Fixing the Disjuncture, Inverting the Drift: Decolonizing Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

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During the past sixteen years, since the 'Trafficking Protocol' entered into force in 2003, a dramatic escalation of research, writing, debating, and practice in the realm of human trafficking and modern slavery has occurred. While human trafficking and modern slavery belong to two distinct genealogies (Allain, 2018; Lazzarino, 2015; O'Connell Davidson, 2017), they are nonetheless frequently used as synonyms to refer to an ample array of conditions of human-to-human exploitation and dependency. Significantly, around these two terminologies, complex local, national, and international apparatuses have evolved. These apparatuses - devoted to identifying, preventing, and ultimately eliminating exploitation - involve experts, stakeholders, and social actors. As a re-elaboration and reflection on the contributions to an international symposium on human trafficking[1], this article makes two consecutive steps in modern slavery studies. The first step is a snapshot compilation of the complexity of problems involved in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery. I concentrate this discourse under two pillars, disjuncture and drift, which offer images of the often detrimental effects, as well as the equally negative "ineffectiveness" (Bravo, 2017), of many anti-slavery apparatuses. Secondly, this article envisions a walkable avenue for a decolonization of the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery inasmuch as this discourse has been monopolized by the center (referring to a few powerful countries of the global north). Albeit all the speakers at the symposium offered very critical views towards the existing anti-slavery apparatuses, they also pointed, more or less explicitly, to routes of improvement for fairer ways of conceptualizing and assisting victims and survivors of human exploitation. This article wants to

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[1] The international symposium "Victims of human trafficking: a multidisciplinary problematization of a category" was held at the University College London on June 7th 2017. The event was organized by Dr Runa Lazzarino and supported by the Institute of Advanced Studies of UCL. More details of the symposium can be accessed here. Full programme still available here. This article mostly builds on those talks for which the speakers have kindly shared their conference drafts. These are, in alphabetical order: Ayesha Ahmad, Alice Bellagamba, Karen Bravo, Mike Emberson, and Carole Murphy.

echo those routes of hope. Emphasis is placed onto the different voices of the key actors involved in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery (i.e., the voice of the states, their legislations and policies; the historical legacy of slavery and the changing, controversial use of terminologies; both the statutory and the non-governmental practices of assistance along with the voice of frontline officers). Significantly, all the speakers taking part in the symposium, along with a rising corpus of literature (Mai, 2018; Nicholson, Dang, & Trodd, 2018; Sukach, Gonzalez, & Pickens, 2018), gave voice to those who have experienced exploitation and violence, in their personal or collective history, or both, who were assigned to the category of 'victim' or 'survivor' or *tout court* 'slave', and to those receiving assistance, or waiting to receive it, or refusing to receive both labels and assistance. It is precisely via a plurality of voices that some of the most relevant problems of the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery and its operational apparatuses should be addressed. Accordingly, this piece identifies three overarching themes stemming from the set of presentations given at the conference, each of which highlights the voice of a group of stakeholders.

The first theme covers anti-slavery and trafficking languages, rhetoric and representation, addressing how the term slavery—in the current Western-centric, global discourse—collide with how post-abolitionist vernacular terms for slave are signified and used (Bellagamba, 2017). Emphasis is here on the role played by the states and their policies and legislations, as well as that played by larger intergovernmental and non-governmental organs, in the way they represent contemporary slavery and how they fight it (Bravo, 2017, also Balgamwalla, 2016). The second theme focuses on outcomes of laws and policies once implemented and turned into practice. Post-slavery assistance from a practitioner's perspective (Emberson, 2017) was explored as were survivors' narratives (Murphy, 2017). Survivors' experiences occupy center stage of the third theme which emerged from contributions addressing challenges faced by the vulnerable and exploited, including during migratory journeys (Ahmad, 2017) and while waiting decisions on alien status (i.e., modern slave or illegal worker) (Murphy, 2017). Gender-based violence (GBV) and mental suffering, stigma and isolation are addressed, demonstrating how these are determined and perpetuated by unaddressed configurations of "structural violence and epistemic injustice" (Ahmad, 2017).

From Definitions towards Experience-Near Analyses

While governments, organizations, and activists oscillate between the use of 'human trafficking', 'modern slavery', 'servitude', and 'forced labor', the academic world is engaged in ongoing explanatory efforts and critical analyses of

these terms and approaches (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015; Nicholson et al., 2018; Patterson & Zhuo, 2018; Stoyanova, 2017). A continuing debate surrounds the meaning of the terms modern slavery and human trafficking as well as the relationship between them (UNODC, 2016). Modern slavery is linked to the imaginary of predominantly male transatlantic chattel slavery and to the history of its legal abolition (Bravo, 2011; Bunting & Quirk, 2017). However, such link between old and new slaveries, and their respective abolitionist movements, is far from being straightforward (Allain & Bales, 2012; Bales, 1999; Patterson, 2012; Quirk, 2011; Trodd, 2018). The main steps of the abolition of slavery marked a definitional expansion of what could be considered as slavery (Quirk, 2011). 'Modern slavery' seems to represent the peak of such expansion, since the term is now used to refer to a large array of forms of human exploitation, further stretching the definition contained in the last international convention on slavery of 1956.

