminal network. The lax enforcement of laws, corruption and weak state structures make it possible that these relationships can operate mostly without legal consequences for the traffickers involved.

The common association of trafficking with well-established internationally operating criminal groups has also been questioned by other authors studying trafficking in different regions. Bruinsma and Meershoek (1999) wrote that trafficking to the Netherlands shows a diversified picture from loosely organized professionals to organized crime groups. This recognition of a diversification of criminal involvement and organization in trafficking somewhat nuances the picture of an international mafia controlling the trade in people over the world like drugs and weapons, but it does not mean that the practice trafficking has no international criminal dimensions. Shannon (1998) argued that the role of organized crime in the global sex trade is multifaceted and that in many cases the exact functions performed by organized criminal groups remain unclear. There are crime syndicates involved, but they can act independently or in cooperation with other individuals, such as authorities, pimps, and even other mafia

groups. The most often mentioned examples of the involvement of such crime syndicates are the Japanese Yakuza, the Chinese Triad and the Russian mafia.

The patterns of trafficking observed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have often been connected to such criminal syndicates. The political and economic changes after the fall of the Wall in 1989 and the subsequent break-up of the former Soviet Union has created special circumstances under which trafficking could develop. The greater mobility and new economic opportunities has appealed many would-be migrants and made trafficking of especially women from these countries to Europe, Japan and the US a lucrative business for criminal groups and especially the Russian mafia or 'Bratva', brotherhood (Caldwell et. al. 1999). The Russian mafia operates, so Caldwell, in networks arranged along regional or ethnic lines. They have used the weakening of governmental control over the economy and law enforcement after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and their contacts or knowledge of police and security structures for various criminal activities, among which the trafficking of women for the international commercial sex industry. This has now become a lucrative business, since Russian women are in high demand because of their 'exotic' nature and their relative novelty in the sex market (ibid.).

The involvement of criminal groups in commercial sex is usually not limited to the recruitment practices alone. The criminalization of commercial sex work has caused the sex business in many countries to be connected with criminal persons or groups. "Traffickers take advantage of the illegality of commercial sex work and migration, and are able to exert an undue amount of power and control over those seeking political or economic refuge or security" (Kempadoo, 1998: p.17). Of course, this makes person

trafficked for commercial sex work and other forms of labor and services within the informal sectors<sup>10</sup> especially vulnerable to exploitation.

#### Working conditions and slavery-like practices

As has been discussed above, trafficking is not the same as nor does it necessarily lead to situations of forced labor or slavery-like practices. Trafficking and illegal migration can be means to bring individuals coercive and exploitative labor situations, though certainly not the only means. However, the illegality of certain kinds of work or services into which individuals are trafficked, but also the illegality of an individual's status, in the case of illegal migrants, often make exploitation of individuals and their labor possible, and contribute to the difficulty in getting out of such situations. This exploitation of and control over an individual's labor and life are enhanced when the person or relatives of the person are indebted with the trafficker and/or employer. Loans, recruitment fees, costs for transportation and visas are all means through which the labor of victims of trafficking become financially bound to certain employers and labor situations. Though such situations can not immediately be equated with slavery<sup>11</sup>, they can lead to slavery-related practices such as forced labor and debt-bondage. Extreme cases of debt-bondage have been found among Chinese illegal migrants brought to the United States and who are indebted with smuggling gangs for up to 30,000 dollar to be paid back with years of hard labor (Beare 1999).

Debt-bondage is also a "fairly consistent and quite distinct model of trafficking" (Reynolds 1996: p.2) in Cambodia. Reynolds argued that the use of bonded labor to repay

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<sup>10</sup> Trafficking for the purpose of begging is similarly connected to criminal groups and illegality.

