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Trafficking Dilemmas

The Phenomena of Women Trafficking and Re-Trafficking
– A Case Study of Albania –

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Abstract

Human trafficking is a transnational phenomenon and it has been one of the most hotly debated issues in the development agenda for the last decade. This thesis focuses the attention on the phenomenon of women trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and takes as a case study the Republic of Albania. Albania has been, especially during the 90s, widely touched by the phenomenon, and since the phenomenon of trafficking has been acknowledged by the Albanian government and the international community, many projects have been launched, both at a national and international level. During the years, social services have been implemented in order to give emotional and psychological support to the women. However some reported cases shows that after a period of rehabilitation and re-integration, within the Albanian society, some of the women ones more fall into another trafficking situation. This is called re-trafficking. This work aims to give an understanding of the phenomenon of trafficking and re-trafficking through a social workers' point of view by applying a gender perspective to the analysis. Within the case study, eight semi-structured interviews with social workers were conducted and six interviews with key-informants were performed. Evidence from the analysis of the interviews highlights the crucial role that the bridge between the economical structure and gender inequality plays within the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking. The social workers, civil society and the state must all work together in synergy if they want to prevent the phenomena.

Key words: Albania, gender, re-trafficking, sexual exploitation, social policy, social work, trafficking.

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List of Acronyms

AWHRC	Asian Women’s Human Rights Council
CATW	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIES	Centre for Development Information and Education
D&E	Different & Equal
EC	European Commission
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women
IHRLG	International Human Rights Law Group
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCATS	National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NPO(s)	Non-Profit Organization(s)
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TV	Tjeter Vizion
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
UN	United Nations
UN.GIFT	United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking
UNODC	United Nation Office for Drugs and Crimes
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VoTs	Victims of Trafficking
WWII	World War II
WB	World Bank

1. Introduction

Slavery and slave trafficking are notions that we usually see as connected to a darker and more ancient period of human history. The international community has been engaged in the fight against such atrocities since the early 1800s. Nevertheless the term slave has not completely disappeared and the modern phenomenon of slavery, more known as “human trafficking” (UNODC 2009) or “trafficking in persons” (US Department of State 2010), is still undermining the freedom of many women, men and children worldwide and in the last decade it has been one of the most hotly debated issues in the development agenda.

After many debates human trafficking has been officially defined by the international community within the United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in December 2000 in Palermo, Italy. According to the Palermo Protocol Trafficking in Persons

“[...] shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms or 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” (UN 2000:3).

This definition suggests that Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is a complex and internally diversified phenomenon which touches women, men and children and it requires an intersectional and holistic approach due to the different components of it. Human trafficking is recognized to be related to different issues such as gender relation, human rights, economic policies, migration policies and ethnic and social conflicts. However this thesis will focus only on women trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation since it is the most spread and studied worldwide.

1.1. Research Problem

Even if more than ten years has passed since the definition of Trafficking in Persons and international organizations and institutions as well as national governments annually spend billions of dollars in projects addressed to prevent human trafficking the phenomenon is far from disappearing. As the two major international institutions underline “[...] no country has yet attained a truly comprehensive response to this massive, ever increasing, ever changing crime” (US Department of State 2010:5) while in October 2008 the *Commission Working Document on Evaluation and Monitoring of the Implementation of the EU Action Plan of December 2005* issued by the European Commission states that “an effective response to trafficking remains a distant goal” (EC 2008:4).

The number of women involved in the phenomenon of human trafficking for sexual exploitation presented by the major international organizations is as dramatic as incongruent: in 2005 the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that at least 2.5 million people were victims of trafficking with approximately half of them being involved in sex trade. In 2008 ILO published another report which estimates that approximately 800.000 people were trafficked across national borders and this does not include the millions that were trafficked within their own country (ILO in US Department of State 2008). The global profit of human trafficking is estimated to be around US\$32 billion a year while profits from forced commercial sexual exploitation totaled US\$27.8 billion annually (ILO 2008). The US Department of State instead estimated that in 2009 12.3 million adults and children were exploited for forced labour, bonded labour and forced prostitution worldwide and that 80 percent of the victims of trafficking are women and girls, with 70 percent of them being exploited sexually (US Department of State 2009). Estimates by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) tells us that trafficking in persons is the third most lucrative crime in the world with an annual profit of \$7-13 billion generated from trafficking in persons (UNODC 2009).

The aforementioned data clearly shows some discrepancy between the statistics. Given the characteristic of illegality of human trafficking it is difficult to acquire meaningful and realistic data and to exactly understand the real proportion of the phenomenon. Another factor which influences the data collection is the definition of human trafficking, especially regarding sexual exploitation. According to Agustín (2008) some institutions consider all sex workers to be victims of trafficking, others instead count all the persons who decide to denounce the traffickers and exploiters while some projects count all illegal migrants within the label trafficking ¹ (Agustín 2008).

Regardless of the real numbers of trafficked women almost everyone agrees on the fact that these women are physically and psychologically exploited worldwide and since it is a transnational phenomenon international, national and local institutions and organizations must work together towards an holistic approach which incorporates the “3 P paradigm”: *prevention* of the phenomenon, *protection* of the victims and *prosecution* of traffickers and criminals (US Department of State 2010:5; UN 2000). Unfortunately even though this paradigm has been implemented by several governments it does not always succeed. Human Trafficking as a transnational phenomenon is increasing worldwide due to the massive profits made by traffickers and the little risk that they encounter. Unlike narcotics, that can be sold and used just once, women who are sold into prostitution earn money continually (Hodge and Lietz 2007).

One of the consequences of the failure of the process of social protection of a trafficked woman is re-trafficking. Re-trafficking has been defined by the International Organization of Migration (IOM) as “secondary trafficking of previously trafficked persons” (Jobe 2010:11). The phenomenon of re-trafficking can have different shapes; when re-trafficking occurs it is not uncommon for it to be to a different destination or for a different purpose of exploitation on each occasion (Jobe 2010:11).

¹ According to the US State Department TIP Report “Prostitution by willing adults” (pg.8) is not considered to be trafficking though it is legal or not. For more information on the debate about counting victims of trafficking See US State Department, TIP Report 2010 ; Agustín 2008; Kempadoo 2005.

Often, if a trafficked woman is not correctly identified as such in the country of destination she is more likely to be deported back to her own country and there she is at high risk of being identified by her old trafficker. As the IOM (2010) report on causes and consequences of re-trafficking reveals a “cross-over between international and internal trafficking, with trafficked persons appearing to be potentially more vulnerable to internal trafficking on return to their countries of origin from an international trafficking situation” (Jobe 2010:11).

Moreover even though the women follow all the steps of the re-integration and rehabilitation program offered by many social services some risk-factors, as poverty or patriarchal society, are not eliminated at their roots leading women to new exploitative/trafficking situations (US Department of State 2010; Jobe 2010; Lesko 2005).

Re-trafficking has been recognized as a problem by many academic writers, governmental and non-governmental institutions, however very little independent research has been conducted into its incidence, causes and consequences for societies and social work (Jobe 2010:11).

1.2. Purpose of research and relevance

The attempt of this work is to give a contribution to the debate in order to fill the gap within the scientific literature about the phenomenon of re-trafficking by applying a gender perspective and taking as a case study Albania.

Albania as a case study has been chosen for many reasons: first of all it is a country largely touched by the phenomenon of human trafficking, especially during the '90. Moreover it has been recognized as a country of origin, where people are trafficked out of; a country of transit, where people are trafficked through and a country of destination, where trafficked persons end up or a combination of all three (US Department of State 2010; UNODC 2009; Jobe

2010; Winterdyk and Reichel 2010; Obokata 2010). However, in this study the focus is on Albania as a country of origin for trafficked women.

Albania could also be considered as a positive example within the fight against human trafficking since both the state and the civil society have put a lot of effort in coping with the phenomenon. Within the last years the Albanian government and Civil Society have taken many steps forward in order to fight it at a local, national and international level (US Department of State 2009; The National Anti-Trafficking Unit 2008; Lesko and Puka 2009). The *TIP Report* 2010, annually published by US Department of State, identifies Albania as a Tier 2 which means that in 2001 it went from being a country “whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so” (Tier 3) to a country “whose governments do not fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards²” (US Department of State 2010:22).

Additionally, according to the International Organization of Migration (IOM) (2010) in 2005 Albania, compared to other countries, had the highest registered rate of re-trafficking with 43 percent of the victims of trafficking being re-

² The US State Department Report every year does an assessment and classifies every country in tier rankings by evaluating the government’s effort in order to cope with the phenomenon. The report classifies the countries in 4 different tier: Tier 1 : countries whose governments fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s (TVPA) minimum standards; Tier 2: countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA’s minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards; Tier 2 Watch List: Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA’s minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, AND: a) the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing; b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year or c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year; Tier 3: countries whose government do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. (US State 2010:47) Albania has been classify from 2001 as a Tier 2 even though in 2008, just for that year, sank as a Tier 2 Watch List.

trafficked into forced labor (Jobe 2010:15). Also the Ariadne Network highlights that internal trafficking within Albania and re-trafficking of Albanian victims to other countries still remained a problem in 2005 (Ariadne Network 2007:5). In 2006 Different and Equal, a well known Albanian Non-Profit Organization (NPO) published a report *The reintegration process* where they stated that the previous year among all of the women who got access to the shelter (seventy women in total) 79.5 percent were trafficked for the first time while 11.4 percent had been trafficked two times before arriving to the shelter and 9.1 percent had been trafficked three times; some of those had been trafficked up to three different states (Different and Equal 2006:25). The same year the Psycho-Social Centre Vatra reported a 45 percent rate of re-trafficking of women among the 123 that were referred to the shelter (Jobe 2010:15). Another publication edited by the Psycho-Social Centre Vatra highlighted that in 2008 six girls and women, on a total of sixty-six cases, had been trafficked and accommodated more than once (Lesko and Puka 2009).

Unfortunately there is no data available about the phenomenon of re-trafficking at a national level neither is there a report or a publication about causes and different strategies adopted within the daily work with re-trafficked women, except from the IOM report published in 2010³. However in the Albanian national database promoted by the Anti-Trafficking Unit⁴ in 2008 the number of girls and women that had access to social services more than once should appear. Due to privacy and the anonymity of trafficked women only persons working within the field have access to the database. When asking about the numbers the social workers said that they should have to look through the database name by name for the number of times that the women have had access to the shelters and that it could take a lot of time. That is the main reason why the exact number is not presented within this study.

