Humanitarianized development?
Anti-trafficking reconfigured as “humanitarian reason”

Abstract:
Humanitarian aid agencies increasingly engage wider implications of their work beyond a tradition-
al concern with immediate relief aid. Humanitarian arguments have also become central to policy
legitimacy in a range of contexts outside the humanitarian aid sector. Hence, humanitarianism has
broadened considerably in scope. Based on research on human trafficking programs in the Mekong
region this paper considers a case where a humanitarian discourse is shaped through a temporal nar-
rowing. Anti-trafficking has over the years moved away from a development discourse of poverty
reduction and long-term well-being of populations to become increasingly shaped by a humanitari-
an emergency logic of exceptionalism. Hence, rather than humanitarianism expanding into some-
thing more than immediate reduction of human suffering, anti-trafficking in the Mekong region
demonstrates the reverse; that is, development modalities contract into a concern for the immedi-
ateness of human suffering. Drawing attention to how operative logics of development and humani-
tarian discourses intersect epitomizes a shift in how legitimization, mobilization and de-
politicization take place, which in turn transform actors and practices. Furthermore, I suggest the
different temporal registers within development and humanitarian discourses help explain why there
has been a move from the former to the latter.

Keywords: human trafficking, "humanitarian reason", humanitarianism, interventionism, develop-
ment

Humanitarianism has expanded considerably in scope beyond a Dunantist concern with immediate
relief aid to address wider implications of humanitarian action  (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Bornstein
& Redfield, 2011; Calhoun, 2008; Chandler, 2010; Feldman & Ticktin, 2010; Gabiam, 2012;
Hultin, 2015; Ticktin, 2014). Key humanitarian principles — such as neutrality and impartiality —
have become progressively strategic where outcomes of humanitarian action take precedence over deontological principles  (Calhoun, 2008). This has contributed to a more interventionist humanitar-
ianism where moral justifications supersede legal and political principles.¹ Several scholars point to how this reorientation is manifest within military responses, humanitarian NGOs and other state-sanctioned interventions (Bornstein & Redfield, 2011; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010; Feldman & Ticktin, 2010). Hence, an “emergency imaginary” and a temporal broadening of scope underpin humanitarianism, resulting in considerable blurring of the humanitarian enterprise (Calhoun, 2008; Feldman & Ticktin, 2010).

This paper builds on these insights in light of long-term research on human trafficking in the Mekong region. Here too, campaigns to combat human trafficking can usefully be understood as a blurring of humanitarian practice. As will be shown below, anti-trafficking in the Mekong region emerged in the late nineties within the context of development aid, focusing on securing long-term well-being through poverty-reduction strategies. Yet, over the years, an increasing humanitarian emergency logic of exception, extra-legal actions, and what Didier Fassin has coined, “humanitarian reason”, have overshadowed anti-trafficking premised on long-term development aid (Fassin, 2011). Hence, rather than humanitarianism expanding into something more than immediate reduction of human suffering, anti-trafficking in the Mekong region demonstrates the reverse; that is, development modalities contract into a concern for the immediateness of human suffering. Drawing attention to how development and humanitarian discourses intersect through anti-trafficking interventions epitomizes a shift in how legitimization, mobilization and de-politicization take place, which in turn transforms actors and practices. Paying specific attention to the operate logics of anti-trafficking organizations suggest these shifts cannot merely be explained in light of an “emergency imagery”. I suggest the different temporal registers within development and humanitarian discourses help explain why there has been a move from the former to the latter.

This paper is based on more than a decade of ethnographic fieldwork exploring both alleged trafficking and anti-trafficking in the Mekong region, as well as "observant participation" through my role as a consultant anthropologist and my previous role as an advisor to a regional anti-

¹ As several scholars have pointed out, the end of the cold war was pivotal in expanding a transnational space where aid programs could operate more freely. See (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010)
trafficking program implemented by the United Nations. My research has examined both cross-
border migration and sex commerce, but also the practice of anti-trafficking programs themselves
(Molland, 2012b). This has allowed me to build insights into how anti-trafficking discourse has
emerged and changed over more than a decade.

First, I will explicate the broadening of scope of humanitarianism and how it intersects with
the contemporaneous concern with human trafficking. I will then delineate key ways in which the
anti-trafficking sector in the Mekong region has gradually moved away from instrumental logics
premised on development aid delivery, towards framing human trafficking as a “state of emergen-
cy”. I will show how human trafficking has become a key site where humanitarian logics of excep-
tionalism transform conventional aid programming.

Human trafficking and humanitarianism

One may ask: what does human trafficking have to do with humanitarianism? Human trafficking —
the non-consensual recruitment of persons for the purpose of exploiting their labour — seems sepa-
rate to conventional humanitarian practice. It does not constitute a core of humanitarian aid program
delivery, whether in contexts of natural disaster relief, or "complex emergencies". Nor do traffick-
ing programs, or anti-trafficking, necessarily self-identify as being part of the humanitarian aid sec-
tor. However, the two share a long historical trajectory.