Human trafficking dominated the legislative, humanitarian, and media landscapes alike since the adoption of the UNODC Additional Protocol on Trafficking in Persons in 2000 (United Nations, 2000). The 'Trafficking Protocol' special attention to women and children, and to human mobility, is attributed to specific historical and political contexts. On the one hand, the 'Trafficking Protocol' is in continuity with the anti-prostitution women traffic campaign which arose in the late nineteenth century and resulted in several agreements around white slave traffic (starting with the *International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic* signed in 1904, e.g., Doezema, 2010; Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2012). On the other hand, the protocol preoccupation with the mobility phase of human exploitation must be examined against the backdrop of a growing international concern with irregular migration and international terrorism (Anderson, 2008; Aradau, 2008; Haynes, 2005). From 1949 (when the last UN convention on women traffic was signed) to 2000 (the year of the Trafficking Protocol) sex work and trafficking were addressed in several UN resolutions and declarations (Doezema, 1998). Prior to its adoption, the 2000 UN definition of human trafficking went through a long process of conflictual negotiations between the neo-abolitionist anti-prostitution lobby along with governments' anti-migration securitarian agenda v. radical feminists and groups promoting migrants' rights (e.g., Lobasz, 2009). The resulting comprehensive definition of human trafficking[2] has not dispelled terminological ambiguities and practical misuses. Both semantically and practically, victims of human trafficking often intermingle with

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[2] "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs" (UNODC, 2000).

and may be indistinguishable from: migrant sex-workers; smuggled, undocumented migrants and humanitarian migrants; victims of trauma, sexual abuse and domestic violence; victims of slavery, forced labor and debt bondage; victims of human/child/women rights. These are just some of the categories along which victims of human trafficking are studied, instrumentalized, un/assisted, criminalized, and stigmatized. The talks in the symposium all demonstrated how the boundaries of the category of 'victims of trafficking' can be instrumentally blurred or impassable.

During the eighteen and nineteen centuries several provisions and international instruments addressed the issue of slavery, slave trade and related institutions (see e.g. Bassiouni, 1990, pp. 453–454). Indeed, "…no human right abuse has resulted in more formal international treaties than slavery" (Welch, 2009, p. 72). The first, most important of these treaties is the 1926 *Slavery Convention* of the League of Nations[3], which was also the peak period of political strategies during which the European powers attempted to establish legislation that would not intrude upon various forms of human bondages occurring on colonial soil (Allain, 2008; Miers, 2003, pp. 121–130; Quirk, 2011). Providing a definition which remains valid in international law, article 1(a) of the 1926 convention defines slavery as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised". This definition is largely seen as applicable to 'classic' slavery (i.e., chattel slavery) (Allain, 2009; Quirk, 2011). Expanding on this definition, the UN 1956 *Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery*, the *Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery* placed "on the same political and legal footing as chattel slavery" four practices: bonded labour, serfdom, servile marriage and the transfer of children for the purpose of exploitation (Gallagher, 2009, p. 802; Quirk, 2008, pp. 543–544). Eventually, in 2012, the Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines—written by a group of experts mainly based at universities in the UK and US—attempted to establish an agreed interpretation of the 1926 definition. The Guidelines reinforced the 'property paradigm' where possession becomes the core element, able to match "a legal reading of ownership and the factual circumstances of contemporary enslavement" (Allain & Bales, 2012, p. 6) . From a political and rhetorical (but not legal) standpoint, the definition of slavery has continued to expand with new political and economic exigencies (Miers, 2003). Unlike human trafficking, modern slavery is not a legal term used in international provisions (Allain, 2017; UNODC, 2016), however the use of this expression seems to be gaining momentum. Together with the inclusion of a reference to modern slavery in the UN

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[3] For a synthesis of the evolution of the international instruments for the abolition of slave trade and slavery, prior to the 1926 Slavery Convention and starting from the 1815 Declaration Relative to the Universal Abolition of the Slave Trade of the Congress of Vienna, see Bassiouni, 1990, pp. 459–466.

Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 epitomizes the current trend towards "the new moralistic policy frame" of modern slavery (Broad & Turnbull, 2018). The UK Act is the first piece of domestic legislation using the term modern slavery, only recently followed by Australia which passed a Modern Slavery Act in November 2018. In the British provision, "slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour" and "human trafficking" remain separated, and referred to as per the international definitions noted above.

Building on these genealogies and debates, this article points to the implications of the economic and political factors underpinning the fluid definitions of human trafficking and modern slavery for millions of people struggling in some form of unfreedom. While acknowledging definitional vicissitudes is important, this piece calls for a move beyond definitional dispute by valuing substantive, experience-near analyses. The contributions at the symposium spoke to and from the center (i.e., the global north), particularly the UK, to set in motion a decolonization of the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery where the voices of those affected are effectively heard to inform definitions, legal parameters, and practices of assistance. With 'decolonization' here I refer to a spectrum of approaches and actions whereby the center would cease to be the locus of production of 'truth'—that is knowledge informing practices. I argue that a critique which rises from the very heart of the 'empire' can be an innovative, effective way to defuse the production of concepts, language, legal framework, and so on, precisely there where they originate.