³ Jobe A. (2010), *The Causes and Consequences of Re-trafficking: Evidence from the IOM Human Trafficking Database*, Geneva, International Organization for Migration IOM publication.

⁴ National Anti-Trafficking Unit is a special department within the Albanian Ministry of the Interior which is responsible of the implementation of social policies addressed to prevent human trafficking.

Even if a wide number of reports have been written and a lot of research is being done about trafficking, the phenomenon of re-trafficking is still largely uncovered and it stands in the shadows of trafficking as such and re-trafficked women are still a ghost population. Thus, more research on causes, consequences and characteristics of it is needed in order to improve social policies and practice (Jobe 2010).

However in this thesis the focus will be on the Albanian social workers perceptions on the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking and their main causes. It is believed in this work that the social workers' point of view on the phenomena can be crucial in order to understand what else can be done in order to fight these phenomena and their roots. The attempt to understand and frame re-trafficking within the context is fundamental in order to try to improve the strategies for the rehabilitation and re-integration of a trafficked woman.

1.3. Research question

This work attempts to give a better and an in-depth understanding of the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking in Albania through gender lenses from a social workers' point of view. The sub-questions are:

- What are the main causes of trafficking and re-trafficking in Albania from a social workers' point of view?

- What is the role of social work within the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking?

- What are the main tools and strategies of the social workers in order to cope with the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking?

- Which are the main difficulties that the social workers encounter during the rehabilitation and reintegration process of trafficked women and how do they cope with them?

2. The Albanian Case

The following chapter presents the current socio-political situation in Albania. It describes women's living conditions within the Albanian society, and finally it gives an overview of the studied shelters/center.



Source: UNDP country profile

2.1. Historical Background

Albania, with a population of 3.5 million people, situated in the Balkan Region in South East Europe, has been subjected to different kinds of colonial powers. It went from being a part of the Roman Empire, passing through the Byzantine, to the Ottoman Empire in 1385 from which got its independence in 1912. During the Second World War (WWII) Albania was first occupied by Italy, from 1939 until

1943, and then by Germany from 1943 till 1944 and the fight against the Nazi-fascist ended with the consolidation, soon after the WWII, of a communist state. During the approximately fifty years of the communist period the country experienced a long isolation due to the decisions taken by the leader Enver Hoxha as, e.g. the backwards of the Warsaw Pact which isolated the country even from its neighbouring communist states. With the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985, the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the consequent collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991 Albania went through a social and economic period of transition. In 1992 the country experienced its first democratic elections and the Democratic Party was elected. Even if Albania soon after the collapse of the communist state went through a period of transition, in which the state experienced corruption, mismanagement and nearly anarchy were different parties succeeded each other due to a fragile states structures. Albanian citizens ratified a new constitution in 1998 via a popular referendum.

Nowadays Albania is a Parliamentary Republic that is a part of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe and one of the founding members of the Union of the Mediterranean. Since the 28th of April 2009 it is a potential candidate to be a member of the European Union. In November 2010 EC decided to grant visa liberalization in order to enable Albanian citizens to travel to Schengen countries without needing a short-term visa (European Commission Enlargement 2010). According to Albanian social workers the decision of the EC to liberalize visas for Albanian citizens, even though it is an important step towards the inclusion within the European Union, is seen with skepticism. It could in fact have a negative impact on the phenomenon of women trafficking since it could make it easier for exploiters to traffic women to other countries within the European Union and that would be a step backwards from the many improvements done during the last decades in order to fight the phenomenon.

According to many reports, e.g. National strategy on Combating Trafficking in Persons 2008-2010, US Department of State 2010, and the data collected within this thesis the decrease in numbers of women trafficked outside Albania can be

adduced to different bi-lateral agreements and laws signed between the Albanian government and the neighboring countries as for instance the strengthening of the border controls between Albania and Italy or Greece.

2.2. Women in Albania

Since human trafficking has been recognize as a serious and dramatic social problem that characterized Albania, especially during the 90s, a range of NGOs and international and inter-governmental institutions, e.g. IOM, UN agencies and EC, promoted an extensive numbers of projects and bi-lateral agreements in order to fight this phenomenon and to make Albania reach the needed standards in order to apply to become a member of the European Union. One of these agreements is the Stabilization and Association Agreement⁵ which focus on gender equality within social policy. This specific agreement, signed between Albania and the EC has been taken into serious consideration by state and civil society's efforts.

Nevertheless some reports, e.g. the *Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women regarding Albania* highlighted the existence of a substantial gap between legal provisions prohibiting gender discrimination and the full exercise of women's rights, so the authorities have taken a series of measures to advance women's rights in the country. They also claim that:

“The Albanian legislation is not discriminatory against women. Although, different fields need to be revised and to be fulfilled, especially those field that has to do with the heredity of land, the exercise of children's rights, violence within the family and reproductive rights” (CEDAW 2000:22).

⁵ The Stabilization and Association Agreement represents the framework of relations between European Union and the Western Balkan Countries, specifically describes the steps Albania must take in order to enter the EU. In particular the Art. 99 of the SAA call for the “adjustment of the Albanian legislation concerning working conditions and equal opportunities for women”. The SAA has been launched by Albania in 2003 and it has been signed in June 2006.

As the report underlines despite the fact that during the 45 years of communist state gender equality was imposed from above, the role of women has always been subordinated the role of the men (ibid). Structures of oppression, sex and gender social construction of the “traditional division of role” are re-proposed and reinforce by the media, in which e.g. prostitution is seen as women misbehavior (ibid).

Some inequalities between men and women are also described by some indicators published by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) in the last *Human Development Report 2010*. The data presented in the report highlights that the Albanian gender inequality index value⁶ is 0.545 and the share in parliament seats female-male ratio⁷ is 0.177 which means that in 2008 only 7.1 percent of all the members of the parliament were women. Another interesting data is the one referred to the labour force participation rate in 2008 and the percentage is respectively 76.4 for male and 55.5 for female. Nevertheless, concerning the overall Human Development Index the report places Albania at the 64th place on a total of 169 countries analyzed which is consider as a high human development (UNDP 2010:157). The literacy rate⁸ of youth female (aged 15-24) calculated by the World Bank (WB) suffered a modest decreased going from 99.5 percent in 2001 to 99.1 percent in 2008. In 2001 the youth rate for female and male was the same but in 2008 the males had a larger decrease of the rate since it is 98.5 percent (World Bank 2011).

⁶ The Gender Inequality Index Value is a composite index measuring loss in achievements in three dimensions of human development—reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market, due to inequality between genders. The index shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in these dimensions. It ranges from 0, which indicates that women and men fare equally, to 1, which indicates that women fare as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions (UNDP 2010).

⁷ The Share in Parliaments seats female-male indicates the ratio of seats held by a respective gender in a lower or single house or an upper house or senate, where relevant (UNDP 2010).

⁸ World Bank data. The WB describes as youth literacy rate the percentage of people ages 15-24 who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life.

According to different international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WB Albania still ranks as one of the poorest countries in Europe, although many improvements have been made; the World Bank's data underlines as Albania's poverty rate was reduced from 25.4 percent in 2002 to 12.4 percent in 2008, one of the highest rates of poverty reduction in the Europe Central Asia (ECA) region (World Bank 2011). The US Department of States Report (2011) highlights an important factor when reading the data provided by the WB. According to the report, in fact, per capita GDP figures do not fully capture remittance income from the extensive network of Albanians abroad and income from the informal market, which the IMF estimates at 30-40 percent of the GDP. The Bank of Albania estimates that remittances fell by 6 percent in 2009 compared to 2008, and their share of GDP declined to 9 percent in 2009. The reduction continued during the first three quarters of 2010, though on a smaller scale (CIA Background Note 2011).

2.3. Overview of the studied shelters/center

Within the present thesis three shelters and one national reception center for victims of trafficking in Albania were studied.

The National Reception Center for Victims of Trafficking is the only one of its kind in Albania since it is the only one that is managed and financially supported by the state. It was founded in 2003 and the centre is the result of the Albanian social policy aimed to alleviate and eliminate the phenomenon of human trafficking. The main goals are: residential accommodation, psycho-emotional, health and juridical assistance, high security level and protection, rehabilitation assistance for the victims, information and sensitization of the public opinion. The families and relatives of the victims are also involved in the reintegration process of the women for their reception and support along the rehabilitation journey. The women's permanence in the shelter is around three months but it depends from each case. The target groups of the centre are Albanian and foreign women and

girls victims of trafficking or at risk of being trafficked; abandoned children that are potential or actual victims of trafficking and illegal migrants that seeks to voluntarily return back to their original countries. The centre is protected twenty-four hours a day by the national police since all of the women are at high risk of being tracked by traffickers. The National Reception Centre is an active member of the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS) which is a national organization for all the shelters for trafficked women.

At the moment of the interviews ten women were living at the centre and a total of twelve social workers were employed there besides the other multidisciplinary staff.

Tjeter Vizion (Another Vision) was founded by a group of social workers and it is an Albanian Non-Profit Organization registered and approved by the Tribunal of Tirana in 2002. Tjeter Vizion is based in the city Elbasan and they offer the population a wide range of social services. They manage a shelter and a daily centre addressed to women victims of trafficking, domestic violence, unemployed women, young people at risk and they also run a residential service and a day care centre for children. Through their social services, they offer to the community of Elbasan psycho-social support, job opportunities, socializing and inter-cultural activities. It is an active member and one of the founders of the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS).

At the time of the research, five women were living at the shelter. Five social workers besides the others members of the multidisciplinary staff were working in the shelter.

The Psycho-Social Centre Vatra started in 1999 and it was registered as a non-governmental, non-profit women organization in 2001. It is based in Vlora and offers social services, psychological support, sensitization and awareness campaigns in the cities of Vlora, Fier, Lushnje and in the rural areas. All the work of the staff aim to prevent the following phenomena: human trafficking,

prostitution, domestic violence, drugs, crime in adolescence, illiteracy and drop out of school.

The shelter was founded in order to give first aid and an accommodation to the women who passed through and were trafficked from the harbour of Vlora. It has been noticed that Vlora was one of the core places of trafficking, where many boats left every day for Italy and Greece. After a few years the shelter was transformed from a first aid to rehabilitation and a re-integration project. The centre is an active member of the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS).