Human trafficking is ubiquitously referred to as “modern day slavery” (Davidson, 2010; Vance, 2012). An important historical precursor for humanitarianism was precisely the abolitionist
slavery movement in the 19th Century (Calhoun, 2008; Craig, 2010; Ticktin, 2011). As such, both
humanitarianism and anti-trafficking share the universalizing aspirations of enlightenment thought
which give prominence to moral equality of all human beings (Calhoun, 2008). Whereas humani-
tarian agencies have gradually increased in prominence since the establishment of the Red Cross in

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2 Yet, as Joel Quirk and David Richardson have argued, the main drive for such apparent cosmopolitan moral values has more to do with “conceptions of a virtuous self” as opposed to “favorable conception of ‘the other’” (Quirk & Richardson, 2009: 89).
1863, the institutionalized emergence of anti-trafficking has only gained momentum since the mid 1990s (Molland, 2012b; See Ticktin, 2011; Vance, 2012; Zhang, 2009). Despite this recent advent of anti-trafficking (though it too has its historical antecedent), the speed and scale of newly launched trafficking programs, national plans of actions and governments signing off on anti-trafficking legislation is nothing less than remarkable (Gallagher, 2001; Molland, 2012b).

Today’s unease with human trafficking speaks directly to a humanitarian concern with distant suffering. At the same time, it epitomizes how moral sentiments are expressed through specific modes of governing. "Bare Life", epitomized by "the trafficking survivor", has become a central locus for intervention and programming, not too dissimilar from the iconic starving African child in humanitarian aid. And, as Bernstein has pointed out, influential strands of anti-trafficking represents as a mixture of “militarized humanitarianism and “carceral feminism” which valorises moral gratification and punitive sanctions at the expense of “political struggle around questions of labour, migration, and sexual freedom.” (Bernstein, 2010: 50; See also Volpp, 2006) Hence, similarly to humanitarian emergencies, anti-trafficking frequently engages a “masculine politics of militaristic rescue” where a preoccupation with (individual) perpetrators and victims take precedence over structural and socio-economic aspects of labour mobility (Bernstein, 2010: 63). Although the ideological underpinnings — such as feminist abolitionism — may not have an obvious equivalent in humanitarian aid discourses, it is easy to see how anti-trafficking produces its own form of “bio-political minimalism”; drawing attention to the plight of trafficked victims does not extend to a cri-

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3 An overlap between the abolition of transatlantic slavery and trafficking is evident. Just as abolitionism gained success in the late 20th Century, a concern with white traffic emerged in the context of several colonies. The 1st and 2nd World War placed a temporary lid on trafficking debates and was only to emerge after the end of the cold war. For elaboration on these historical trajectories, see (Doezema, 2010)

4 I use "bare life" in a qualified sense compared to how Giorgio Agamben deploys the term in *Homo Sacer*. Whereas Agamben's analysis is ultimately premised on a necro-politics of the sovereign, “bare life” has been employed in the context of humanitarian aid as it draws attention to how biological human existence (as opposed to civic and biographical existence) is privileged through a range of bio-political interventions, often premised on the camp. Hence, “bare life” in this context denotes a concern with survival (and not death) and can be usefully thought of as “bi合法性” as it draws attention to how biological life supersedes political life as a source of legitimacy and mobilization. See (Agamben, 1998; Fassin, 2009; Rabinow & Rose, 2006; Redfield, 2005) It is precisely this notion of life which the label “trafficking survivor” encapsulates.
tique of the political and economic conditions which enables the possibility of labour exploitation and abuse in the first place (Redfield, 2012).

Human trafficking and humanitarianism are not merely interconnected conceptually. They also intersect in empirical, concrete situations. Since the advent of the refugee convention humanitarian aid has increasingly comprised the moral, political and social administration of refugee populations. Over the last few years, refugees and humanitarian aid have been directly related to human trafficking. Traffickers, it is claimed, may target refugee camps (Human Rights Watch, 2014; Lijnders & Robinson, 2013). For years, concerns have been raised regarding Burmese refugees in Thailand, who frequently end up in the informal Thai labour economy. Trafficking vulnerability in recovery phases of humanitarian relief efforts has been raised in several natural disaster contexts, including the recent Haiyan typhoon in the Philippines (Oxfam, 2013; Philippines: Typhoon Haiyan and the digital last mile | OCHA, n.d.). Perhaps the most infamous example of how refugee population converge with human trafficking is reflected in the Thai military’s alleged involvement in trafficking Rohingya refugees into labour camps in Southern Thailand (Daniel, n.d.; Marshall & Szep, n.d.). Cases of institutional overlap are also evident, witnessed by humanitarian aid organizations, such as the Australian Red Cross, implementing victims support programs for trafficked victims.

Framing trafficking through a concern with human suffering, which requires extra-legal and moral responses, is not new. As Gretchen Sunderland and Jo Doezema have pointed out, current trafficking discourse comprise strong historical legacies (Doezema, 2010; Soderlund, 2011). Yet, although anti-trafficking often resembles a humanitarian “state of emergency” due to a focus on rescues of trafficked victims, few scholars explicitly examine how human trafficking and humanitarianism intersect.5 Trafficking literature typically frame arguments within legal debates (human rights versus criminal law), feminist debates (how human trafficking intersects with prostitution and

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5 It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an overview of the bulging academic literature on human trafficking. For overviews, see (Anderson, 2012; Anderson & Davidson, 2004; Davidson, 2010; Doezema, 2010; Gallagher, 2001; Molland, 2012b; Weitzer, 2007)
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agency), the ethics and politics of reductionist representations in the media, and analyses that illuminate anti-trafficking’s depoliticizing effects on immigration policies and border control (Anderson, 2012; Davidson, 2003; , 2010; Gallagher, 2001; Kempadoo, Sanghera & Pattanaik, 2005; Lindquist, 2010; Soderlund, 2005; , 2011; Vance, 2012; Volpp, 2006; Weitzer, 2007; Zheng, 2010).