At the Center of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery: A Focus on the UK

The political role of the center in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery is well-established. For instance, a set of literature has criticized the cumbersome role—in a neo-abolitionist sense—of the US in the global fight against human trafficking and modern slavery. The 2000 *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* and the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports, with their attached system of tiers and sanctions, have been at the center of the debate. The reliability of these reports, especially in the determination of countries deserving sanctions, is dubious and biased, so too is the efficacy of the anti-trafficking grants (among many: Caraway, 2005; Kapstein, 2006; Mahdavi, 2011; Wooditch, 2011, pp. 476–477). The TIP reports have neither increased anti-trafficking initiatives overall nor served to guide grants (GAATW, 2007, p. 235; Wooditch, 2011, pp. 487–488). However, tiers and sanctions have placed the US in the role of "global sheriff" (Chuang, 2006b), with the effect of imposing worldwide an anti-trafficking policy conflated with US and global north's political interests and ideologies, and based on considerations frequently in conflict with trafficking data (Agustín, 2007;

Gallagher, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2003). Reasonably, the ratification of the Trafficking Protocol on behalf of some governments is suspected due to economic and political reasons, rather than humanitarian commitment. In the same vein, governments can provide false information, or start spectacular anti-trafficking measures as a façade, in order to obtain US funds and favors (Haynes, 2005; Kempadoo, 2005).

As already mentioned, this article originated from an international, multidisciplinary symposium held in London which aimed at discussing the category of victim of human trafficking and modern slavery. In terms of languages, policies and interventions, human trafficking and modern slavery unequivocally originated in the global north. Accordingly, echoing the voices of that symposium, this article speaks from and to the *center* of the contemporary discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery. In particular, while it can be argued that human trafficking as a discourse was given shape and steered by the US, the UK *Modern Slavery Act* 2015 has established the UK as the leading country in the current shift towards the modern slavery paradigm. Not only has the US and UK been crucial in determining contemporary anti-trafficking and slavery apparatuses, but also—it is worth remembering—they play fundamental roles in anti-trafficking humanitarian interventions, reception of migrants and asylum seekers, and, more broadly, the history of slavery and its legal abolition. While convinced that the ultimate aim must be to eradicate any center v. periphery opposition which too closely mirrors post-colonial arrangements, I also believe that more effort must be devoted to understanding and changing what happens at the center. The principal direction is to dismantle monopoly in knowledge production and practices starting off from where it is rises, and build a participatory system where power and resources are redistributed, and a plurality of voices and interests are respected.

The voices animating the symposium, as well this article, work in the direction of decolonizing the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery, with a direct and indirect focus on the UK where the first piece of legislation making use of 'modern slavery' was adopted. Again, it is via the variety of angles, positioning, and methodologies, characterizing the presentations at the symposium, that we can appreciate the unwieldy role of the UK in contemporary trafficking and slavery discourse. One decolonizing way, we argue, is letting vulnerable migrants and workers speak. To give voice to survivors is only a preliminary step to pave the way for them to decide what to do with their own voice – either to speak or be silent – and either to take an active role in the production of apparatuses around their assistance, or not. In the presentations by McIlwaine (McIlwaine, 2017) and Ahmad (2017), for example, the experience vulnerable migrants "subjected to cross-cultural forms of gender-based violence and healthcare experience"

illustrates challenges for host countries' national health systems in adequately meeting the mental health needs of this population, as well as promoting their recovery and reintegration.

The voice of female asylum seekers in the UK is at the center of Murphy's study and speech (Murphy, 2017, 2018). As a criminologist, the author delineates a number of factors in the asylum-seeking process (e.g., poor decision-making, detention-like conditions, lack of training) which perpetuate and potentially increase the mental and social suffering of those awaiting decisions on their legal identity and status. Murphy critically frames her discussion within the friction between *Immigration Policy* and the *Modern Slavery Act*, and how this is reflected in the UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM). This friction emerged as crucial in the presentations by McIlwaine (2017) and Emberson (2017) too, who relied on personal experience to interpret the fundamentally unfair system of reception and assistance to potential victims of human trafficking, and irregular migrants more broadly. Emberson offered an original interpretation of UK migration policies and practices of un-assistance for migrants reaching his country, analyzing the creeping work of prejudicial assumptions and fears which determine unethical hierarchies in treatment and aid (see also Balch, 2016).

Although the UK is not the context of study of other works, Britain remains a leading state actor in the anti-modern slavery language and policy perspectives presented in their work. Bravo (2017), echoed by Dottridge's introductory speech (Dottridge, 2017), attacked the blatant dishonesty and ineffectiveness particularly of those states which adopt strong rhetorical "anti-'slavery'" positions—such the UK—but do not want to address the 'whys' upstream of human exploitation, while having major responsibilities in current world order of inequality. In fieldwork conducted by Bellagamba and her research team[4], the global modern slavery language appears to clash with the vernacular terms for slave which colonial abolitions "did not sweep away" (Bellagamba, 2017). The anthropologists involved in this research project show, for example, that in the Highlands of Madagascar and the Kolda Region of Senegal, people's reluctance to be described as the 'new, trafficked slaves' is coupled by the adoption of anti-trafficking measures which turn to be de facto detrimental for many migrant workers. A double disjuncture therefore applies at the level of social identity, and of people's life projects in pursuant of better conditions.

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[4] The findings presented by Bellagamba (PI) stemmed from research conducted by a team of anthropologists in the framework of the ERC project 'Shadows of Slavery in West Africa and Beyond. A Historical Anthropology' (2013-2018).