When the interviews were conducted sixteen women were living in the shelters and besides the other multi-disciplinary staff, six social workers (in total) were employed.

Different and Equal is an Albanian non-profit organization that was founded in 2004. The main goal of the organization is to offer support and a re-integration process to Albanian victims of trafficking. The shelter is based in Tirana and operates in the territory of the capital with protection services and prevention campaign and as all the other shelters it is an active member of the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS).

When the interviews were performed fourteen women and three children were living at the shelter and a total of four social workers were working there.

3. Theoretical Background

“When writing the text, exploring the interpellation of the local social phenomena that we investigate into larger global histories also serves as to denaturalize and de-exotify their existence, to work against a romanticization of Third World phenomena as somehow existing outside of history”

(Wolf 1996:192).

3.1. Why gender lenses

As already mentioned this work is an attempt to look at women trafficking and re-trafficking in Albania from a gender perspective. During the research attention will be drawn to the role that transnational female/feminist movements played within the writing process of the Palermo protocol and to the important task that the female social workers face in order to challenge the patriarchal structures of oppression which are still present within the Albanian society. Having a gender perspective in this specific work means to recognize the crucial role that the bridge between economical structures and gender inequality plays within the phenomenon of re-trafficking. When the patriarchal structures of oppression are still largely prevalent women are more likely to be involved in trafficking and especially re-trafficking since the rejection from the family, the stigma and a difficult economic situation are seen as main causes of failure of many re-integration projects (Jobe 2010; Lesko 2008). This thesis attempts, through a gender perspective, to reframe the issue of trafficking and especially re-trafficking without having the ambition to give concrete answers but in order to highlight how insights drawn from feminist scholarship in social sciences can be used to challenge conventional or orthodox approaches to the phenomenon. Some authors have demonstrated how the trafficking discourse is deeply gendered⁹. As Steans perfectly explains “to look at the world through gender lenses is to focus on

⁹ For more information on trafficking discourse see e.g. Doezema 2005; Agustín 2008.

gender as a particular kind of power relation, or to trace out the ways in which gender is central to understanding international processes” (Steans 2003:5). Gender lenses also means to try to analyze the everyday experiences of women and underline their unequal social positions.

Looking at the phenomenon of re-trafficking from a gender perspective does not mean to accept that human trafficking for sexual exploitation is just a women issue, or taking for granted the feminization of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The awareness of the feminist post-colonial criticism of the ‘monolithic category of Third World Women’ constructed by Western feminist as passive, domestic, voiceless, powerless, vulnerable, uneducated, and uniformly poor is one of the main fundamentals of this thesis. As Mohanty (2003) states

“The assumption of the category ‘women’ as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interest and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location, or contradictions, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even a patriarchy that can be applied universally and cross-culturally” (Mohanty 2003:21).

The description of ‘women’ given by Mohanty as an intersection of different characteristics as age, sex, class, ethnic etc. perfectly defines the women involved within the phenomenon of human trafficking. Within the phenomenon ‘women’ cannot be identify just as oppressed, since women are recognized to be both oppressors and oppressed, trafficked and traffickers. Indeed, surprising or not, also traffickers have more and more a female face and many women play an active role in the recruitment phase (Agustín 2009; UNODC 2009; Siegel and De Blank 2010).

Analyzing trafficking and re-trafficking through a gender lens also means an attempt to stress:

“the influence of gendered power relations within and beyond transnational migrant families and individuals, how the

disadvantaged position of women within the 'private' sphere is reproduced within transnational household spaces, and how this underpins women's decisions on marriage arrangements, family movements and fertility practices" (Smith & Bailey 2004:359).

The term 'victims of trafficking' (VoTs) is hereby used as a synonymous of women trafficking, trafficked women and beneficiary. Aware of the fact that words construct the reality and the social world which we want to study and of the problematization of the term illustrated by the post-colonial feminist standpoint in this specific work 'victims of trafficking' is referred to a temporary condition of women and not to describe their identities. It is here applied because it has been used extensively by social workers during interviews and it also reflects the use by many NGOs and NPOs. The dilemma of 'victimhood' is still an ongoing debate within the trafficking discourse and recognizing the weak position of trafficked women, in this work, does not mean to see women only as passive victims without any voice or will to decide for themselves but as active agents and subjects in a migration dream process that aim to change their previous conditions.

Trafficking in persons, human trafficking and women trafficking are hereby used as synonymous. They are referred to as in the UN definition aforementioned in chapter 1. Nevertheless, the author is also aware of the problematization of the concept of the 'consent' of the women. According to the definition of trafficking presented in the above mentioned protocol "the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used" (UN 2000). A more comprehensive presentation of the debate on the 'consent' concept is described in the next chapter.

The interviewed social workers have extensively used also the word beneficiary in order to indicate women who benefit from their services. Beneficiaries can be a neutral name within the social work practice.

Sexual exploitation is not used as synonymous to street prostitution, but it means the physical and psychological exploitation of women in a wide range of activities

as escorts, strippers, exotic dancer, erotic entertainers, people engaging in sexual practice, or being observe in sexual performance (Peterson & Runyan 2010:208).

3.2. Trafficking or Prostitution. A Dilemma

As Berg (2004) highlights in his book *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* a theoretical background plays a crucial role in determining the research. As the author underlines no research ever starts as a theoretical tabula rasa and “methods impose certain perspective on reality” (Berg 2004:4).

Lately the attention of the academic world and the media has been catalyzed by a main issue, which broke into the sociological, juridical and political sphere: human trafficking. In the Western countries many newspapers, academic authors, political figures, famous actors, film festivals and benefit events have shown sensational data and slogans which compare human trafficking to the slave trade which took place within the eighteenth century (e.g. Bluehearth UN campaign UN.GIFT, Women´s International Film Festival Tackles Human Trafficking). At the same time other academic scholars (e.g. Agustín 2008; Kempadoo 2005; Doezema 2005), by looking at the phenomenon through post-colonial lens, question the mission to help ‘victims of trafficking’ by claiming that many, not all, women identified as Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) are not passive victims but instead agents aware of their own choices. So in other words they are consent, willing sex workers and not trafficked women. Likewise, these academic scholars agree in claiming that often social workers and anyone who actively work within the ‘rescue industry’ actively reproduce the marginalization that they at the same time condemn (Agustín 2008).

Massive amounts of literature, several articles and reports have been written on human trafficking and especially trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation. The actual debate on trafficking in women underlines the difficulties that many academic writers, development practitioners and actors involved in the “rescue

industry” of trafficking encounter while clearly defining what is women trafficking for sexual exploitation and its difference from mere prostitution or sex work. Often trafficking and prostitution are widely believed to be synonymous and, in many instances that is not the case (Agustín 2008; Kempadoo 2005; US Department of State 2010). Nevertheless, even though it could seem easy to draw a clear line between the two phenomena on the base of the consent of the woman it has been showed that they often are interconnected and the line between trafficked women and merely prostitution get even more blurry when it comes to re-trafficking within Albania.

In order to better understand the trafficking discourse and the ongoing debate it is useful to briefly analyze the transnational characteristic of TIP and its connection with globalization.

As already mentioned every country is implicated in the network of human trafficking, regardless of whether it is a country of origin, a country of transit, country of destination, or a combination of the three (e.g. UNODC 2009; US Department of State 2010; Jobe 2010; Winterdyk and Reichel 2010; Obokata 2010). Thus, TIP is facilitated by globalization and the continuum and easier flows of goods and people worldwide and, vice versa, international population movement constitute a key dynamic within globalization. As a result, globalization has asked for an increased transnationalism and a proliferation of transnational networks and transnational social movement; which are defined by Castles and Miller (2003) as “behavior or institution which simultaneously affect more than one state” (Castles & Miller 2003:1). Also the networks of criminals who move thousands of trafficked persons or smuggle migrants are *de facto* transnational networks. That is the reason why the international community advertizes a transnational solution in order to cope with trafficking. As the UNODC highlights in the *Global Report of trafficking in Persons* (2009) even if it is recognized by NGOs, Governments and international institutions and agencies, the transnational and global aspects of the phenomenon “we still lack a global understanding of the subject, and how its components interact to make the whole” (UNODC 2009:7).

Another step taken by the academic authors and the international community has been to refer to trafficking within the migration discourse. In the last decade the term human trafficking was rarely referred to within the debates about migration policy but it was just referred to as a new form of slavery. However nowadays TIP is considered to be part of a broader migration discourse and it is seen as a form of illegal forced migration which is facilitated by organized criminal groups (Obokata 2010; UNODC 2010; Laczko and Gramegna 2003; Desai and Potter 2008). The characteristics of transnationalism and the migratory process behind trafficking put it within the ongoing debate about the problematization of the meaning of transnational migrants¹⁰ (Smith and Bailey 2004:357). Moreover it made the international politics focus on a tight cooperation between states and border controls instead of a nation-state control of migration.

Social policies and social practice connected to trafficking are thus framed in a transnational background that influences the practice of social workers. The paradigm of the 3P, protection for the victims, persecution of the criminals and prevention sponsored by the UN Palermo Protocol and the US Department of State TIP report, is in fact just the tip of the iceberg of an ongoing exchange of practices between social workers worldwide.

Even though we can track the beginning of the anti-trafficking policy to 1904 and 1910 when respectively the League of Nations drafted and signed the “International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic” and the “International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic” (OHCHR 2010) the first comprehensive and shared international definition of human trafficking was stated in Palermo, Italy, in 2000 with the signature of 121 countries of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This Protocol, which became effective in 2003, was written after two years of debates between NGOs, Governments, several lobbies and international agents. Different authors, e.g. Agustín, De Stefano, Doezema and Jani have highlighted the long and

¹⁰ See Smith and Bailey (2004)

controversial debate which has preceded the Palermo Protocol (Agustín 2008; Doezema 2005; Jani 2010; De Stefano 2007). The debate about human trafficking, prostitution and sex work is very rich, and the literature offers a broad spectrum of standpoints, analysis and conceptualization. However the main debate is played on whether prostitution is to consider a job and since accept the existence of sex workers or consider it as a violation of women rights. This dilemma has been extensively discussed by two main coalitions of feminist's international organizations.

According to Doezema (2005) the 'two camps' separated within the lobby efforts were divided by their different attitudes towards prostitution more specifically connected to the relationship between trafficking in women and 'consent'. Both the two sides of transnational networks of anti-trafficking NGOs were framing their approach to trafficking in feminist terms and both women from developed and developing world were present (Doezema 2005).