Miriam Ticktin’s work on humanitarianism in France represents one of the few scholarly works which explicitly juxtaposes anti-trafficking, humanitarianism and humanitarian agencies (Ticktin, 2011). In her analysis of immigration in France she shows how “…the struggle around human trafficking… take place in many of the same moralizing terms, through similar institutions and logics as other regimes of care such as medical humanitarianism.” (Ticktin, 2011: 162) Although trafficking organizations in France may appeal to a language of human rights, their discourses and practices are ultimately a regime of compassion which depoliticize immigration control (Ticktin, 2011).

In this paper, I build on these insights by considering how anti-trafficking in the Mekong region increasingly resemble a humanitarian logic of emergency and exceptionalism. Yet, the context in which I base my analysis differs from France in that anti-trafficking largely takes place within the context of development aid delivery. This is analytically important as it constitutes a case of how overlapping, and at times competing discourses of humanitarianism and development aid intersect. As will become evident, this is not merely a question of the convergence of two regimes of governance which takes trafficking as their aim. It raises a broader question of the conditioning which makes an interplay between humanitarian logics and combating trafficking possible. Temporal dimensions of humanitarianism are significant for appreciating this point.

Temporalities of Humanitarian Reason

Humanitarianism has arguably become a technology of government. Whether it is the policing of migration, treatment of HIV aids, justifying aerial bombardments in Libya, a humanitarian reasoning has emerged as a dominant frame globally for mobilizing and legitimizing a range of policy re-
sponses which stretches well beyond conventional disaster relief (Fassin, 2011; Feldman & Ticktin, 2010). “Humanitarian reason”, Fassin argues, does not only set in motion specific practices in order to govern and support suffering victims. It also collapses distinctions between moral sentiments and reason. Government, Fassin argues, has replaced concerns for injustice and inequality with compassion and suffering, where "...the discourse of affects and values offers a high political return" (Fassin, 2011: 3). It is important to point out the depoliticizing effects of such discourse where “Inequality is replaced by exclusion, domination is transformed into misfortune, injustice is articulated as suffering, violence is expressed in terms of trauma.” (Fassin, 2011: 6)

This broadening of humanitarianism as a discourse and practice can be understood in light of temporalities. Whereas classical humanitarianism has always been engaged with immediate care, this has changed in two ways since the late 60s. On the one hand, several humanitarian organizations have become more attentive to the wider implications of aid. Short-term relief has been critiqued for failing to address both causes and long-term effects of relief work and, worse, may even have become part of the problem (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Chandler, 2010). Humanitarian crises, such as Ethiopia in the eighties and Rwanda in the nineties demonstrated how humanitarian aid could be co-opted within a broader political economy of war (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Chandler, 2010; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010). Reoccurring and chronic humanitarian disasters have forced aid programs to consider implications of their work beyond immediate care.\(^6\) Over the years, some aid programs that initially placed main focus on humanitarian aid, have expanded to include long-term development.\(^7\) This shift is also reflected at the state level with a move from 1990s concern with military humanitarian intervention to the responsibility to protect doctrine (R2P) which claims to factor in long-term approaches to conflict, such as prevention.\(^8\) This provides considerable temporal

\(^6\) It is important to note that aid agencies have responded to this differently. Organizations, such as MSF and Red Cross, maintain a demarcated focus on immediate medical relief aid. In contrast, organizations such as Oxfam, Save the Children and Care have since the seventies increasingly become involved in long-term development.

\(^7\) Several aid agencies, such as Save the Children and Oxfam has expanded their mandates over the years to include long term development aid, in addition to humanitarian aid delivery. (Chandler, 2010; Gabiam, 2012). The current focus on “resilience” within humanitarian aid also engages this question.

\(^8\) Most critiques of R2P concerns its interventionist aims. However, the doctrine can be considered to contain strong “developmental” characteristics as the use of military force ought to be applied as a “last resort”. (Evans, 2008)
stretch in terms of what defines humanitarian responses, as anything from pre-emption of atrocities to post-conflict recovery falls under the R2P framework.

Furthermore, the temporal change pertains to how the immediateness of aid has become a source for action. The notion of “emergency” has been given considerable attention in relation to humanitarianism, ranging from “the right to intervene” doctrine developed by French philosopher Mario Bettati and popularized by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)’s founder Bernard Kouchner, to a “state of exception” as articulated by Giorgio Agamben and Carl Schmitt. Revisiting these debates is beyond the scope of this paper, but, as Craig Calhoun has pointed out, an “exception is not simply the sovereign declaration. It is also the notion of emergency itself, not only because it is the counterpart to the very idea of order, but also because it carries a demand for action.” (Craig, 2010: 47)

In other words exceptionalism can usefully be understood in relation to temporalities. Framing humanitarianism as an emergency is precisely what makes it interventionist (Craig, 2010; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010). Since MSF’s focus on "witnessing", the humanitarian sector has increasingly become more capable to extend operations, in part due to geopolitical changes after the end of the Cold War (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Chandler, 2010). As Gupta and Ferguson have aptly pointed out, aid programs must be considered parts of transnational forms of governmentality (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). See also (Feldman & Ticktin, 2010). Hence, humanitarianism comprises an expansion underpinned by both temporal immediateness as well as a broadening of scope beyond immediate care.