Disjuncture and Drift

Two images emerge from the set of presentations at the symposium, which effectively characterize two problematic pillars in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery. Disjuncture refers to the gap between the "grassroots experience and sensibilities" of the more vulnerable and the "anti-trafficking/anti-slavery discourse" (Bellagamba, 2017), whereas drift indicates the structural lability of terminologies, people's life projects, and policies and practices, which is instrumentalized and managed by the center. All contributions spoke to these two fundamental, problematic features, which are transversal to the three themes I have identified and that I discuss in this piece: rhetoric and terminologies; policies and practices; and experiences of the exploited.

The definition of human trafficking of the UNODC additional 'Trafficking Protocol' was the outcome of mainly informal and ideological battles led by two coalitions: one defending migrants' and sex workers' rights (GAATW), and the other anti-prostitution abolitionists (CATW) backed by statutory agendas of borders' protection (Doezema, 2010, p. 114). The ideological influence on the Protocol has had relevant consequences on how it has been implemented via governmental policies and non-governmental activities (Ditmore, 2012; Doezema, 2002, 2005; Raymond, 2002; Saunders, 2005; Sullivan, 2003). The final version of the Protocol was substantially a compromise reached by allowing the definition of human trafficking to be ambiguous enough to accept opposite interpretations, in particular regarding prostitution and the exact meaning to be attributed to 'sexual exploitation', 'abuse of power' and 'position of vulnerability' (Chuang, 2006a; Doezema, 2010, pp. 146–169; Jordan, 2002).

A similar rationale can be said to apply to the classic definition of slavery, as per the expressions 'any or all of the powers', 'conditions analogous to', and 'slavery in all its forms' (Allain, 2009; Quirk, 2011). Finally, it is legitimate to maintain that the same kind of observations can be formulated with respect to the UK domestic legislation which largely echoes the international provisions. To attempt a theoretical synthesis, the ambiguity of these terms is rooted in the fact that they refer to a continuum of experiences from one extreme of coercion and passivity to the opposite extreme of freedom and self-determination (for instance, Anderson & O'Connell Davidson, 2003; Anker & Van Liempt, 2012, pp. 1–14; Grewcock, 2003; O'Connell Davidson, 2006, 2010, 2015). They also refer to the complexity of experiences characterizing the either sedentary or mobile life of those at the margin, such as the descendants of slaves in Africa (Bellagamba, 2017), the migrants fleeing conflict settings (Ahmad, 2017) and 'cultures of exploitation'—as I call them— and the victims of trafficking seeking asylum (as in

Murphy 2017). The inherent ambiguity of all broad definitions, the ideological and political interests charging human trafficking and modern slavery, the unwieldy complexity of experiences of those falling into, or aside, the category of victim or survivor all contribute to a disjuncture between anti-slavery policies and peoples' feelings and needs.

The fundamental disjuncture between anti-slavery languages and policies, on the one hand, and the experiences and needs of the exploited people on the other hand, transversally emerges from all the presentation. This disjuncture applies at the level of prevention of discriminatory and exploitative conditions in both origin and destination countries; in the processes of displacements during which trafficked and vulnerable migrants—fleeing from contexts of conflict, poverty, and abuse—go through a number of "spaces of mobility" which are often unprepared to address their needs (Ahmad, 2017; McIlwaine, 2017); and in the systems of reception and assistance in source, transit and destination countries which determine the status and consequent eligibility of residence or assistance of vulnerable workers and migrants. The fundamental disjuncture between policies and people is chiefly attributable to the contradiction between declared and actual interests of the states. Such contradiction has two main interlinked consequences. First, it results in dishonest and ineffective efforts to combat what states rhetorically call slavery: "the dishonesty and ineffectiveness of state efforts stem from collective failure (or refusal) to acknowledge conceptually, rhetorically, and in policy implementation the *complexity* of the origins and nature of the forms of contemporary exploitation" (Bravo, 2017, my italics). Within this framework, as long as the structural foundations of contemporary exploitation are not targeted, the 'vulnerability trap' of millions of people around the globe will not be dismantled (Lazzarino, under review).

The second consequence of the fundamental disjuncture between statutory rhetoric and practices has ultimately to do with the dilemma for liberal democracies between the protection of their boundaries, resources, and identity in an era of intense migration flows and the observance of the principles of human rights' protection (McIlwaine, 2017; Murphy 2017). As noted with respect to the UK, this unsolved dilemma is epitomized by the clash between immigration policies and pieces of legislation devoted to protecting vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers. The politicized "hidden agendas" of the states determine a "classification of those in need as deserving or undeserving", following "hierarchies of sympathy" in delivering assistance, assigning asylum and right to reside (Emberson, 2017).

During the 1990s, the incentive of a new provision in the realm of human trafficking rose from the necessity of having a law enforcement instrument in a moment of growing concern with illegal migration, international criminality, and

terrorism (e.g., Quirk, 2011). This boundary crisis was accompanied by a growing xenophobia "casting the 'Other' as a threat primarily to the security of the (First World) nation-state" (Kapur, 2012, p. 26; also Ausserer, 2011; Berman, 2003; Kempadoo, 2012; Wijers & Doorninck van, 2010). As such, the Trafficking Protocol is the first international agreement around a legal definition of trafficking (e.g., Gallagher, 2009). The provision was indeed preceded by the move of human trafficking from UN human rights area to the area dealing with drugs and crime (e.g., also (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2015). That relatively recent shift in paradigm seems to be giving way to another shift: that of an increasingly rhetorical, political and legal adoption of a 'modern slavery' terminology. As seen, this shift seems to be captained by the UK and driven by the desire to forge what was before the anti-trafficking fight into an all comprehensive crusade against *all* contemporary forms of human-to-human exploitation. These two important paradigmatic shifts informed the discussions during the symposium. They also play a major role in shaping the second image I have chosen – evoked by the talks at the conference – to represent a major issue in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery: drift.