The main two coalitions recognized within the debate were: on one side the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) while on the other there were the International Human Rights Law Group (IHRLG) with the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) and the Asian Women's Human Rights Council (AWHRC). The former supported the idea that prostitution constitutes a violation of human rights and in every case is a form of sexual violence that can never be chosen as a profession. On this position they argued for illegal prostitution which lead to state that "anyone involved in helping a woman move from one place to another to engage in sex work is a trafficker" (Doezema 2005:67). On the other side, the second coalition formed by IHRLG, GAATW and AWHRC argued for the recognition of the sex workers' rights and sees prostitution as a job. In accordance with their stand point trafficking and forced prostitution are described as:

"Manifestations of violence against women and the rejection of these practices, which are violation of the right to self determination, must hold within itself the respect for the self determination of adult

persons who are voluntarily engaged in prostitution” (GAATW 1994 cited in Doezema 2005:68).

One of the issues highlighted by the latter coalition of feminists NGOs and lobby is that “the myth of trafficking grows to encompass all prostitution, and every woman selling sex become mythically positioned as a slave” (Doezema 2005:74).

Nevertheless, the final definition of trafficking presented by the Palermo Protocol can be considered as a compromise and a negotiation between the two parts since it included the forced and coercion as an essential element of trafficking and it referred to prostitution and sexual exploitation. Thus, as many authors highlighted, e.g. Doezema and Scarpa, the link to prostitution and sexual exploitation is confusing and ambiguous and as a consequence the line between trafficking and other phenomena depends on the political stance taken towards prostitution. (Doezema 2005; Scarpa 2008; Skilbrei and Tveit 2008).

As indicated in the above mentioned overview of the definition of trafficking many actors played a crucial role in defining and addressing the trafficking as a phenomenon and discourse. These actors can be identified as the state, the civil society and, in a more indirect way, the social workers. These three actors are responsible for designing the social policies and practices in order to address the phenomenon both at an institutional level and a more practical one.

3.3. Social Development, Social Policies and Social Practice

The idea of social development started to see the light as a specialization within the development process during the last two decades even though it has a longer history in development planning and implementation (Kothari and Minogue 2002:58). Social development became central in the development agenda after the recognition of the failure of the “paradigm of progress” (Kothari and Minogue 2002:58) and a reevaluation and recognition by the bilateral and multilateral

agencies of the important role of a people-centered approach within poverty reduction. In these years development and poverty gained a “Human Face” (UNDP here from Kothari and Minogue 2002:58) which pushed international organizations as well as national governments to review their strategies and shift them to a more participatory approach. Also the World Bank’s Comprehensive Development Framework recognizes the crucial importance of social institutions and processes to meet human needs further than a mere economic one and the World Development Report from 2001 takes the idea of the social development as the starting point from which to attack poverty (World Bank 2000).

Social development has been defined by the World Bank as:

“Promoting the inclusion of poor, vulnerable and excluded groups (especially youth and women); strengthening social cohesion and the capacity for collective action towards development and; enhancing the capacities of citizens and civic groups to hold accountable the institutions that serve them” (World Bank 2000).

In the Balkan region development is not equally distributed. In all countries there are marked differences between regions and/or between rural and urban areas, as well as an evident lagging behind of some vulnerable groups. (Matković 2005:6)

Social Policy, as integral and fundamental part of social development, addresses “poverty alleviation, social protection, social inclusion and the promotion of human rights” (Hall & Midgley 2008:1). Mkandawire, the UNRISD director, defines social policies as “state intervention that directly affects social welfare, social institutions and social relations” (Mkandawire 2006:1). This statement presupposes that the state is free to address social policies which are more likely to be effective in that specific country’s context.

According to Mkandawire the state, or a developmental state, has the crucial role of addressing social policy towards the regulation of labour market. “Not surprisingly, a common feature of all the development success stories has been their intervention in labour markets” (Mkandawire 2006:3). The state should have

the capacity of regulating the labour markets at the micro-level (Mkandawire 2006). Within the realisation of labour market policy there is also space for basic civic and social rights as addressing women facilities or labour unions. It is also through these kinds of policies that it is possible to identify an authoritarian regime from a democratic state and make these policies high level gendered. According to Naila Kabeer women's agency can be increased through paid work. Also the work carried out in the home can increase the power that women have within their family group. "Women engaged in industrial homework in Mexico City noted that in households where women contribution was critical to household survival, women had been able to negotiate a greater degree of respect" (Kabeer 2005:18). According to Sweden's Report on the Millennium Development Goals (2004), *Making it happen*, gender discrimination is seen as a root cause which cause poverty and a major obstacle to equitable and sustainable development (Sweden's Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2004:24).

In the specific case of social policy the state has to work towards the provision of social welfare through the improvement of the education sector, health sector, pension and social security, land reform, labour market sector, taxation and the so called redistributive policies (Mkandawire 2006).

The state also has the task to deliberate anti-discrimination legislations in order to achieve gender and racial equality and deliberate and regulate the role of non-state organisations, international institutions and "market in social provisioning" (Mkandawire 2006).

The four biggest concerns within social policy are: protection, in order to protect people from the market policy and the changing of the age and personal situation; reproduction of other social tasks; distribution of the results of economic policy; and production of the human capacity and potential (Mkandawire 2006). These four goals of social policy must be maintained in synergy and balance by the state and the welfare regimes, otherwise as Mkandawire brilliantly explains

“a focus only on the distributive functions of social policy would ultimately be economically unsustainable. [...] Similarly a purely productivist approach to social policy would encounter political instability that would undermine the growth objective. And finally, a policy regime focused on protection would fail on both grounds.” (Mkandawire 2006:2).

In the specific case of social policy the “State ideology” plays an important role, if not crucial, in addressing specific norms and policies. On one hand they can represent aspects of social rights and, on the other hand, represent just social privilege. Social policy, if well directed and implemented can also contribute to capital accumulation and the formation of human capital through “forced saving collected as social insurance funds”, education, health and the improvement of the labour market and conditions (Mkandawire 2006). Investing money in social provision such as housing education and health care is, according to Leftwich, one of the reasons why developmental states gain remarkable legitimacy since civil, political and human rights scores have generally been low (Leftwich 2008:16). Increasing welfare through social policy is a necessary condition and an intrinsic part in order to get legitimacy and face eventual internal and external conflicts and so social policy contributes to political stability.

In the specific case of Albania not just the state but also civil society and thus also the social workers play a crucial role within a construction of a welfare mix state.

3.4. Crucial actors

In the next sub-chapters different actors that play crucial roles in the establishment of social policies and social practices will be discussed.

3.4.1. State

The state's role in addressing social policy in developing countries is undoubtedly influenced by a number of non-governmental organisations, international institutions, development banks, the private sector, financial agencies, the informal sector and social movements. All these agencies have the direct or indirect power to set limits and constraints in order to address social policy towards one type of ideology instead of another. On the other hand it is also possible to facilitate some policy direction through the delivery and financing of specific funds or aid. Aid in developing countries has a double face because it can reinforce the role of the state or, as the last international policy has shown, implement a non-statism and a freer market orientation. According to Mkandawire (1998) "to the extent that perceptions of welfarism and state interventionism spilled over into the aid business, it is not surprising that the aid discourse has embraced some of the anti-statism of neo-liberalism" (Mkandawire 2001:3).

The State also has the fundamental and critic role to apply and request all development assistance and aid from the international institutions and agencies.

In order to fight the phenomenon of trafficking the Albanian government has made great efforts during the last decades and, after the ratification of the UN Palermo Protocol, in 2001 they have adopted an anti-trafficking legislation. The law 8733 specifies that "trafficking in human beings, trafficking in women for prostitution, trafficking of children with the purpose of material profit or any other profit is punished by five up to twenty years of imprisonment or even life imprisonment". There are three different articles dealing with trafficking, more precisely article 110/a that deals with human trafficking, article 114/b that deals with trafficking in women for prostitution purposes and article 128/b that deals with trafficking in children (Anti-Trafficking Unit 2008). Since the legislation was enacted to criminalize human trafficking, different methods and means of protecting victims have been expanded. The tools that the law enforcement may use in investigating trafficking cases have also been improved. Politicians and field experts have been really receptive of all international strategies and

indications in order to fight human trafficking (Rakipi, Bashkim and Lasser 2006).

Even if since 2001 the phenomenon is decreasing, the problem of trafficking is still recognized as an important social problem which is affecting Albania's development as a nation that is waiting to enter the European Union.

3.4.2. Civil Society

Civil Society has been defined as an “agent of change to cure a range of social and economic ills left by failures in government or the marketplace” (Potter et al. 2004:308)

The role of the civil society in Albania has played a crucial role in influencing the state's social policies addressed in order to fight trafficking in women. A great number of NGOs, NPOs and associations both internationally and locally have done and still does an extensive work of lobbying. As all the key informants has underlined during the interviews there is an ongoing pressure from the civil society in order to make the Albanian government more present in the protection process of trafficked women by providing adequate structures and economic support to them during the re-integration step.

According to the key informants, even if there is still a long way to go, nowadays the state is starting to collaborate with the civil society in a positive and efficient way.

3.4.3. Social Workers

Social workers within the phenomenon of women trafficking have the crucial role of functioning as a bridge between the persons directly involved in trafficking and the actors in charge of elaborating social policies in order to prevent the phenomenon or to cope with it; they have the fundamental role to create awareness among development practitioners, policy makers, civil society and international institutions. The social workers are aware of the real and expressed needs, the desires, aspirations, and characteristics of the phenomenon. In the Albanian case study all of the statistics, information and data publicized by institutions as the European Union and different agencies of the UN are mainly collected by social workers active in all of the Albanian shelters/centre who periodically reported to the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator, which insert them in a national database (Meshi, Picari, Pinder 2009). It is thus obvious that they have an immense power that can influence both national and international institutions and also the women as such. As Cox and Pawar (2005) underline the rebirth of social work in Eastern Europe since 1990 has seen a strong emphasis on social reconstruction or the building of civil society (Cox and Pawar 2005:2).

In order to challenge the patriarchal culture and mentality which oppresses women in Albanian everyday life social workers should be aware of their political and social role within the phenomenon.