a debt incurred either directly by the laborer or by an associate of the laborer was a traditional form of slavery in Cambodia. Osborne noted, however, that this practice has often misinterpreted from the western point of view. He wrote that “Western observers to the traditional world of Southeast Asia seldom understood the difference, for instance, between ‘true’ slaves, condemned to a life of servitude, and those who had voluntarily, but temporarily, given up their freedom in order to meet a debt or other fulfilled obligation” (1995: p.59). Muecke (1992) related this practice to the present situation in which young women are sold into prostitution. She stated that the “historical practice of selling women” can be found in Southeast Asia and provides an important precedent for the current practice whereby adults, predominantly men, sell family members, particularly daughters, for economic gain. Viewed in this way, this practice could be seen as part of a household (survival) strategy. It is, however, debatable to view this practice as a feature of patriarchal structures in which women are devaluated in economic terms. I found that the relatives involved in bringing young women in prostitution were usually mothers, sisters or aunts and that here western perception of sale and ownership do not necessarily apply. As a brothel madam explained: “The parents bring their daughters here, but they do not sell them. They come to borrow my money.... The women usually have worked as a prostitute before. Their parents brought them to different places. When other people come here to search for women they want to buy from me, I do not dare to do that, because the parents of these women trust me.”

The shades of morality and responsibility brought up by this brothel madam, as well as others I interviewed, are interesting. This refers to the role of the brothel madam

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<sup>11</sup> Slavery is, according to the UN Convention on Slavery, “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised, and a slave means a person is

as a trustworthy employer in whose hands parents, usually mothers, left their daughter. Many brothel owners literally spoke of their nurturing role regarding the women in their brothel, using the term *ceñcem* (to nourish, take care), implying a kind of parent-child relationship. Providing food, shelter, clothes and protection create bonds of dependency between the brothel madam and women who work for her. Dependency relations with the employer are especially binding for those who are brought to places where they are unfamiliar with the language, rules, and people. This is not only true for Cambodian prostitutes in Thailand or Vietnamese prostitutes in Cambodia, but also for the old Cambodian women and young (handicapped) children who are brought to Thailand to beg and who are completely dependent on the leader of the begging ring for their own survival. They do not know the city, cannot speak Thai and are often too inexperienced, old or weak to try to escape from their situation. Such situations can last till debts are earned back with enough interest, till the labor of the bonded person does not produce enough earnings anymore, till outside interferences bring a halt to the situation or till individuals themselves manage to escape.

### ***Blurred boundaries***

Trafficking involves forms of coercion and abuses which counter against values of human dignity, human rights, human freedom and self-determination. Especially its common connection with (child) prostitution awakes strong emotional feelings regarding the injustice, immorality and perversity of the phenomenon. However, the cruelty of trafficking does not become more pressing, nor does an understanding of the phenomenon increase through certain biased, sensationalist or distorted views regarding

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such condition or status” (United Nations 1994: p.212).



the trafficking phenomenon. I would like to discuss here some of the ambiguities and blurred boundaries that exist within the trafficking debate regarding its common associations. These blurred boundaries refer not necessarily to the national boundaries within which trafficking takes place or which are crossed, often illegally. Blurred boundaries and ambiguities also exist within the trafficking debate itself, which becomes clear when trying to comprehensively analyse the phenomenon in relation to the debate about prostitution, slavery-like practices and illegal migration, but also regarding issues of choice versus coercion and the impact of certain cultural attitudes and economic conditions on trafficking experiences.

Trafficking is not an isolated phenomenon, but is related to forms of abuse and exploitation that are diverse and affect not only individuals and families, but also sending and receiving regions and societies more generally. The image is often of desperate people from poor regions in developing countries who see no other way to repay a debt or to relieve poverty than by following recruiters who lead them in exploitative working situations in more affluent countries or regions. Yet, not only dire economic needs, but maybe even more so economic desires fueled by the global spread of images of wealth, modernity and beauty contribute to this abusive movement of people for work or services. The gendered labor market and cultural values concerning the role of women and certain patriarchal dominant structures are thought to make women especially easy targets of trafficking. Muecke (1992) added to this another dimension when she wrote about a 'cultural mandate' influencing young Thai women's lot in migrant decisions. This 'cultural mandate' loads daughters with a responsibility in contributing to family

income and could therefore also be considered to be a contributing factor to the trafficking of young women in, amongst others, commercial sex work.