'Drift' encapsulates an important feature of the discourse of modern slavery and human trafficking. With the image of drift I refer to movements and shifts which are externally manipulated to appeal to others' interests, events, and configurations. In synthesis, we conceive drift as Western-led change which coincides with mainstream history tout court. In this sense, drift applies to people, terminologies and meanings, and national and international policies. Leaving the long-term history of slavery and human trafficking, and their definitions, in the background, this paper points to contemporary issues ultimately related to power in the mobility of people, rhetoric, and political strategies. The determination of people flows, their direction and quality; the changing exploitation of historical events and imaginaries to gain political consensus and mask political ineffectiveness; different international and national policies quickly drawn and implemented for reasons too far from the desire to combat normalized abuses and restore people's well-being: all this points to an instability rooted in a power unbalance. This article looks at fairer configurations in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery, starting with the adoption of terminologies that can help to better address experiences of abuse and exploitation.

Terminologies, Rhetoric and Representation

Human trafficking is genealogically rooted in both the historical discourses of transatlantic slavery and, more significantly, of white women trafficking. Trafficking as modern slavery discourse (O'Connell Davidson, 2010) and sex

trafficking/trafficking in women discourse (Weitzer, 2007) are both defined by Bernstein (2007) as forms of "contemporary abolitionism", but they are also more generally referred to as "neo-abolitionisms" (e.g., Bravo, 2007; Chuang, 2010). The neo-abolitionist movement, particularly in the US, sees the coalition of liberal and radical feminists, and of Christian groups, with neoconservative governments and neoliberal modern-day antislavery activists (e.g., Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2014). The joint aim of these "moral crusaders" (Weitzer & Ditmore, 2010; Weitzer, 2007) is the abolition of slavery-like conditions, in primis prostitution, while appealing to the conception of universal human rights (Kempadoo, 2012, p. XV).

The neo-abolitionist conflation of sex work, sexual exploitation, and trafficking is far more rhetorical than evidence-based (Mai, 2017, 2018; Ronald Weitzer, 2012). In addition, neo-abolitionist lobbies have negatively affected the US and the international anti-trafficking provisions by: leaving aside people trafficked into non-sex sectors; "confusing legal standards by strategically equating trafficking with slavery" (Chuang, 2010, p. 1706); and drastically reducing programs designed to support sex workers (e.g., Ford, Lyons, & Schendel, 2012, p. 4). Many 'rescued' women return to the brothels because they do not trust the authorities and fear being deported back to their countries where they might reencounter worse conditions or a shelter detention experience that could violate international human rights law (Chuang, 2010, pp. 1715–1718; Jones, 2003; Kapur, 2005; Pearson & Anti-Slavery International, 2002; Soderlund, 2005; Thrupkaew, 2009). The anti-prostitution neo-abolitionist approach resulting in what has been called "sexual humanitarianism" (Mai, 2017, 2018) has had relevant consequences both in terms of Protocol implementation and in the perpetuation of the sensationalistic myth of sexual enslavement (e.g., Kapur, 2012; Mai, 2011; Vijeyarasa, 2015).

Within the emerging language of modern slavery, the image of the female sexual slave, or "the figure of the trafficking victim" (Andrijasevic & Mai, 2016), is now more widely accompanied by images of male workers in bonded labor in brick kiln or fishing industries, and agricultural fields. The increased framing of human trafficking discourse with references to the "old" transatlantic slavery and the more "emotionally appealing" anti-slavery terminology is being used as a synonym for or replacing "human trafficking (Bravo, 2011). Bravo, in her speech, maintained that the slavery terminology—relying on nineteenth century's legal abolition of slavery—serves the "dominant paradigm of aberrational exploitation" whereby contemporary human-to-human exploitation is "portrayed as unusual and outside the norm", obfuscating in this way how exploitation is embedded in larger configurations of structural injustice (Bravo, 2017). This paradigm is substantiated by the legal framing of human trafficking and modern slavery as issues of domestic and international criminal law with states' border protection as the principal

concern (also Segrave, Milivojevic, & Pickering, 2017). Both the TIP reports and the Global Slavery Index, albeit problematic documents, signal a rise in the number of cases of trafficking and slavery. That is, decreases in neither vulnerability to exploitation nor severe forms of exploitation have been formally documented. Finally, despite an expanding victim-centered approach (e.g., Goodey, 2004), victim protection in relation to pre- and post-trafficking vulnerability dramatically fails to empower those at the margins.