Yet, how specific aid actors evoke different temporal registers and instrumentalise humanitarianism have received less attention. In what follows I will show how human trafficking is precisely such a site where a "humanitarian reason" has reconfigured how trafficking programs operate. Although a logic of emergency and exceptionalism increasingly legitimize and mobilize anti-trafficking, we are not witnessing a parallel move towards a widening of scope or long-term, strategic approaches. In fact, as I will argue, long-term development has eroded over the last fifteen years
Human trafficking: from chickens to victims

Human trafficking – the non-consensual recruitment of migrants for the purpose of exploiting their labour - emerged as a global concern in the late 1990s, witnessed by the launch of numerous anti-trafficking programs, government action plans and legislations. Providing an exposition of the various legal and political implications of the concept is beyond of the scope of this paper (for overviews, see Gallagher, 2006; Raymond, 2002). Yet, in this context it is worthwhile to note how human trafficking blurs immigration policies with concerns for labour conditions. Although the protocol refers to exploitation as the main “purpose” of trafficking, the acts that are criminalized refer to non-consensual movement and recruitment. Furthermore, a growing body of academic and policy research in the Mekong region shows that most trafficking begins as voluntary migration where non-consensual practices emerge subsequently within the workplace environment (Feingold, 2005; Huijsmans, 2011; Molland, 2012b). This has important implications for aid programs as it makes it extremely difficult to delineate the differences between human trafficking and other forms of migration. For example, from a vantage point of a rural village, determining whether out-migration constitutes human trafficking or voluntary migration becomes unattainable. As will become evident, this confusion has important implications for how anti-trafficking initiatives have evolved within a context of development aid.

The first anti-trafficking programs in the Mekong region were established in the late 1990s. The first two regional programs by the United Nations were The International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (TICW) and the United Nations Inter-agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP). The United Nations Development Program implemented the latter, which is notable given that it is the world’s largest development organization. Thus, early anti-trafficking efforts were conceptualized within the
framework of development aid programming. For example, UNIAP’s project document provides the following rationale for the project:

 Trafficking has been exacerbated by the opening of border crossings and improvements in transport infrastructure across borders as well as loss of livelihoods and increased poverty levels caused by the economic crisis. Widening economic disparities are fuelling migration for better economic opportunities, and the status of women and girls and the vulnerability of children makes these groups particularly susceptible to exploitation. The Asian economic crisis further intensified the problem; with an increase in the number of people losing their jobs and desperately seeking work; the large-scale repatriation of migrant workers; and governments encouraging the export of labour to address unemployment and bring in foreign remittance. (United Nations Development Programme, 2000: 1)

Even the ILO, with its mandate on labour conditions, primarily focused on rural development in source communities of migrants (Caouette, 1998; Wille, 2001).

Soon, other NGOs followed suit. Programs were initiated with a focus on awareness raising in rural villages coupled with rural development projects (Molland, 2012a; , 2012b). Conventional activities (micro-credit, vocational training, irrigation, fish ponds) that are common in mainstream development were implemented under the auspices of anti-trafficking. For example, the aforementioned UNIAP project that I worked for in the early 2000s included activities to support improved irrigation in rural villages. The rationale behind such initiatives was as follows: trafficking has to do with rural poverty and lack of viable alternatives "at home". By providing such alternatives in villages with high levels of out migration, trafficking is "prevented" by annulling the need for out-migration (Marshall & Thatun, 2005; Molland, 2012b).

Although many of these programs were conventional in terms of what they actually did in practice (vaccination of poultry and mushroom farming are two other examples), donor proposals and fund raising efforts reflected a concern with framing trafficking in terms of a state of emergency (Molland, 2012b).
One of the first discussion papers by the ILO is telling. The report stipulates in its first pages that "Trafficking in children in the Mekong sub-region is a growing concern. Several recent international events have called for immediate action to end this outright crime." (van de Glind, 1998: 98) Yet, the actual activities that the ILO suggested in the report (and later on implemented through a large regional program) focused largely on what many aid programs had done for years (i.e., income generating activities in rural communities). Hence, conventional aid delivery (such as vaccinating chickens in a Laotian village) was seamlessly expressed through a language of emergency (the call for "immediate action") and need for law enforcement (the proclamation for ending "this outright crime").

Over time, such programs were subject to criticism. Anti-trafficking premised on community development had a tendency to reinforce a blurring between anti-trafficking and border control. If, say, a micro-credit program stemmed the flows of migrants from a village, how could a project be certain whether this “prevented” trafficking or voluntary migration? The UNIAP project that I worked for in the early 2000s is a case in point. Phase 1 of the project included several rural-based development initiatives, coupled with awareness raising. This included financial assistance for constructing fishponds as well as improving irrigation in order to boost rice yields in target villages with high levels of migration. Although these initiatives were strongly supported by the project team within the Lao government, regional program managers and implementing partners expressed doubts about the efficacy of such interventions. As rural-based anti-trafficking interventions were premised on creating incentives for staying “at home”, it could easily give legitimacy to the government’s desire to prevent out-migration, as opposed to addressing immediate concerns regarding labour exploitation. Yet, a larger problem related to how “impact” on trafficking levels could be demonstrated over time. No clear attempts were made in terms of monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives. A reason for not even attempting to assess the efficacy of these approaches were due to a realization of the difficulty with determining whether out-
migration was a useful indicator of trafficking. A UNIAP field trip report encapsulates the looming questioning of anti-trafficking premised on development aid:

[H]ow much can be achieved in the fight against trafficking by concentrating on community development activities? There is certainly a level beyond which the economic situation of a community or a country puts it above large-scale trafficking phenomena. This level can be considered as a merging point between economic development objectives and anti-trafficking ones, and it probably takes anywhere between years and centuries for a poor country such as Laos to reach this point. How long would it take a community? What level of investment (human and financial) would be required? I am unable to answer these questions. All I can do is note that poverty reduction was a stated global objective years before the anti-trafficking agenda came to the forefront and that “poverty alleviation programmes” have not always met the expectations of those who had initiated them. Designing economic interventions that reach those “most at risk of being trafficked” may prove as difficult as designing interventions that reach “the poorest of the poor”. (Ginzburg, 2002: 10)

In other words, the very idea of long-term development as a counter-trafficking strategy was questioned. The UNIAP project abandoned rural-based development activities entirely when it moved into its second phase where the program stepped away from implementation to coordination (For an elaboration on these developments, see Miller, 2008). Similar concerns were raised within other projects. As one project officer from an NGO admitted to me in private; their rural development initiatives seemed to have made no difference to migration levels. In fact, several officials raised concerns whether micro-finance initiatives had the opposite effect, as there were indications of migrants using micro-finance loans to finance their migration.9

In any case, despite some agencies’ attempts to fine-tune indictors for assessing trafficking risk, “reading off” trafficking prevalence from migration levels remained futile.

9 Critique against microfinance within the anti-trafficking sector sometimes generated inter-agency conflict. During my time with the United Nations in Laos, UNIAP and UNICEF were becoming increasingly critical of this approach to combat trafficking. The head of UNICEF’s child protection unit discussed with me the possibility of having a UN-wide review of the practice. However, colleagues in the ILO did not warm to the idea as their entire project design was premised on micro-finance. The criticism of micro-finance as a strategy to curb migration has also been examined by several academics. See (Bylander, 2014)
Given these difficulties with demonstrating “success” in combating trafficking, intervention modalities gradually changed from being premised on progress towards a program logic based on an immediate moral imperative. This helps explain why it became important for programs to also include a focus on trafficked victims through repatriation and reintegration programs. This enabled an increasing use of victims for funding and advocacy purposes. For example, during fundraising efforts for the UNIAP program in 2004, potential bilateral donors were taken to one of the shelters for trafficked victims in Bangkok in order to evoke empathy (and donor funding) for the program’s second phase of implementation. This strategy proved eventually successful. One may wonder whether the fact that the Norwegian Ambassador to Thailand broke down in tears in response to a victim’s despondency during a shelter-visit had some bearing on the Norwegian government’s decision to become the first bilateral donor to commit funds for the second phase of the project (subsequently, Norway became one of the biggest donors for the UNIAP program). A similar interplay of emotion and programmatic instrumentalization can be seen in David Feingold’s documentary Trading Women in a scene were American congress representatives are emotionally shaken in front of the camera in their direct encounters with underage trafficked victims in Northern Thailand (Feingold, 2003).

Hence, a gradual shift took place from long-term development to an individuated concern with victims as well as (importantly) the biographical expression of biological suffering (i.e. a homology to MSF’s principle of “witnessing”) (Fassin, 2011). Repatriation and reintegration programs were quickly premised on operating shelters for trafficked victims. Some of these shelters were initially practical in nature. For example, Lao-Thai repatriation required family tracing and victim identification before Thai authorities could formally repatriate victims to Laos. This process, which was led by the governments but supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), was often tedious and hence necessitated temporary housing (in the form of shelters). However, over time the purpose and role of shelters have expanded (IOM, 2004). When I initiated work for the United Nations in Laos in the early 2000s, no permanent shelter services existed. Four years
later, IOM, UNICEF, as well as several government bodies and NGOs either implemented, or funded shelter activities. This was so much the case that the UN launched a shelter coordination working-group in order to attempt avoiding duplication of activities. Since then, operating shelters for trafficked victims has become a central activity for many NGOs. It is notable that even in authoritarian countries, such as Laos and Vietnam, where governments are reluctant to allow international organizations to directly implement programs, several NGOs have been able to establish shelters for trafficked victims, often involving long-term care. (Surtees, 2013)

It is easy to see how this is homologous to humanitarian aid work, where the refugee camp is a central technology for translating humanitarian principles into governable "spaces of exception". (Dunn, 2012) As such, shelters for trafficked victims have become what Eyal Weizman refers to as “epistemic spaces”. It sets anti-trafficking apart. Whereas rural-based anti-trafficking interventions must engage pre-existing societal and political structures, shelters are - sociologically speaking - tablu rasa, making them easier for NGOs to administer. This helps explain why NGOs have been able to set up shelters, even in contexts of considerable state control. Shelters are also legible examples of anti-trafficking, witnessed by the commonality of facilitating media and donor visits. Shelters have reinforced the aforementioned tendency to use trafficked victims in the forms of images and biographical narration in order to obtain donor funding (Andrijasevic, 2007). The "trafficking survivor" became a central trope within the anti-trafficking sector.