The role of these economic and cultural conditions has been analyzed in relation to the practice of trafficking with different emphases. Yet, though existing economic inequalities between sending and receiving regions as well as certain cultural attitudes might account for some of the underlying factors causing people to be trafficked into situations of abuse and exploitation, neither economic factors nor cultural values alone can explain the diverse forms, directions and purposes of trafficking. It is difficult to speak of customs or structural relations between specific cultural traits or values regarding economic responsibilities and trafficking. Socio-cultural aspects are not in themselves responsible for the existence of trafficking and the problem lies therefore not within the cultural traits and values itself, but more in the abuse of these traits and values by those who profit from it. The role of economic and cultural factors in trafficking practices therefore also need to be considered in connection with the available options regarding earning an income, possibilities to migrate and choosing between alternatives.

The issue of choice is here an ambiguous one. It assumes to be the opposite of concepts of coercion, force, violence and deception which define trafficking. The ambiguity of choice versus coercion is within the trafficking discussion especially revealing when it concerns commercial sex work. To what extent is a free choice of someone to enter prostitution forced by circumstances? And why is this issue of choice not raised in a similar way when it concerns domestic, factory or other kinds of labor? In an earlier report I have used the distinction between voluntary, bonded and involuntary ways of entering prostitution. Such distinction might reveal somewhat the various ways

and degrees of choice concerning the way women become involved in commercial sex work, thereby distinguishing between various forms of trafficking for prostitution as opposed to voluntary prostitution. Yet, such distinction is in reality not easy to make and is usually not made when it concerns other kinds of work. This shows somewhat the uneasy valuation of sex work, and leads it to be, more than any other kind of work, associated with trafficking.

As I have pointed out before, critics of the free versus forced distinction regarding women in the commercial sex business have argued that such distinction can easily lead to a simple dichotomization between those who are poor victims of trafficking and others who are prostitutes by nature. As Doezema (1998: p.47) noted “[c]laiming that prostitution could be a choice was a major step. Yet now, as old myths are being given new impetus under the guise of accepting choice, it is time to reconsider the usefulness of “choice” versus “force” as the model of sex workers’ experience.” Getting away from the dichotomy between the victims who were forced or deceived into commercial sex work and the whores who chose this work and therefore deserve what they get, Murray argued to acknowledge that “[s]ex work is diverse and context-specific, related to the combination of local conditions and the forces of economic globalization, the AIDS discourse and legislation which creates the space for exploitation and violence by criminalizing prostitutes and restricting travel” (1998: p.52).

The diverse forms of exploitation and abuse that exist in various categories of work, including sex work, thus need to be analyzed within the broader context of economic and social change influenced by processes of globalization. Truong (1990) wrote about an increase in the use of violence to locate and control sexual labor, as a

consequence of the industrial production of sexual services, which produce a proliferation of commoditized pleasure and eroticism and requires a continuous supply of sexual labor. But this location and control of female labor is not limited to commercial sex work alone. A general feminization of labor and labor supply (Sassen 1998) has made the option of migration more relevant for women in diverse regions around the globe. Migration, and the exploitative forms of it in the form of trafficking is thereby related to individual choices regarding practice or consumption, but also to economic structures, labor relations and the ethics of sexual and other kinds of labor in different societies. Of course, such structures and relations affect men as well as women. Within the trafficking debate there is, however, clear focus on women who are considered to be most vulnerable to trafficking under certain patriarchal and economic systems. Seen in the broader context such victimization does, as also Wijers stressed, not comply with the reality of women's lives. "On the contrary, a great many of the women who become a victim of trafficking end up in this position because they do not want to accept the limitations of their situation, because they are enterprising, courageous and willing to take initiatives to improve their living conditions and those of their families. But somewhere in the process they get trapped" (1998: p.77).

In the studies I conducted, I found that it is not always easy to draw a clear line between those who were trapped, i.e. trafficked, and those who voluntarily choose to follow a recruiter or to go on their own initiative. Either way, the working and living conditions in which they ended up varied between, at best, good pay, freedom of movement and good treatment, to, at worst, slavery-like circumstances and bonded labour situations. This is why several authors have argued for a focus on the general

empowerment of migrant women – and men – in labor situations and especially in the commercial sex industry, instead of victimizing those who were trafficked into slavery-like conditions. Chapkis noted that “[t]hose who are enslaved must be made free either to leave the trade or to join those who are “merely” exploited in demanding better wages, safer working conditions, and greater control over the labor process.” (1997: p.57).