Anti-slavery initiatives are often ineffective because they do not address structural origins of exploitation, but also because of failure to address needs from historical and cultural perspectives. Bellagamba and her team followed the semantic vicissitudes of some vernacular terms, such as *andevo* (in Malagasy) and *jiyaaɓe* (in fulfude) after the colonial abolition of slavery, in Madagascar and Senegal respectively. The reconstruction of the drifts affecting these terms frames the "neo-abolitionist trend of 2000s" as "yet another phase in these ongoing histories of post-slavery" (Bellagamba, 2017). Four keywords serve to characterize post-abolition processes of those two vernacular vocabularies, giving a vivid sense of how context-based analyses are necessary for legitimate uses of terms representing social categories. Essentialization refers to a "freezing" of the categories of nobles, freeborn, and slaves, which before abolition were more porous. Politicization indicates "the crucial role that people of real or alleged slave ancestry have had in the political struggles" in the two contexts under analysis since the Second World War. Expansion is a third process which saw the increase in number of the andevo and the jiyaaɓe significantly due to "the inclusion of people who did not fit the criteria of inclusion among descendants of the ancient nobles/freeborn" (Bellagamba, 2017). Such expansion has turned dubious the slave past of twentieth century *andevo* and *jiyaaɓe*. Finally, silencing indicates the stigma associated with slave ancestry which gives rise to a number of alternative ways of recognizing a slave descendant. How—we then wonder—do these complex processes interact with the current discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery represented in Africa by anti-trafficking USDOS initiatives? How do people react to what they learn from the media as being the "new, trafficked slaves"? The speakers explored the cases of young domestic workers who migrate from Madagascar to Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Mauritius, and China, and the *talibé*, children handed over to Islamic scholars to be educated yet find themselves begging on the streets of big cities for their teachers. The intersections with current slavery rhetoric, representations, and policies are complex and multiple. And contemporary forms of exploitation, which arguably affect predominantly the *andevo* and the *jiyaaɓe*, also suggest historical continuities of abuse which must be carefully understood and addressed in order to "uncover the intersection of contemporary marginalities with the cycles of emancipation and re-subjection".

Finally, a sensitive use of terminologies and rhetoric should inform the contemporary fight against exploitation, in order to avoid the perpetuation of shameful, even unfounded, association to *modern* slavery of those "people who handle the consequences of a slave past" (Bellagamba, 2017).

Policies and Practices of Assistance

The cases of Malagasy domestic workers and of the *talibé* children in Senegal speak to the problematic nexus between modern slavery, trafficking, and migration, and demonstrate how the implementation of the 'Trafficking Protocol' can have detrimental effects on migrants' rights. Many scholars have pointed to the arbitrariness of applying to migrants, in the real world, the categories of victim of trafficking, smuggled, illegal, irregular, undocumented, "simply" unlucky or deceived migrant. A representative case is the distinction between trafficking and smuggling. The two phenomena are part of a continuum: smuggling can turn into trafficking, and in happier cases vice versa as well (Apap, Cullen, & Medved, 2002; Gallagher, 2001; Holmes, 2013; Lee, 2005). Yet, the definition of the two phenomena establishes a neat line of separation between voluntary and consensual migration, in smuggling v. involuntary and non-consensual, in trafficking (e.g., Andrijasevic, 2010, p. 7; Derks, 2000; O'Connell Davidson, 2006, p. 8), and between legal and illegal migration (Anker & Doomernik, 2006, p. 2). On the contrary, a large corpus of ethnographically based or micro-level qualitative studies have shown how these distinctions are inapplicable as they largely oversimplify the complex and dynamic processes of irregular migration, recruitment, migrants' exploitation and experience, as well as different level of coercion and victimization (e.g., Agustín, 2006; Andrijasevic, 2004; King, 2002; Lutz, 2004; O'Connell Davidson, 2013; Parrenas, 2001; Skilbrei & Tveit, 2008; Ronald Weitzer, 2014, pp. 232–237).

The shift of 'human trafficking' from the domain of human rights to that of criminal justice occurred in a moment of pre-9/11 boundary crisis. If we are to argue that human trafficking and modern slavery are caught between two "discourse families" (Darley, 2006), the human rights/humanitarian one and the securitarian one, the latter seems to be by far the prevailing one on the ground. Other two contributions to the symposium in this section address the problematic trafficking-migration nexus from the point of view of UK contradictory policies and practices of un-assistance (also Craig, Balch, Lewis, & Waite, 2019). In particular, Emberson (2017) and Murphy (2017) both concentrated on post-trafficking identification and support to migrants caught in the UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the system introduced in 2009 for the identification and verification of the status of potential victims of human trafficking and modern

slavery. Both authors highlight the culture of disbelief informing, especially, the UK's Visa and Immigration service which is the authority in charge of dealing with non-EU nationals.