Human trafficking as crime

Alongside a focus on shelters, repatriation and reintegration programs law enforcement, arrest of traffickers and the rescue of victims became a key concern within the anti-trafficking sector. This change reinforced an individuation of trafficking where emphasis is given to how to "combat" traffickers (i.e., individuals) as opposed to explore structural reasons for why some migrants end up in

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10 For example, AFESIP has been able to establish shelter for trafficked victims in both Laos and Vietnam. Village Focus International, which initially focused on rural development, now run a shelter in southern Laos. For theoretical treatment of spatial aspects of humanitarianism see (Redfield, 2012; Weizman, 2012: 44)

11 For an elaboration on economic and political motivations for operating shelters see (Gallagher & Pearson, 2009).
deplorable work conditions. In the early 2000s, key agencies on human trafficking tended to comprise social welfare departments and labour agencies. In the Mekong region, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia all placed anti-trafficking within either social welfare or labour ministries. UN agencies also echoed this focus by concentrating collaboration with labour and social welfare agencies. Yet, over time this changed.

In 2002, UNIAP was the first anti-trafficking program to employ a person with a police background. Two years later, the Australian government funded the first regional anti-trafficking program with a specific focus on law enforcement and criminal justice response to trafficking. It employed several individuals with policing background and worked directly with law enforcement agencies (investigative police department, immigration police) ("Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking," 2002). The importance of this program has increased over the years. Its current budget of approximately 50 million AUD makes it the largest bilateral trafficking project in the region. At the same time, the United Nations office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) strengthened their focus on trafficking and launched their own programs, with specific focus on investigation, arrest and prosecution of traffickers.

Focus on the arrest of traffickers has several effects. It brought in new actors (police, prosecutors) into the anti-trafficking arena and in some cases enabled a space where the police became the central anti-trafficking agency. For example, in the mid-2000s the lead agency on human trafficking within the Vietnamese and Lao governments moved from social welfare ministries to their respective ministry of interior. Just as the operation of shelters for trafficked victims enabled an unprecedented role for NGOs, law enforcement programs opened up the possibility for expatriate police advisors to work closely with the police in respective countries. For example, the Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking project (ARCPPT) was the first aid program in Laos where the government allowed an expatriate advisor to work within the immigration police.

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12 The inclusion of a law enforcement officer is reflected in the revised project document from 2000 (United Nations Development Programme, 2000).
The central focus on law enforcement also accentuated a temporal concern with emergencies, such as rescues of trafficked victims. Law enforcement was intimately linked with victim support programs and shelter for trafficked victims. Law enforcement within anti-trafficking tends to rely on reactive, as opposed to proactive investigations (such as surveillance) (Smith, 2010). Hence, police investigations (as well as prosecution of traffickers) depend on witness testimonies from trafficked victims. This has brought many NGOs into close contact with law enforcement agencies, and in some cases, has even resulted in a blurring between the roles of humanitarian support services for victims and intervention by law enforcement agencies. Although the inclusion of police within anti-trafficking can easily be interpreted as a politics of emergency and exceptionalism, it must be noted that this is not necessarily the case. Several programs, such as the aforementioned ARCCPT program and UNODC, aim to enhance capacity building of local law enforcement agencies. As such, such efforts may well be labelled “developmental” as they attempt to contribute to institutional and structural change within the parameters of the law. Yet, alongside such programs, a focus on law enforcement within anti-trafficking has also brought in a range of new actors which moves anti-trafficking from the legal to the moral and enables extra-legal action based on a discourse of emergency.

Human trafficking as emergency: moving from the legal to the moral

In several countries, particularly where NGOs can operate with considerable autonomy from the state (such as Cambodia), it is now common that NGOs (and in some instances UN agencies) virtually have taken on state functions in their close engagement with rescues (Gallagher & Pearson, 2009). Such emergent modes of transnational governmentalities are perhaps most clearly encapsulated by the Somaly Mam foundation (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002).

Somaly Mam foundation originated in Cambodia in the late 1990s when Somaly Mam and her husband Pierre Legros founded *Agir pour les Femmes en Situation Precaire* (AFESIP). One of AFESIP’s key strategies involved rescuing alleged trafficked victims from the sex industry and ran
shelters for the support of their recovery. AFESIP quickly ascended to prominence within the Cambodian aid sector and branched out into Thailand, Laos and Vietnam in the mid 2000s. In contrast to framing trafficking in light of broader questions of poverty, AFESIP engaged in rescues of alleged trafficked victims from the Cambodian sex industry. Reframing trafficking as a state of emergency and a blurring of state functions and NGO humanitarian work, resulted in several controversies regarding their work.13

After divorcing her husband and co-founder, she launched the Somaly Mam Foundation. Somaly has become the embodiment of the suffering "trafficking survivor" as she alleges she was herself trafficked into the Cambodia sex industry before being able to leave and commence rescues of other young women and girls. She embodies the humanitarian ethos of a "perfect victim" which helps explain her success. Her best-selling biography The Road to Lost Innocence has enabled Somaly to build a strong network of supporters in Hollywood, including accolades from actress Angelina Jolie. TIMES magazine even listed her as one of the most influential women in the world.