Another fundamental role that the social workers play is within the rehabilitation and the re-integration process, especially in connection to re-trafficking. One of the crucial questions for that rehabilitation process of women is how to make the best use of the women's original coping skills, or how to help them recover these skills while they are supported, assisted and empowered in order to avoid the trap of re-victimization (Bjerkan et al. 2005). The women's empowerment, emotional and psychological support and re-integration process are the main goals for social workers within the phenomenon of trafficking in women.

The definition of social work written in 2004 by the International Federation of Social Work highlighted every level in which social work, also within trafficking and re-trafficking, operates within its framework

“Promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environment. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (Cox and Pawar2005:3).

Different scholars moved criticism towards social work practice by accusing it to be an oppressive part of the modernist project of the nation state or by criticizing its capacity to reproduce oppressive social relations under the appearance of providing care (Dominelli 2002; Agustín 2008). Thus, in order to prevent social workers to reproduce oppressive social relations it is crucial for them to be aware of the ongoing debates and theories behind their work. A way out is undoubtedly the opportunity that nowadays social workers have to share practices and confront themselves within the international community of social workers; especially within the phenomenon of human trafficking, which has been identified as a transnational phenomenon.

Undoubtedly the international level of social work has helped in order to share strategies, theories and practices throughout the countries and boundaries and to build links between women, hence giving birth to international and transnational feminist networks. From these networks a ‘feminist social work’ started to grow and to influence the theories behind the profession.

According to Dominelli (2002) in order to reach results towards a less gender discriminated society structure, social work theory and practice should transcend additive approaches to oppression and seek ways of working with children, men and women that established egalitarian relations among them (Dominelli 2002). This becomes crucial for the social workers involved with the prevention of the phenomenon of women re-trafficking working both with men and women in order

to fight the patriarchal society, the stigma and the economic vulnerability of women caused by their previous trafficking experience.

Feminist social work has been defined by Dominelli as

“a form of social work practice that takes women’s experience of the world as a starting point of its analysis and by focusing the links between a woman’s position in society and her individual predicament, responds to her specific needs, create egalitarian relations in ‘client’-worker interactions and addresses structural inequalities” (Dominelli 2002:7).

However the practice of social work is rather complex since it develops from the dialogue with the persons, in this case women, about their situations and the practice-knowledge is thus derived from a reflection-in-action that emphasizes the interaction between the social workers and the beneficiary.

In the next sections the work carried out by the social workers in the different shelters and/or centers for trafficked women will be presented.

4. Research design

“Our hardest work – to bring the ethnographic moment back, to resurrect it, to communicate the distance, which too quickly start to feel like an abyss, between what we saw and heard and our inability, finally, to do justice to it in our representations”. (Behar R. 2006:9)

The following sections portray the research process by highlighting some general methodological consideration, ethic concerns and the description of the technique performed as data collection strategy in order to carry out this research.

When designing the research process the dilemma of using qualitative or quantitative methods started to emerge. Since the main aim of this thesis is to have a better understanding of the phenomenon of trafficking and re-trafficking from a social work's point of view in a specific context, Albania, I reputed it could be more appropriate to carry out a case study.

According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Bexter and Jack 2008:545).

Within a qualitative study "case study approach works best when the researcher want to investigate an issue in-depth and provide an explanation that can cope with the complexity and subtlety of real life situation [...] the use of more than one research method sits comfortably with the case study approach" (Denscombe 2007:38)

Within the present study interviews, more specific semi-structured interviews, with social workers who daily work in the shelters/centre for women who have been trafficked was performed during the research. Six key informants were also selected for semi-structured interviews.

In addition secondary sources have been used, in particular reports written by international agencies and institutions, international and local NPOs and NGOs, academic articles mainly written within development, social work and gender disciplines.

4.1. Qualitative approach: Case study

For the case study semi-structured interviews were used in order to express the viewpoints of the interviewed subject's (Becker, 1996:321). As it is stated in Ben Crewe and Shadd Maruna's article *Self-Narratives and Ethnographic Fieldwork* (2006), "in order to understand why people behave the way they do, it is important to understand the personal myths by which they live" (Crewe and Maruna, 2006:122) so by interviewing social workers their representations of the phenomenon of trafficking and re-trafficking have been disclosed and a better understanding of the practice is presented. The intention to use semi-structured and "open ended" interviews was also aimed to get deeper insight by allowing them to expose more freely their points of view (Yin 2003: 90).

All the data and information collected on the field are the result of three main qualitative strategies:

- Informal conversation and semi-structured interviews with six key informants. These conversations were useful and fruitful for the research process in order to get an in depth description of the phenomenon in Albania, in order to understand the path of social policy and strategies shared by social services during the years and to hear about the phenomenon from different points of view. The intent was also to make maximum use of development professionals that have direct experiences on different levels within the complexity of the phenomenon. More or less formal conversations were carried out with: the director of the Anti-Trafficking Unit of the Albanian Minister of the Interior, the CIES Desk Officer in Rome, the Executive Director of Tjeter Vizion, the CIES Project Manager in Tirana, the Coordinator of the Daily Centre run by Tjeter Vizion and the Assistant of CIES Project Manager in Tirana. They have extensive experience about trafficking in Albania since they have been operative and active in the phenomenon since it was presented in the country. Moreover they represent different institutions and agencies, which operate at national and international level and are representing both the state, government agencies and the civil society. These interviews were really precious for the

data collection and analysis. All the key informants, even though they had an institutional role were honest respondent trying to highlighting both the success and the remaining challenge for both the government and the civil society. Interview guide for key-informant interviews is attached as Appendix 2.

The Italian Non-Governmental organization CIES, Centre for Development Information and Education, was chosen because I carried out a 20 weeks internship with them in which the attention was mainly focus on the phenomenon of trafficking in women in South-East Europe. CIES has been active in the fight against human trafficking in Albania since 1997. They introduce me at the Director of the National Anti-Trafficking Unit of the Albanian Ministry of the Interior and all the other key informants with whom they have a long and tight relation of collaboration.

- Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eight social workers representing three shelters active in Vlora, Tirana and Elbasan and one, the only, national reception centre for victims of trafficking run by the state. Interview guide for social workers interviews is attached as an Appendix 1.

- Secondary data was analyzed within the research process. Such as secondary sources: official documents prepared by UN agencies, EU and EC, governmental documentation prepared by the Albanian Minister of Interior and the National Anti-Trafficking Unit, reports written by Albanian NPOs, international NGOs and articles from scientific journals were used.

Before performing the interviews ethical consideration have emerged.

4.2. Ethical consideration

As Donna Haraway perfectly underlines in her article about positionality and “situated knowledges” no research is ‘objective’ and bias-free (Haraway 1988). This reflection took me to the words of Devereux: “the subjectivity of the observer influences the course of the observed even as radically as inspection influences the behavior of an electron” (cit. in Behar R. 1996:6). While I was asking questions or listening during the interviews I was always thinking if my data was mirroring my prejudice and previous knowledge or if it was just a result of my observations. I believe that reflecting, at this stadium of the research, is very important in order to better understand our position in the research, in my case an Italian/European white woman/researcher/social worker in Albania. While writing or thinking certain aspects we undoubtedly create knowledge, which creates power structures and social realities (Foucault in Venn 2006). A risk that is always present when doing research within the feminist post-colonial frame is to listen, understand and write with a “neocolonial mentality of post-colonial” (Lal J. here from Wolf 1996:190). The reflection on my positionality, the structures of power relations and ethical issues also convinced me to interview only social workers and not the trafficked women *per se*. Sex, sexuality and some personal traumas are topics which deserve a certain grade of trust in the relationship in order to be allowed to discuss. Due to the restricted amount of time that I spent in Albania I decided not to interview or collect any data directly from any of the women. Moreover I realized, during the literature review that there are many reports, articles and books reporting stories told from the point of view of the women or advices for best practices given by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or International Institution but it is rare to find literature that focus the attention on the point of view of the social workers who work with trafficked women everyday. As aforementioned social workers are an important ring of the chain of the phenomenon and their perceptions, realities, and difficulties can play a crucial part in order to better understand the phenomenon and improve social policies and practices. Moreover social workers could be the bridge between, using a post-colonial terminology, the ‘subaltern’ and the

‘intellectuals’; in this specific case between all the trafficked women and all of the authors of reports and articles written by the “academic élite” (Loomba 2005).

Almost all of the interviews were recorded on tape under the informed consent of the interviewed persons. The goals and intention with the research were always explained before each interview and I presented myself as an “independent” student enrolled in a Swedish Master Programme in Development Studies. Only two interviews were not recorded due to the will of the interviewed persons, in these cases field notes were taken instead. Real names of the social workers were never recorded or mentioned in the research in order to maintain their anonymity.

The places where the interviews took place were decided by the social workers. The space and the setting are also important for different reasons: as Michael Stein states in his essay *Your place or Mine: the Geography of Social Research* “The field its self, the places wherein observed behavior occurs, needs to be considered in its own right. Issues of place affect social research throughout the process” (Stein M. in Hobbs D. and Wright R. 2006:59). Places are important because different places can create different situations and different conversations. Due to privacy’s issue of the women living at the shelters/centre and the aim of the study interviews were performed in the offices of the different organizations. As Stein underline in his article “The interaction between place and person is mutually reinforcing. This reciprocity means that knowledge of place gives one some idea of the sorts of people, and kinds of behavior, to be encountered there” (Stein M. 2006:64).

4.3. Interviews

Eight in-depth semi-structured interviews with social workers were conducted within the whole research. The social workers that have been interviewed were selected directly by the staff of the shelter that an Albanian key informant working for CIES in Tirana had contacted on my behalf. In Albania there are only four shelters that are all run by local NPOs and one national reception centre for victims of trafficking run by the state. The centre managed by the state and one of the other shelters are both based in Tirana, while the other three shelters are placed in the cities of Vlora, Elbasan and Gyrokastra.

Interviews were conducted with two social workers from each shelter/centre except for the one based in Gyrokastra since there no opportunity to go was presented. Having the privilege to interview social workers active in almost all of the shelters and centre for victims of trafficking in Albania gave the research a broad and deep understanding of trafficking and re-trafficking on the national context.

The interviews were meant to gather specific information about the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking in Albania, the social workers perceptions of the phenomenon, concrete practices and methodology used in the shelters and difficulties encounter within their daily work.

The guidelines on how to conduct a semi-structured and neutral interview were based on the guidelines and theoretical/methodological framework suggested by Flick (2006).

Interviews were performed in Italian, Albanian and English, depending on the social workers languages skills. When the interviewed persons answered in Albanian a key informant, always the same for all the interviews, translated from Albanian to Italian. All the interviews have been translated into English by the author.