The presentations by Emberson and Murphy complemented each other inasmuch as the former assumes the point of view of the policies and their underlining "grand narratives", whereas the latter gives voice to survivors' experience with respect to the impact of those same "stigmatizing policy discourses" on their recovery. Sketching a political analysis tweaked in moral, socio-psychological terms, Emberson's talk was significantly rooted in his long-term hands-on experience as frontline practitioner (Emberson, 2017). Emberson has worked for many years for a UK NGO which supports vulnerable adults who have gone through experiences and been assigned labels of human trafficking and modern slavery. The practitioner aimed at identifying a few "underlying themes and factors" that he sees as having "led to the ambiguous, confusing, and often unfair, way" in which vulnerable migrants are treated by the UK government. The rationale of "deserving and undeserving" victims of trafficking and modern slavery —which Emberson connected to the Elizabethan Poor Laws of the sixteenth century that classified the poor into categories—informs an approach based on "hierarchies of sympathy" and "continuums of merit". The speaker offered a visualization of this spectrum and placed children trafficked for sexual exploitation at the end of those deserving "full, unconditional sympathy"; at the opposite end, he located "adult male economic migrants from non-conflict zones" who receive "indifference or hostility". This hierarchy reveals value judgments, Emberson argued, informing how trafficking victims are treated in the UK, within the National Referral Mechanism (NMR) and the *Adult Victims of Modern Slavery Care Contract* (AVMSCC). Some of the iniquities of this "dysfunctional trafficking industry" are blatant (e.g., the division of trafficking into two separate categories by origin, the sudden change of treatment occurring when a victim minor turns 18 and enters an adult asylum process, or the lack of support for those migrants who do not want to enter the NRM and cooperate with authorities). Funding for support is not released until the decision with respect to the claim of asylum and the status of victim has been made, and if the decision is negative, no formal mechanism is in place to appeal against it. It is not difficult to imagine how the consequences of this system on the claimants' well-being can be distressing, as Murphy investigated in her study.

Murphy's study (Murphy 2017, 2018) was designed to examine perceptions about long-term support for victims of trafficking. The findings cast light on the challenges to (re)integration for migrants awaiting the "leave to remain" decision, even in those cases where a positive decision has already been made with respect to victim status (also Murphy, 2018). Living in temporary accommodations, denied

the right to work or engage in education, asked to tell their stories several times: the women encountered by Murphy embody a vulnerability determined by penalizing state policies which perpetuate their insecurity and "loss of agency" (Murphy, 2017; also Brennan & Plambech, 2018). Internalized stigma is arguably the most cogent issue affecting these women. Shameful feelings are often present as a result of sexual violence, while being exacerbated by the "status of exploited, illegal immigrant, in which there is often a perception of complicity in their situation". In other words, the "dual identity" of potential victims seeking asylum means also double stigma, and intensified shameful feelings which undermine self-identity and social relations. Thus, negative identity construction and isolation can have destructive impact on the "already fragile mental health" of these women whose abuses during childhood, migratory journeys, and slavery have affected their psychological resilience. It is in this framework that extreme cases of attempts to self-harm and difficulty in dealing with everyday activities were read in Murphy's talk. Additionally, "feelings of anxiety, stress, and paranoia" affect more generally the living in a surveilled limbo of these female vulnerable migrants, who often reach the UK after enduring violence and abuse both in their country of origin and during their long, fragmented transitions.

Violence, Stigma, Mental Suffering: The Experience of the Exploited

The category of victims of trafficking and slavery has been problematized from different angles. In contrast, mental health sciences have turned ex-victims into an operational study population affected by PTSD, anxiety, and depression (Ottisova, Hemmings, Howard, Zimmerman, & Oram, 2016; Stanley, 2017; Stanley et al., 2016). However, quantitative approaches based on scales and interviews alone are inadequate to approach this complex population, characterized by a multiplicity of traumas, cultural backgrounds, and types of exploitation (Lazzarino, under review). Health sciences have furthermore tended to assimilate survivors to other categories of social actors who have supposedly suffered similar traumas, such as refugees, survivors of torture, wars and natural catastrophes, victims of domestic and sexual violence, and populations who have experienced multiple and chronic traumas (Doherty, Oram, Siriwardhana, & Abas, 2016, p. 469; Hossain, Zimmerman, Abas, Light, & Watts, 2010; Oram et al., 2016). However, the assimilation of traumatic experiences among victims of trafficking and slavery on the one hand, and these populations on the other hand needs to be ascertained (Doherty et al., 2016, p. 469).

The medicalization of survivors of trafficking and slavery, and their victimization via the assimilation to other vulnerable groups, suggests that the knowledge produced by biomedical studies on post-trafficking health is embedded

within the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery. In turn, this discourse is unraveled as interlinked with the discourse of psychological traumatism and victimhood informing Western-led psycho-social international interventions (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009; Hinton & Good, 2016; Jordan, Wright, Wright, & Lazzarino, under review; Molland, 2019; Pupavac, 2001). Framed within this double ideology, the knowledge that mental health studies produce corroborates the stereotypical image of the traumatized victim whose experience of abuse, especially if of sexual nature, has severe consequences on emotional health (Gadd & Broad, 2018). The category of victim of trafficking and slavery is defined and reinforced on a scientific basis. The "trauma paradigm" shifts attention to survivors' mental health needs which must be urgently addressed, away from the structural injustice at the root of human-to-human exploitation, as well as from detrimental state policies of reception and assistance. Such depoliticizing bio-medicalization of survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery (Jordan et al., under review), and other vulnerable groups, lacks experience-near analyses which would instead aim to grasp "the nuances and complexities of multiple traumatic experiences" (Ahmad, 2017) occurring in the context of origin, during the migratory journey, and in destination settings.

Murphy and Ahmad offered analyses of vulnerable migrants' lived experience; together they show the complexity of the factors affecting the emotional well-being of survivors seeking assistance and asylum. If Murphy concentrated on post-trafficking life of female asylum seekers caught in the UK system, Ahmad paid attention to pre-departure discriminating gender norms, perceptions of mental illness, and violence and trauma vulnerable migrants endure during their journeys (Ahmad 2017, also in Mannell, Ahmad, & Ahmad, 2018). Ahmad drew her reflections from cases of asylum seekers in the UK. Ahmad's observations on the mental suffering of female asylum seekers resonate with Murphy's findings outlined above, in reference to stigmatized identities and implications for mental wellbeing. However, Ahmad concentrated on a specific, relatively disregarded aspect of migration: GBV during the journeys of forced migrants fleeing conflicts. Adopting an experience-near approach, Ahmad argued for the need to devote more care to the effects of GBV during migrant journeys as risk factors of increased mental suffering in destination countries.