AFESIP and Somaly Mam's foundation are far from alone in carrying out rescues of trafficked victims. Another NGO, called "The Grey Man" comprise Australian ex-military and police officers who carry out undercover rescue operations in Thailand, Laos and elsewhere. The Grey Man also exemplifies how aid, military and humanitarian reason merge. Being ex-service people and civilian police, they operate outside the institutional frames of the army and the police where

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13 Somaly Mam and AFESIP have been caught up in several controversies over the years regarding their conduct. In 2004 AFESIP was involved in raiding a brothel masquerading as a “hotel” resulting in the rescue of some 80 young women and girls from the premises. AFESIP subsequently brought the alleged victims to their shelter in Phnom Penh. The following day, a group of individuals forced their way into AFESIP’s shelter and removed the women from the premises. The raid and subsequent counter-raid resulted in considerable debate and rumours regarding the actual course of events. It is beyond the scope of this paper to delineate the details here. However, what is notable is the way their actions were legitimized. Although AFESIP was careful to emphasize that the raid was carried out in collaboration with the police, official statements from the organization clearly revealed a highly blurred operation where AFESIP was an instrumental actor. Actions were justified with reference to the alleged egregiousness of abuse as well as the innocence of the victims. Considerable emphasis was placed on claims of the presence of underage sex workers. This, in turn, enabled AFESIP (as well as several of their supporters) to claim no contradiction in having an international NGO carrying out police functions as well as confining the very victims they purported to assist. In short, human trafficking was framed as an event (trafficked victims in brothels) which legitimated a state of exception where the moral suspends the legal (an international NGO enters premises and removes a large number of alleged victims). For some of the media coverage and related literature on AFESIP and Somaly Mam see (Cambodia: Somaly Mam’s ex-husband speaks out | GlobalPost, n.d.; Haynes, 2014; Interview on Newsweek Somaly Mam Scandal - Cambodian Anti-Trafficking Activist Somaly Mam - Marie Claire, n.d.; Mam, Somaly., Marshall, Ruth, 2008; The New Somaly Mam Fund | Voices For Change, n.d.; Somaly Mam Foundation, n.d.)
they built their careers. Yet they obfuscate the boundaries in their role as extra-legal law enforcers in the countries they operate. Their marketing campaigns explicitly highlights their covert operations. They use pseudonyms to protect their identity, which they claim is essential in their fight against traffickers.\textsuperscript{14} Such extra-legal, covert tactics may seem to signal an extreme form of vigilanism.\textsuperscript{15} However, several Australian lawyers have lauded the Grey Man (Lawyers Weekly, n.d.). Similar organizations, such as the International Justice Commission, have been endorsed by both George Bush and members of the Barak Obama administration (Bernstein, 2010). Hence, both the Grey Man and Somaly Mam are not merely peripheral actors within the anti-trafficking sector. They have enjoyed considerable financial, political and symbolic support from several powerful quarters.

The Grey Man and Somaly Mam share another thing in common: their downfall. In 2013 several organizations critiqued the Grey Man for uploading pictures of alleged trafficked victims on their Facebook page. Other NGOs followed up the case concluding that the trafficking claims were fabrications. Similarly, the authenticity of Somaly's biography was questioned in an investigative story in Newsweek. Her claim of being a former trafficked victim was alleged to be a fabrication. Claims have also emerged that Somaly Mam Foundation groomed several of their “victims” into scripted victim-narratives for fundraising purposes.\textsuperscript{16}

At first glance, it may seem as the downfall of both the Somaly Mam and the Grey Man indicate the inability of rescue-based programs to maintain currency. However, it is the questioning of the authenticity of rescues and trafficked victims which led to their infamy. Few critiqued the politics of rescues and anti-trafficking in itself.\textsuperscript{17} What brought down both the Somaly Mam and Grey Man were precisely that the revelations placed their narratives of trafficking survivors into question.

\textsuperscript{14} In one instance, they have bizarrely taken more care hiding their own identity compared with the alleged victims they claim to protect. In one Facebook image the “grey man” faces’ are blacked out entirely, whereas only the victims’ eyes are anonymized. (\textit{The Grey Man and the Akhas - The Missing Children - Andrew Drummond}, n.d.)

\textsuperscript{15} It is notable how clients in the Southeast Asian sex industry share a remarkably similar discourse and preoccupation with the "rescue" of young women and children. See (Hamilton, 1997)

\textsuperscript{16} Allegations have also surfaced that her daughter was kidnapped by traffickers. This claim is disputed by her former husband. (\textit{Cambodia: Somaly Mam’s ex-husband speaks out} | GlobalPost, n.d.)

\textsuperscript{17} As several academics and practitioners have pointed out, rescues of trafficked victims can be highly counterproductive.
The epistemology of rescue (i.e., the questioning of claims of rescues) and the ontology of the victims became problematic (the revelation that trafficked victims turned out to be either voluntary sex workers or ordinary minority children living safely in their village homes).

Hence, the rise and fall of both the Grey Man and Somaly Mam reveals to us important changes. They signal a notable shift away from conventional aid delivery towards a focus on the subjectivity of the humanitarian enterprise itself: the charisma of Somaly Mam as the trafficking survivor, and the highly masculine bravado of militarized, covert rescues by the “Grey Man”. Action - such as rescues - is valorised in terms of immediateness and morality, not progressive social transformation and law. And, the object of intervention has clearly moved away from broader considerations of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage to a felicitation of the “bare life” of trafficked victims. In short, these programs place legitimacy and mobilization of action firmly within a space of humanitarian exceptionalism.

The way I delineate how anti-trafficking has become “humanitarianized” must be understood in light of the considerable diversity in both anti-trafficking actors, as well as the political contexts in which these practices are situated in the Mekong region. NGOs can operate relatively freely in countries such as Cambodia and Thailand. In contrast, authorities in Laos and Vietnam tightly control development agencies. Hence, there should be no surprise that NGOs taking part in rescues and running shelters are more prominent (and emerged earlier) in countries such as Cambodia. Importantly, not all trafficking programs carry out rescues like the Somaly Mam Foundation and the Grey Man. In fact, many of them are critical of these actions. Nor has the focus on poverty and broader structural conditions for trafficking disappeared entirely. Hence, my claim that anti-trafficking constitutes a “humanitarianization” of development must not be misread as a neat, unilinear trajectory.