4.4. Reliability/Validity

The verification of qualitative research is vital. The basis for verifying it has been validity, reliability and objectivity, where validity refers to the accuracy and precision of the data and the question is: “are the data the right kind for investigating the topic and have they been measured correctly?” (Denscombe 2007:296).

According to Yin (2003) reliability of the research means “to be sure that if a late investigator follows the same procedures as described by an earlier investigator and conducted the same case study all over again, he/she should arrive to the same findings and conclusions” (Yin 2003:37).

According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993) “the canons of reliability for quantitative research may simply not work for qualitative research” (Cohen et al. 2008:148). Two researchers who are studying a single case may come up with different findings and both set of findings might be reliable (Cohen et al. 2008:149). Therefore the concept of validity in the qualitative research is more important than reliability (Flick 2006:371).

In order to make the research more valid, accurate and appropriate the researcher can use triangulation (Denscombe 2007:297). Triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources, data collection methods or evaluators. In qualitative research triangulation is used to establish construct validation (Crishna 2006:224). In order to increase the validity of the study, the data has been collected with different techniques: semi-structured interviews with social workers, interviews with key informants and an analysis of secondary sources consisted in official documents.

Another key concept within qualitative research is objectivity. The dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity is an open discussion in research. The researcher should be as objective as possible without forgetting his own roots and education and the understanding that his perceptions are, in a way, subjective. Simpson

(2006) explains this concept by saying that a researcher should “subjectivise the objective relation to the subject” (Simpson 2006:127). This is a complex issue which has to be discussed and can be shift also within the interview process. The researcher should be transparent and understand his position and authority in the field. The process of research is complicated “by the action of multiple subjectivities and political constrains beyond the control of the writer.” (Clifford 1988:480). Before performing interviews in Albania an extensive amount of literature have been analyzed and read within the trafficking and re-trafficking discourses and practices. In this way it was easier to grasp the salient points of the research during the interviews. Moreover the decision to quote parts of the interviews within the analysis has been dictated from the will of the author to be as objective and possible and try to expose the reader to the same materials.

4.5. Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the study could be that not all the shelters/centres in the country have been included in the research. The centre that was not included was the one based in Gyrokasra as it was difficult to reach within the available timeframe.

Another limitation could be that interviews were conducted in different languages. Perhaps one of the most difficult stages within interviews is to ask in a comprehensible and direct way and to receive truthful answers. Misunderstandings in questions and answers, especially if more than one language is used, can give slightly different views on things and perception. However the problem has been faced by asking more specific questions and for clarification of concepts when not completely understood by the author.

Finally a last limitation could be that the interviewed persons were selected by the head of the shelters/centre, which might increase the biasness of the result of the

study. The social workers selected might provide biased information since they could be the ones reflecting the ideas preferable for the NPOs themselves.

5. Social workers between theory and practice

The following sections present the analysis of the interviews, the complexity of the role of social workers within the context and the limitations and strengths of the social work practices in relation to trafficking and re-trafficking.

5.1. The complexity of trafficking

Many reports, and also the interviews that was conducted for this thesis in Albania with the social workers, underline how the phenomenon of trafficking is not anymore an episodic phenomenon linked to the changes, which characterized the Balkans area during the 90s. Nowadays trafficking in persons is considered to be a structural phenomenon, which has serious consequences on the social, economic and organizational net of Albania and Europe, on the perception of the Otherness and on the cooperation between local, national and international institutions and agencies.

As in other countries in the Balkan Region, the phenomenon of human trafficking in Albania emerged and developed as a post 1990s phenomenon. It intensified during the post-conflict period which characterized the Balkan area.

The first part of the interviews focused on the social workers perception of the phenomenon of trafficking in Albania, how it is shaped nowadays and how it is different from the past. In these sections the reader is accompanied throughout all the steps which characterize the women´s travels. From a brief overview of the push factors, through to the arrival at the shelters and rehabilitation centre since

the independent life which sometimes can be hard and ones again trick the women into re-trafficking or other forms of exploitation.

5.1.1. Push factors

The main causes or push factors of women trafficking in Albania identified by the social workers and key informants during the interviews are many: patriarchal mentality inherited from the past, feminization of poverty, being victims of domestic violence, unemployment, low education level and divorce.

Some reports identify being part of an ethnic minority, Roma or Egypt, as a risk factor even if the latest report, e.g. Meshi et al 2009, USAID 2007, noticed that 90% of the women who stayed in the shelters are in fact from the ethnic majority of the population (USAID 2007:8). None of the interviewed social workers or key informants has emphasized as being part of an ethnic minority a risk factor.

Some of the social workers also highlighted a new interesting phenomenon: it is not just un-educated girls who are more likely to be trafficked but there are a growing number of university students, especially coming from rural areas, who in order to pay for their studies has become 'consent' sex workers. This is seen by social workers as a risk factor for trafficking.

“I remember the story of a girl, coming from a poor family from a rural area of the internal part of the country. Her parents divorced and they did not have so much money. At the second year of university she met a guy who started to help her with some money. Then she started to go with other guys who helped her to finish the studies. After one year they had trafficked her to Spain. She was really angry at her family, because she thought they knew because they never asked her how she could pay for the university and an apartment in the city, they just told her to study [...]”.

In order to cope with these aspects of trafficking social workers' practice is organized in two main fields of intervention: protection of trafficked women and prevention of the push factors.

5.1.2. Recruitment

The phenomenon of Albanians trafficking in women is really complex and it has undergone deep changes within the last decade, which also has influenced the social work. As a structured phenomenon it started to get public attention around 1997 when it became a major problem for the Albanian society. From the information collected through interviews and from different reports published by national and international organizations, e.g. US State Department and the different Albanian organization aforementioned, if during the 90s brutal violence and kidnapping characterized the **recruitment** phase of the traffic process nowadays girls and women are more likely to be tricked or deceive by traffickers (that could be men or women¹¹) who falsely engage with women, promising them a good work abroad or a wedding. Besides, due to an extensive work of information and prevention done by social workers within the country nowadays some women are aware that they are going to be sex workers, sometimes through a bargaining with criminal organizations, as this represents a way to escape their condition of poverty and uncertainty in personal and family life. Out of all the social workers only one said that she had never met a woman who knew before that she was going to be a sex worker. Others stated:

“(...) we can say that now girls are more aware about what they are going to do, before they were more trick/deceive for engagement, a possible work because they did not have information about the phenomenon. Nowadays we cannot say that they don't know, there is much more information through the media, newspaper,

¹¹ In opposition at the stereotype, which defines traffickers, being male and young recent researches shown that traffickers can be both man and women. Interview extract “The situation is more difficult also because once the woman rich a certain age, when they are old, they (trafficked women n.d.a.) are pushed from traffickers to recruit other women. So they enter in re-trafficking in both parts: trafficked and traffickers.” See also: Agustín (2008); Siegel D. and De Blank S. (2010).

brochures. Moreover we work more with at risk community. We organize meeting ad-hoc with schools. Now within schools trafficking is a curricular topic within sociology subject. Social workers go also in small villages of rural areas in order to provide information so they know. [...] what they don't know is the modality and methodology that traffickers will use in order to exploit them. Anyway are rare the girls who knew before" (extract from an interview with a social worker).

The recruitment "at will" has been also analyzed in the *Annual Report 2009* written and produced by the Psycho-Social Centre Vatra. During the elaboration of the data they collected in 2008 they stated that ten women on a total of thirty-six had admitted to have been recruited at will; the authors of the report challenge this aspect by saying that there is no such at will trafficking in Albania due to the patriarchal mentality and because women know prostitution is punishable by law.

Another important aspect of the recruitment is that a small percentage of the women have been trafficked by being deceived from family members or members of the same community. In this way women are much less likely to dehumanize their clients because the traffic situation have been built around social contractual arrangements and the checks and balance within such transnational migration networks are socially determined as much as they are economically driven (Desai and Potter 2008). As an interviewed social worker describes

"We met many cases when it was the family who actually sold girls and they knew what the daughter was going to do. Others didn't know at the beginning but once they knew they submit, sometimes under threat. They were consent about the job that their daughters were going to do but they agreed anyway also because they (women n.b.a.) took some money home, as remittances, so as we say in our popular saying the families closed an eye and a hear (in order not to pretend to not know n.b.a.)".

These new aspects of the recruitment phase influence the work of the social workers who have more difficulties in making the women understanding that they in fact are actual victims of trafficking and that they as such have rights to get social and economic protection both in Albania and abroad.

"Now traffickers do not use physical violence anymore but psychological violence which is worst because women get used to that".

5.1.3. Transportation

Women pushed or forced by a migration dream, accept and /or suffer from the violence, the deceit and exploitation of illegal journeys, which could be outside or inside the Albanian borders. Women were more likely to be trafficked in Italy and Greece which since the mid of 2000 were the two main destination countries. After 2004, since Italy has strengthened its border controls Greece became both a transit and a destination country (U.S. Department of State 2009; Lesko and Puka 2009; Meshi et al. 2009). Nowadays in fact women are not so often **transported** outside the country but it is more likely that they get exploited within Albania; this phenomenon is known as internal trafficking.

There are different nuances within the definition of internal trafficking and during the interviews a long debate about what is internal trafficking and the difference from exploitation of prostitution has been carried out. According to some interviewed social workers internal trafficking can be consider a synonymous of daily prostitution as long as there is someone who exploits the woman by keeping part or the total of the income. The debate became more complex when they were asked to define the word 'consent' or 'exploit/consent for necessity'. According to Lesko and Puka (2009) "there are objective reasons showing that voluntary trafficking in Albania, be that internal or external, does not exist and cannot exist for as long as will have this socio-economic situation" (Lesko and Puka 2009:28). For other social workers instead if the woman is consent and willing to be a sex worker then it is not internal trafficking or exploitation but prostitution and as such seen as a 'normal' job.

This debate, which is still an ongoing one, has raised the necessity of social workers for a clearer, more comprehensive and shared definition of internal trafficking, and the differences from mere exploitation. As an interviewed social worker highlighted:

“Sometimes I wonder to myself and reflect about the topic. I think there is a need of new amendments of the law for new definitions of the phenomenon. If there are new definitions about internal trafficking, external trafficking and even re-trafficking there are new status for women and then new and better structures for them”.