Ahmad, in her talk, presented the case of Mariam, an orphan whose parents died during genocide in Iraq Kurdistan and who was subsequently subjected to child marriage, sexual torture by members of local authorities ("against the backdrop of a society that highly stigmatizes and is punitive towards raped women") as well as rape during her migratory journey as did one of her children while residing in a refugee camp (Ahmad, 2017). Upon reaching the UK, the extenuating asylum-seeking process ensued. Ahmad conceptualized migratory

journeys like Mariam's as fragmented transitions made up of "spaces of mobility" where the agency of the migrant can vary—with "spaces of mobility" referring to "physical, social, cultural, and clinical settings as well as internal and external locales" occupied by the migrant. "Under-researched nuances related to autonomy and agency" differently characterize the spaces of mobility migrants go through, and gender is a key factor determining spaces a migrant can(not) occupy, as well as consequences of such on health.

Rape, honor-based violence, and endemic discrimination against non-heteronormative sexualities interlace with contexts of origin (e.g., affected by conflict and genocide) and contexts of arrival (e.g., replete with requests to narrate and the culture of disbelief) often aggravate mental distress, stigma and trauma. Ahmad's reflections force us to take seriously "the role of migratory journeys in shaping health consequences", particularly from a gender perspective, and call for greater interaction between "humanitarian and health care providers to respond to transitionary mental health needs in contexts of mobility". Overall, we also become increasingly urged to locate the perceptions and voices of social actors in some form of unfreedom at the center of future studies, interventions, and policies, and in lieu of ideological "homogenous and undifferentiated categorisation" (Ahmad, 2017; Lazzarino, under review).

Decolonizing Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

The case of Mariam lies beyond the category of victim of human trafficking and modern slavery. Mariam's trajectory points to the necessity of focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable, being in mobility or not, and simultaneously on the structural factors at the root of endemic poverty and violence, normalized exploitation, genocide, and contradictory and often unjust migration policies. The interdisciplinary talks of the symposium situated multiple perspectives into a thorough fresco of the problems affecting the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery. In this piece, I have encapsulated such plethora of issues with the images of disjuncture and drift. The former refers to a mismatch between rhetoric and police, on the one hand, and people's perceptions and needs on the other hand. The latter indicates how the mobility of people, policies, and terminologies has been subject to Western-centered interests. However, the contributions in the symposium, speaking from and to the center, did not only review or echo the considerable body of critical literature on the matter. All speakers aimed to point to novel ways to decolonize human trafficking and modern slavery, starting from the heart of the 'empire' where they originate, in order to overcome the severe problems identified with these terms and their apparatuses. By bringing together law, global health, victimology, historical anthropology, and frontline experience,

that symposium responded to the need to go beyond definitional and categorical disputes to gain insights into the rhetorical and actual uses of these terms and what they mean for millions of people in complex conditions of exploitation – in migratory context or not.

Both the existing academic production and the talks in the symposium would suggest that the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery is too much ideologically and politically charged that it should be radically revised or abandoned altogether. Nonetheless, on a constructive and impact-oriented ground, scenarios are drawn where this category can be turn into a useful instrument to improve the rights and the services for the most vulnerable. Notably, this could be achieved by releasing human trafficking and modern slavery from their ideological burden, by converting them from law enforcement tools into actual human rights protection ones, and by working at culture-sensitive and ethically-positioned policies, studies, and interventions where the exploited take the lead based on the needs and experiences of the exploited.

Three broad paths can be identified to address the disjuncture between people and policies, and invert drift in the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery. Firstly, more nuanced and substantive investigations are necessary in order to place at the center the culturally-and-gender-informed experiences of those marginalized by historic and contemporary configurations of inequality. Only experience-near, participatory studies can contribute to the establishment of an evidence base for the development of appropriate categories, policies, interventions, and health care responses. The voices of marginalized individuals – both survivors (Nicholson et al., 2018) and perpetrators (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2017) – as well as governmental and non-governmental bodies from the global south must be let decide to speak or not (Spivak, 1988) if a de-monopolization of the discourse of human trafficking and modern slavery is to be achieved. Secondly, efforts oriented to tackle the upstream, political and economic structural causes of human-to-human exploitation are required to prevent the otherwise inevitable perpetuation of endemic vulnerability to abuse and violence. Thirdly, the selfishness of states, banks, corporations and even local and international humanitarian agencies could benefit from being counterbalanced by humanistic perspectives and humane practices. The framework of a shared humanness could contribute to the eradication of discriminatory, stigmatizing practices denying autonomy and rights of citizenship to those experiencing punitive and stigmatizing policies, rhetoric, and assistance. The disjuncture between these and the humanistic approach towards individuals who have lived and are living through forms of unfreedom requires addressing. The 'being human' of Mariam is a valuable ground to start acknowledging the value of the experience and needs of the exploited to inform effective policies and respectful language.

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