However, over time a concern with development has either lessened in importance, or has been discursively reframed. Nearly all anti-trafficking programs in Laos had initial focus on income generating activities in rural communities in the early 2000s. Only IOM worked directly on repat-

AT FIRST GLANCE, THE PREOCCUPATION WITH RESCUES OF TRAFFICKED VICTIMS AND ARREST OF TRAFFICKERS MAY APPEAR AS RE-POLITICIZING ANTI-TRAFFICKING AS THEY DIRECTLY ENGAGE LAW ENFORCEMENT. HOWEVER, I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE ARE SEEING A CHANGE FROM ONE MODALITY TO ANOTHER. WHEREAS CONVENTIONAL AID DEPOLITICIZES BY RENDERING THINGS “TECHNICAL”, HUMANITARIANISM DEPOLITICIZES MORALLY (ANDERSON, 2012).

18 TRIPARTITE ACTION TO PROTECT MIGRANT WORKERS WITHIN AND FROM THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION FROM LABOUR EXPLOITATION (GMS TRIANGLE PROJECT). IN FACT, A NOTABLE TREND WITHIN ANTI-TRAFFICKING IS HOW SEVERAL PROGRAMS HAVE RELABELLED THEMSELVES. PROGRAMS, SUCH AS UNIAP, REPLACED “WOMEN AND CHILDREN” - THE UTMOST SYMBOL OF HUMANITARIAN MORAL PURITY - WITH “HUMAN” TO REFLECT A RECOGNITION THAT TRAFFICKING TAKES PLACE IN OTHER SECTORS THAN PROSTITUTION AND MAY WELL AFFECT MEN AND BOYS.

19 SEE HTTP://TH.IOM.INT/INDEX.PHP/ACTIVITIES/FACILITATING-MIGRATION
20 A RECENT EVALUATION OF THE UNIAP IS VERY REVEALING IN TERMS OF HOW DONOR FATIGUE IS RELATED TO AGENCY-INFIGHTING. (NAIK, 2012)
21 PERSONAL COMMUNICATION.
21 | Humanitarianized development?

2013; Fassin, 2011; Ferguson, 2006; Li, 2007; Ticktin, 2011). It furnishes righteous responses to question of structural inequality, asymmetries and exploitation. The very act of framing human trafficking as an emergency allows visceral identification that in turn articulates agents of vindication (Vance, 2012; Volpp, 2006). Anti-trafficking reconfigured as “humanitarian reason” comes most to light in this context as it collapses boundaries between emotion and reason. As we have seen, anti-trafficking in the Mekong region constitutes a blurring of development and humanitarian logics in which the latter has become more prominent over time.

Yet, the reasons for this cannot only be explained in light of an “emergency imaginary” and the visceral identification it allows. It must also be understood in the different temporal logics between development and humanitarian aid. Anti-trafficking – framed as development assistance - has struggled to reproduce itself over the years due to discursive imperatives of demonstrating transformative change and impact. Recasting anti-trafficking through a humanitarian lens eases the need for producing programmatic evidence of “success”. Furthermore, by juxtaposing these competing logics it becomes apparent that these discourses do not merely depoliticize but radically alter the stakes in terms of what type of practices - and actors - that can eventuate from them.

A noticeable change has taken place. Saving victims and arresting traffickers energize development programming into a politics of emergency where moral gratification supersedes the need to demonstrative impact (such as evidence of reduction of trafficking). As such, the change in temporality does not move beyond an immediate concern with suffering, but the reverse: development has become “humanitarianized”. This is not merely a discursive shift. It exemplifies a cascading transformation of government. Conventional aid engages a humanitarian discourse of exception that transforms practices which in turn transplants actors. The initiators of anti-trafficking activities who carried out micro-credit programs in the early 2000s would have been puzzled if they knew that fifteen years later ex-army and police would have replaced them.

Conclusion
Delineating the reasons for these changes are complex and constitute a broader question within my ongoing research on trafficking discourses and migration governance in the Mekong region. Yet as this paper has shown, the different temporalities evoked by development and humanitarianism provides some clues for explaining this shift. Development aid is premised on notions of progress (Brigg, 2009; Crewe & Harrison, 1999). As we have seen above, demonstrating “impact” over time, such as reducing out-migration through socio-economic development, has proven difficult. The continuation of programs premised on a development discourse has therefore faced donor fatigue. Reframing the human trafficking as a moral concern reconfigures the stakes of these programs as the temporal immediateness, through acts such as rescues, speak more clearly to deontological moral sensibilities. A humanitarian discourse fits this bill. Yet, – and this point is crucial – the attraction of a humanitarian discourse cannot merely be explained in isolation. As I have shown in this paper, the ascendance of a “humanitarian reason” fills a vacuum where a development discourse has lost momentum. It may well be that “the distinctive feature of contemporary societies is without doubt the way that moral sentiments have become generalized as a frame of reference in political life.” (Fassin, 2011: 247) What anti-trafficking in the Mekong region shows us is that one must carefully attend to how temporal dimensions of “humanitarian government” intersect within a wider context of other governmental logics.

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