There were different factors that influenced the shift from trafficking of girls and women exploited outside the Albanian borders, into internal trafficking. The main factors are (1) the efforts made by the Albanian government and governments of the neighbor countries in border controls, and (2) the awareness campaigns and information meetings on recognition and identification of trafficking victims.

Internal trafficking and/or prostitution have different forms. As Donadel and Martini (2004) claim nowadays the so called “indoor prostitutions activity workplace” is more common and caused by some repression actions taken by the police in the streets, to the actions of the magistracy in the criminal field in the repression of trafficking and sexual exploitation, to the social intervention supporting the victims of trafficking which are some external factors which pushed the traffickers and the criminal net to transform the phenomenon (Donadel & Martini 2004:10). Some social workers during the interviews underlined as, according to their perception of the phenomenon, internal trafficking could soon be transformed again since in 2010 the EU has decided for the liberalization of visas.

“Now with the liberalization of visas I think, but it is just my personal impression, I think now they were exploited inside Albania just because they could not exploit and transport them abroad for a lack of documents or a tighter border control, with the liberalization it is easier to take them abroad again”. “Thus, now with the liberalization of the visas it is easier to go abroad [...]”.

5.2. Strategy of interventions

Even though every shelter and centre has its own way of working, they share some strategies and tools in order to identify, rehabilitate and re-integrate the

trafficked women. The whole process of protection and re-integration of trafficked women is made of different steps:

5.2.1. Identification and referral

The very first identification is done by the police through interviews at the borders or where the women are first suspected to be victims of trafficking. It is always the national police who refer the girls and women to the shelters/centre. In this phase the policeman have the crucial role of the first identification and the first approach. A social worker of the referral shelter or centre goes to the police station in order to meet the VoTs, perform another first interview and then accompany them to the shelter/centre that is closest to where she was living before, or, in accordance with the woman's will, to another area. The identification phase is done using national standard interview's format.

5.2.2. Accommodation

During this first step of the rehabilitation process the women are accommodated within one of the shelters or the national reception centre. Basic needs are met as food, clothing etc. The national Reception centre is the only closed one, with national police controlling the centre twenty-four hours a day. Women are not allowed to go out for the first period due to high-risk security issues. The shelters instead are semi open since women are allowed to go out to work or to school even though they are always accompanied by a social worker. The shelter that is run by Psycho-Social Centre Vatra is also controlled by private police twenty-four hours. They had national police until 2006 then the State decided not to fund protection anymore so they had to seek private help instead. During the first weeks the woman are assigned to a referent social worker. Social workers work within a multi-disciplinary staff composed by a doctor and a nurse who initially do the first assessment of the health status of the woman e.g. sexual transmitted

diseases, level of physical abuse etc; a lawyer who help and support the women during their court process during the eventual identification process of traffickers and so on; a psychologist who is responsible of counseling and support especially in cases of women with mental problems due to traumas suffered during the trafficking; a teacher who check the educational level of the women. After a few weeks, which is the average time needed for the staff to understand the overall situation of the women, they propose a help plan to the woman who will decide if she will accept it, if she wants to change something or if she chooses to leave the shelter.

5.2.3. Rehabilitation

The rehabilitation phase starts when the woman decides to stay at the shelter. The relationship with the social workers get strengthens and usually is the step when women start to tell their stories to social workers. In this phase it is really important that each woman have psychological and social support. Beside, social workers help her to understand what she would like to do in her future, if she would like to study or find a work. All the NPOs which runs the shelters and the Centre for Reception of VoTs collaborate with the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity. This collaboration can be translated in free vocational training for trafficked women and, in theory, more possibility of employment once the re-integration path is concluded. This period could go on for about 3-4 months but it depends on the expressed need of the women. It can happen that, due to a long juridical process, the women need protection for a longer time or due to strong mental pathology the women are not able to live in an independent way and others structures, as hospital do not want to take care of her. The aim of the rehabilitation process is the empowering of the women, the treatment of diseases or dependency from drugs and/or alcohol.

5.2.4. Re-integration

The re-integration process is conducted on two different fronts. The first is re-integration within the social net by providing the women access to school or vocational training, especially as hairdressers, computer courses, languages courses, professional tailoring and cooking courses. The vocational trainings, which are free of charge, should be the bridge between the shelter and a more independent life for the women. The other front on which the re-integration process takes place is within the families of the women. All interviewed social workers highlight the importance of the support of the family both on an economical level and on the social and psychological one which influence the acceptance or the stigma of the woman. In these last years the support of the family has become less crucial for some women who, in accordance with the social workers, have decided not to contact them or to go back and try to find a job in another city. The relationship with the family is established through continuous visits from the staff of the shelters that help the families to better understand and accept the women.

5.2.5. Semi-independent accommodation

This is the step after the shelter where the women live on their own in semi-autonomy apartments. Semi-autonomy means that some expenses, like the rent of the apartment, are covered by the NPO who run the shelter. This period, usually lasts about six months and it helps the women to save up some money which they will use in the future to start their new life.

5.2.6. Monitoring

This is the last phase of the process and usually not all the women who went through the process have maintained contact with the staff of the shelter. As a

policy the national Centre for victims of Trafficking cut all the contacts with the women as soon as they leave the centre. Often women, after leaving the centre, are referred to the shelters in order to continue their re-integration process or they go back to their families. Monitoring is as crucial as the other phases during the first period of independency; in fact women are more likely to be at risk of re-trafficking during this time. As the IOM (2010) report on re-trafficking highlighted trafficked persons are more likely to be vulnerable of re-trafficking immediately after having exited a trafficking situation and en route to assistance, especially within the first two years (Jobe 2010:11).

All these steps are not mandatory for women since all the process is decided together with them. Some women can decide to attend just the vocational training while some others can decide to stay just a few days in the shelters and leave afterwards. Since all the women have different stories, different dreams and different ways to cope with the situation all of the projects are planned ad hoc for each woman. The main goal for all of the interviewed social workers is the empowerment of the women so that they can better face the re-integration process and be successful in it. Another aspect that all the interviewed social workers highlighted is the emotional and psychological support for strengthening the women's capabilities.

5.3. Re-integration process as preventive work to re-trafficking

In the next sub-chapters a brief overview and analysis of the main causes of re-trafficking highlighted by social workers is presented. The factors described below, are the most common causes of re-trafficking and the ones more likely to be addressed by social workers during the re-integration process.

5.3.1. *Employment and economic support*

During the whole rehabilitation and re-integration period the social workers invest a lot of energy preparing the women to the life “after” the shelter and the moment when they have to do one more step into their real life. Many difficulties are encountered by Albanian women once they leave the shelters or the centre. For some women a grant, in form of a micro-credit, was offered from different NGOs which could help them to start, as entrepreneur, their own business. All the stories told by social workers about micro-entrepreneur have a positive happy ending. However, as the data provided by shelters highlighted, de facto few women could benefit from them. All the other women had to face, once they were living alone, the first obstacle: **employment and economic support**. In a context of economic crisis it is difficult to find a job and when this actually does happen it is not often well remunerative. Lately a new law has been approved which recognizes a little amount of money (as economic support) for victims of trafficking but as all social workers said “*it is not even enough to buy cigarettes*”.

5.3.2. *Motivation to work*

Another difficulty encountered by women and social workers within the employment sphere is, surprising or not, the weak **motivation to work** or the lack of the “*culture of work*”:

“It is not difficult to find a job, the difficult thing is the money, the salary, and the motivation to work. When she was trafficked even if the woman didn’t keep the money she had the idea that she was earning enough money, high “salary”, while now she thinks I work at the sweatshop, I earn 15.000LEK (more or less US\$ 150) every month and this money is not enough to live. I think if I don’t get exploited but I work for myself I earn more money, I already did it, it is not that is the first time that I do that, so they want to go back. This is a main risk for re-trafficking because they think they will go back to work alone but it is very difficult to work alone, it is impossible to work without a tutor they need “a tutor” a pimp so they go back to trafficking. Maybe this time they can make a pact with someone and they earn more money than before but also the opposite can happen because they are older and they are not “preferable” as before.”

Relating to the wave of motivation to work another social worker says:

“Some girls have been trafficked in a early age that they don’t know any other way of living, in a way or another they aren’t used with other forms of life, they didn’t see other form of solutions, for some of course, not all of them, it is hard to understand that they have to go to a job place and stay there 8 hours [...] or call when they are sick and not just stay at home [...] sometimes they seek rights but not responsibility”.

The reasons could be a post-traumatic stress disorders or just the fact that they have never been working before because they experienced trafficking at an early age.

5.3.3. Stigma

Another risk factor for re-trafficking is the **stigma** that sometimes trafficked women have to carry with them. Due to the strong patriarchal society which characterizes Albania many women re-integrated within the society have to face the stigma that the family, the society and the institutions attribute them. All social workers underlined how the family is the core of the Albanian society and how crucial the support of the family is in order to have a positive re-integration.

“From our work we see how the family is the main factor which influences the re-integration process. If the family does not support them women are without any support, of course they have the support of the organizations but that is not enough because they always seek something more, something that is more spiritual you know, only the family can give them that support, women are more likely to be vulnerable to go back to a situation of re-trafficking”

Even if during these last years a lot of steps forwards have been taken in order to raise awareness and improve knowledge about trafficking, also within public offices in order to prevent an escape of information about trafficked persons’ identity, the stigma is still playing a major role as a push factor for re-trafficking.

“I have met many re-trafficked girls during this years, the girls were judged a lot, the family abandon them and there were a lot of prejudice and stigma, as we say in Albania they were pointed with the finger and even if they didn’t want to go back they had to leave the country because of the stigma. For the women it was really difficult to live here.”

5.3.4. Housing

The **housing** problem has been recognized by most interviewed social workers. Prices and quality of the apartments is not proportional and often women cannot afford to rent an apartment with the salary that they earn. The situation is even worse if they have children and live in the capital. Housing and accommodation is one of the primary basic needs a person has to answer to.

All the above mentioned aspects of the re-integration process are real problems that women have to face once they are out of the shelters or the semi-autonomy apartments. The risk of re-trafficking soon after this phase, as stated also in the IOM report, is especially high within the first two years.

As a social worker highlights there are very few cases of completely positive integration but not so many girls and women are re-trafficked. A spontaneous question is: where do all the other women go and what do they do? According to the social workers they “survive” by being sex workers exploited within a trafficking situation or not.