This is, however, still not the reality, since those who did end up in exploitative and abusive labor situations are not free to leave. Getting out is not easy and, paradoxically, not necessarily perceived to be advantageous. In the case of illegal migrants there is the threat of deportation. Though receiving countries and regions partly profit from the cheap labor illegal migrants provide, they are at the same time concerned with the illegal, criminal and social consequences of the traffic in human beings. Considered to be “undesirable aliens” (Wijers 1998), receiving countries are quick to expell migrants who were trafficked without having legal resources to decriminalize their position and bring the recruiters, employment and entertainment agencies, or others involved in (organized) trafficking to justice. In various ways, such situation symbolizes and synthesizes a loss, for those who were trafficked internationally, but also for those trafficked within national boundaries. It does not take away the debts and might even increase them, but it also means a disappointment of own and familial expectations regarding financial or social benefits (Boidi 1996).

The effects of trafficking experiences are thus multifold and are related to the perceptions regarding the trafficked person, male or female, from the point of view of his or her family, and the sending and receiving countries. Instead of perceiving trafficked persons as illegal aliens, criminals, or as victims, there is now a call within the anti-

trafficking debate for understanding those who come out of such situations as ‘trafficking survivors’. For these individual ‘survivors’ of trafficking it is above all important to regain control over their lives (Wijers 1998). This can take place in various ways. The most widely promoted way is, as mentioned above, bringing the ‘survivors’ of trafficking back to the country and back to the place and family of origin, which often means back to the situation from which they were trafficked in the first place. This kind of ‘reintegration’ is, however, not always easy or desirable. It does not entail a simple reunification or re-incorporation of an individual in a family or a society, as it also requires a great deal of re-adaptation to a social situation, to certain kinds of work, to a certain lifestyle and certain behavioral codes. The extent to which an individual coming out of a trafficked situation can, wants to or is allowed to re-adapt will have a major influence on the reintegration process. This is also related to the kinds and degree of choice individuals had before being trafficked and the purpose and situation in which they were trafficked.

In the studies on Cambodia, I found that in several cases individuals who were reintegrated in their family preferred to leave as soon as possible again, after they found life and work in the village too hard and boring while few economic benefits were to be gained. This was also related to their economic, health, social and psychological situation, which affect the way they see themselves and are viewed by others. From the point of view of the individual, processes of reintegration can be influenced by feelings of shame and low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life and unfulfilled responsibilities regarding economic contributions for the family. From the point of view of the family, considerations regarding family relations, family honor, but also expectations regarding

economic contributions play an important role. The point of view of the larger social environment is related to concerns regarding bad or modern influences, incorrect behavior and contagion, which can lead to gossip and social stigmatization. External support for reintegration might be helpful for relieving some of the economic, health or even social problems. However, not all factors influencing the reintegration can be controlled through such external support, especially when it is not adapted to individual circumstances. Most importantly, ‘survivors’ of trafficking themselves need to be able to make a choice on their own behalf, something not all were able to do in the same way or degree before being trafficked.

### ***Conclusion***

As I have tried to make clear, it is hard to make generalizations about the causes, patterns, purposes and consequences of trafficking, as the practice takes place in different contexts and implicates in various degrees issues of criminality and illegality, migration, and exploitation. The involvement of diverse socio-cultural, ethical, economic, juridical and global factors add to the complexity of the trafficking phenomenon. The purpose of this paper was to give some, though limited, overview of this complexity, referring thereby to the blurred boundaries between trafficking and the diverse related issues. I pointed out that trafficking is not about the boundaries between states, about a certain type of work or about enslavement as such. Trafficking is about force, coercion, deception and exploitation of certain circumstances within the recruitment and transportation of persons for different purposes, which may be related to, though not necessarily, exploitation of labor in general. A comprehensive analysis of the practice of trafficking in migrants should, therefore, take into account this complexity and maintain

an inclusive approach towards the different features, manifestations, and patterns of trafficking that have developed within the interplay of global and local processes.



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