As one of the key informant highlighted *“It seems that the tools in order to survive within the country have been given by the trafficking situation and not by the rehabilitation and re-integration process”*.

5.3.5 The network

All the shelters and the National reception centre work in tight collaboration between themselves and the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Education. Due to the diversity of needs within the group of women it is fundamental that the network includes as many actors as possible. All the interviewed social workers and the key informants stressed the positive, useful and functional cooperation between all the members and actors involved in the prevention, protection and persecution phases. The collaboration between the NGOs and the government can be translated into a lobbying activity done by the local NPOs which ask the state for more comprehensive social policies while international NGOs have the crucial role of supporting the local organization especially by funding them. All social workers highlighted the funding problem. Since all the shelters are run by Albanian NPOs they are completely dependent from international funding. They claim a more active and supportive role of the state especially within the economic issues. Almost all the NPOs has underlined how the lack of funding, especially in this specific socio-political context when Albania is a potential candidate to enter the EU with an exponential run down of development and cooperation European funds, challenge the social work activities. As a social worker underlines

“if we don’t have so much money to pay the salary of social workers or have a full human capacity in the shelter how can we think to plan long term projects with women?”

5.4. Difficulties

All the social workers interviewed in the study agreed in saying that the difficulty that they encounter the most is connected with the personal risk that they face every day by working with such a complex and problematic target group. As it has been presented during the interviews, social workers are at risk not only because

there is the possibility to be recognized and threaten by traffickers but also because the target group sometimes can assume aggressive behaviors against the social workers or against other women. Some other characteristics that can be considered as factors that challenge the work of the social workers are: psychiatric diseases (e.g. borderline), dependency from different drugs or alcohol, highly contagious diseases as AIDS/HIV, Hepatitis or a combination of the three.

The social workers are usually supervised by a psychologist in order to avoid getting burned out and to control the stress that this work may cause to them. According to one interviewed social worker they are advised to change work or target group after 4-5 years within the shelters.

Other difficulties highlighted during the interviews by the social workers are connected with the problems that the women encounter during the re-integration problem as the unemployment or housing and the frustration that the of social workers felt from the inability to offer concrete help to women.

Yet another problem encountered by the social workers had to do with making the women understand the possibilities of being a risk of re-trafficking.

“Most of them are very isolated in the centre so it is difficult for us explaining them what is going to happen outside and even though we tell them they think could never happen to them”.

The problems connected to the funding of the NPOs have also been highlighted by several social workers. One criticism connected with NPOs is that they are completely dependent on foreign aid. Since Albania is a candidate in order to enter the EU donations from international NGOs are slowly decreasing. As more than one social worker highlighted it is problematic to plan rehabilitation and long term re-integration projects with the women when the organization have access to a very limited amount of money.

6. Conclusion

This work has sought to provide an analysis of the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking in Albania. The gender lenses used within the study offered new insights in order to start to recognize the problems at its roots and through the intersectional approach, which take into consideration all the specific characteristics and factors that represent women as age, level of education, class etc. to discover and overcome some myths about trafficking and re-trafficking.

As a source of data semi-structured interviews with social workers were conducted, together with key-informant interviews and analysis of secondary data.

The first myth is that re-trafficked women do not represent an interesting proportion of the phenomenon. All the interviewed social workers highlighted that there are cases when women are accommodated in the shelters more than once.

According to the interviewed social workers re-trafficking can have different forms. In some cases women are deceive again into the phenomenon, trafficked, again, to new countries. Other times women voluntarily get in contact with exploiters because of unemployment, stigma and lack of social and economic support.

The main causes of re-trafficking identified in the study could be divided into two main categories: external factors as unemployment, poor housing, lack of social services like kindergarten, poverty and stigma and a rooted patriarchal society; and internal factors as the motivation to work and the will to change their present condition.

Social workers extensively underlined the problem of the mentality of the Albanian society being described as widely patriarchal that stigmatize trafficked women which does not let them re-integrate into society.

Another myth, which has been shaking within the study, is the one that recognizes the low level of education of the women as being a crucial risk factor. During the interviews with social workers it emerged that some girls and young women enrolled into university programs are at risk of trafficking because of the poor tools they have in order to afford all the costs and expenses that comes when registered in university.

Another interesting finding is that poverty in this study should be intended as relative poverty and not intended in absolute terms. As Kempadoo (2005) highlight in her study

“The attribution to trafficking to poverty fails to explain why some places, such as Thailand, are both points of destination and points of origin of trafficking. Rather it seems clear that relative poverty (inequality) is more relevant to trafficking” (Kempadoo 2005:48).

The analysis of the qualitative data collected also helped to raise some crucial questions about the need of newer and clearer definitions of trafficking, internal trafficking, re-trafficking, exploitation and prostitution and ‘consent’ on which social workers can plan more efficient strategies and practices. This has been recognized by the social workers as being one of the difficulties encountered in their daily work. It highlighted the importance that representation of the problems has within social work practice. Using Hager’s words “the ways in which certain problems are represented, differences are played out, and social coalitions on specific meanings somehow emerge” (Hajer 1995:44 cited in Doezema 2005:63).

Other difficulties encountered by the social workers during their work are connected to the role of the state, which, according to them, should take a more clear position towards the phenomenon and be more present by giving economically support to NPOs and to the women directly. Many improvements have been done as the late endorsement of a new law, which recognizes that all trafficked women are entitled to an economic support, even though, according to the social workers, this is still very trifling. However it is a step forward towards the recognition by the state of the difficulties encounter by trafficked women

within the re-integration process. It also underlines the will of the state and government to have an active and crucial role in the fight against the root factors of the problem. It can also be seen as recognition from the state of its pro-active role within the process since they no longer can count on an extensive support by international organizations.

The study also highlights the immense political role of the social workers. During the years not only their daily work within the shelters has been fruitful but also their lobbying process towards the state and international organization has been precious in order to have a better understanding of the phenomenon and to improve the social workers strategies. This has been recognized as one characteristic of the profile of international social work, which overcomes the local barriers. Their role has also been precious to help to focus the attention of Albanian social policies not only on women well-being, which is a necessary condition, but also on the active role of women's agency.

Moreover the interviews with the social workers have uncovered another 'ghost population': the one composed by all the women who do not have a positive re-integration process. However some of these women are not officially recognized as re-trafficked since they did not return to the shelters even though the social workers know that they often go back to prostitution exploited or not. The number of women that one interviewed social worker defined to be:

“the ones who do not have a positive re-integration or known re-trafficked situation. The ones who try to survive in the limbo of the unclear internal trafficking/prostitution”.

The literature examined and the empirical evidences (which consists of interviews with key informants and female social workers) highlight the complexity of the different realities in which women who have been trafficked must live once they are reintegrated within the social net in Albania and also the complexity of gender structures in which the women has to live before and after their trafficking experience.

Thus, it emerges the need for “feminist social work” that addresses trafficking and re-trafficking by placing women and the elimination of structural gender inequalities at the centre of its practice and the attempt to challenge those power relations expressed both within the everyday life in private or family-based relationship and the one occurring within the public arena (Dominelli 2002).

This study also highlighted the complexity of ‘nature of women’ underlining that there is no single or simple way to deal with trafficking, especially re-trafficking, and a serious fight against the patriarchal structure is required in order to alleviate women’s oppression and maybe some day overcome these atrocities.

7. Possibilities for future research

The study has helped to highlight the complexity of the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking. Some crucial aspects have been highlighted but, due to the limited amount of time and space they have not been studied or presented in-depth. One example is the phenomenon of internal trafficking which perhaps needs to be furthered studied especially on the national level. The intersectional approach could give many interesting insights in order to understand who the women and the traffickers are and which are the reasons behind such a phenomenon.

Moreover would it be interesting to perform a quantitative study within all the shelters, national reception centers and the centre based in Gyrokastra in order to try to have a broader and complete overview of the phenomenon of re-trafficking. If it would prove to be difficult to quantify trafficking as a transnational phenomenon due to the lack of definitions or “registers” for illegal migrants re-trafficking could easily be studied by having access to the Albanian national database and through in-depth interviews with many of the women. Further studies and researches on re-trafficking could be helpful to social workers in order to better plan their strategies and fruitful for social policies planner in order to

offer better services and structures that give a concrete and focused answer to the women's actual needs.

There are many different possibilities for future research and this study can be a good base for further analysis of the phenomena of trafficking and re-trafficking, in order to finally challenge the darkness that imprisons so many ghosts against their will.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide for Social workers

1. How long have you been working here?
2. What have you worked with before? (related to this problem or to other)
3. How did it come that you work within the shelter? (Why did you choose to work with trafficking and women)
4. How do you define women trafficking as a phenomenon and how do you define it in the Albanian context/what is trafficking? The difference with prostitution?
5. Could you describe your “typical day”, what you concretely do in the everyday work?
6. Which are the most common obstacles or problems, which you encounter in your work?
7. Which philosophy or working idea is behind the strategies of social workers in this shelter/daily centre/?
8. What, according to you, is the status of trafficked women who lives here and get social protection?
9. Do you think social policy and social protection is adequate in order to reintroduce trafficked women into society or would you like to change something? If yes what?
10. Have you had experience of working with women who are been trafficked more than once?
11. How do You define re-trafficking? When do you consider someone to have been re-trafficked? Explain the question, or take another strategy, ask about how women in trafficking act, for example: stay they in Italy? Do they return? etc.
12. How frequently re-trafficking occurs in your area, if you know? Are you aware of many cases? Which are your sources?
13. How do you get to know about their experience of re-trafficking? Do you ask any specific questions within the first meeting with the woman?
14. Why do you think these women go back to trafficking?
15. Which groups do you consider to be most at risk of being re-trafficked?
16. Which factors, in your opinion, and/or experience, make it less likely that a person will be re-trafficked?
17. What do you think is the aim of social workers working within the phenomenon of trafficking? What do you think are your main goals as social workers?

Appendix 2 – Interview guide for key-informants

1. According to your experience, how the phenomenon of trafficking has changed throughout the time?
2. Could you describe the implementation process of social policies?
3. How much Albanian social policies have been influenced by international organizations and how much by local civil society?
4. Which are the positive aspects of Albanian social policies and which goals have been achieved?
5. Which are the negative aspects of Albanian social policies? And which difficulties do they encounter?
6. What do you think is the main role of those social workers who work on trafficking issues?
7. Could you tell me more about the phenomenon of re-trafficking?
8. What are the main causes of it?