International Workshop
Critical Approaches to Irregular Migration Facilitation: Dismantling the Human Smuggler Narrative

Migration Policy Centre, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI (Villa La Fonte)
5-6 April 2016

Scientific Organisers:
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Gabriella E. Sanchez | National Security Studies Institute, University of Texas at El Paso

In contemporary mainstream narratives of migration, the human smuggler has earned a privileged if infamous spot as one of the most widely recognized and despised global predators. Smugglers are often referred to as orchestrators of senseless human tragedies along migration corridors, masterminds behind sexual exploitation rings, or amassers of untold riches made at the expense of asylum seekers, migrants and their families—in turn often narrowly portrayed as infantile and ignorant. Constructed as racialized, hypersexual and greedy males from the global South, facilitators of irregular migration have earned widespread notoriety in narratives of human and national security, particularly in the context of migration control efforts.

Media and authorities conceive the fight against clandestine migration as a war, a war where the evil is represented by the smuggler. The question is: is this a worthy war? Human smugglers certainly bear responsibility for many of the tragedies we are currently witnessing in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. However, our knowledge of irregular migration facilitation is often plagued with fragmented perspectives on the socio-cultural dynamics of the migratory journey, the facilitator-traveller relationship and their community dimensions. This is hardly surprising. Scholarship on the facilitation of irregular migration often draws exclusively from the experiences of government or law enforcement entities, or of the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who were the unfortunate target of threats, scams or violence during their clandestine journeys, further obscuring the perspectives of those playing a role in their transits.

In light of the necessity of elaborating an adequate policy response to human smuggling, a better comprehension of the phenomenon is pivotal to ensuring the stability of the receiving state and the security of the migrant/refugee. With this task in mind, this workshop aims to problematize the figure of the smugglers beyond overly simplistic generalizations and representations. There is a growing corpus of empirical and critical work on the facilitation or brokerage of irregular migration within migration regimes that deserves to be fostered and strengthened. We are proposing critical and empirical engagements on the topic of the facilitation and brokerage of irregular migration as witnessed regionally and comparatively.

The workshop is co-organised by the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, and the National Security Studies Institute, University of Texas in El Paso.
Programme

Tuesday 5 April

9:00-9:15 Opening
Luigi Achilli and Gabriella Sanchez

9:15-9:30 Official Welcome
Philippe Fargues | Director of the Migration Policy Centre

9:30-10:15 Introduction – Toward new notions in human smuggling and brokerage studies
Sheldon Zhang | San Diego State University

10:15-10:30 Coffee break

10:30-12:30 Session 1 – Human Smuggling Theory and Legislation
Chair: Ferruccio Pastore | FIERI

- Problem or Solution: Migrants, states and the duality of the human smuggler
  Jorgen Carling | PRIO

- Defining Human Smuggling in Migration Research: an Appraisal and Critique
  Ted Baird | VU University of Amsterdam

- Humanitarian Smuggling in a Time of Crisis: Examples from Europe
  Ilse van Liempt | University of Utrecht

- Is there a mutually reinforcing cycle between increased attention and power of state enforcement and the dynamic association of smuggling and/or trafficking?
  Josiah Heyman and Sam Simon | University of Texas at El Paso

12:30-13:30 Lunch Break

13:30-15:45 Session 2 – Smuggling as a form of service
Chair: Jorgen Carling – PRIO

- Smuggling as a social negotiation in transit spaces: pathways of Central American Migrants in Mexico’s Southern Borders.
  Yaatsil Guevara | University of Bielefeld

- What makes a good smuggler? Customer Satisfaction among undocumented migrants
  Daniel Martinez and Jeremy Slack | George Washington University and UTEP

- Beyond common-sense notions about the smuggling of migrants: local findings from clandestine experiences from Ecuador to the US
  Soledad Alvarez Velasco and Martha Ruiz | King’s College and FLACSO-Ecuador

- Manufacturing Smugglers: from irregular to clandestine mobility in the Sahara
  Julien Brachet | University of Oxford

- Brokerage Economies: crisis, mediation, and contested subjectivities across the Beitbridge border of South Africa and Zimbabwe
  Xolani Tshabalala | Linkoping University

15:45-16:00 Coffee Break
16:00-18:00  Session 3 – Enforcement
Chair: Joe Heyman | University of Texas at El Paso

Recent Evolutions in the Organisation of Crossings of the Mediterranean Sea
Paola Monzini | Independent Scholar

The War on Smuggling, at Sea and in the Public Sphere
Maurizio Albahari | University of Notre Dame

Life after Hirsi: the Rise of a Human Rights Proof Approach
Matteo Tondini and Jean Paul Pierini | Military Legal Advisors

Mapping Borderlands: Drawing Things Together
Nora Akawi and Nina Kolowratnik with Jason Danforth | Columbia University

18:30  Cocktail Party

Wednesday 6 April

09:00-11:00  Session 4 – Solidarities, friendships, identity
Chair: Shahram Khosravi | University of Stockholm

Historical and Community Dimensions of Smuggling in Afghanistan and Somalia
Nassim Majidi | SciencesPo

Friends and Handlers: Facilitating Passage Out of West Africa
Stephanie Maher | University of Washington

Indigenous Migration Merchants: Coyoterismo and indigenous mobility in Ecuador’s migration industry
Victoria Stone-Cadena | City University of New York

“This is Jihad”: Piety and Morality among Syrian Smugglers
Luigi Achilli | Migration Policy Centre

11:00-11:15  Coffee break

11:15-13:15  Session 5 – Contradictions, Challenges, and Incongruences: the Multiple Angles of the Smuggling Experience
Chair: Anna Triandafyllidou | European University Institute

Smuggled or trafficked? North Korean refugees’ border mobility through smuggling networks.
Kyunghhee Kook | University of Nottingham

Coyotaje and the construction of “el Camino” from Central America through Mexico
Noelle Bridgen | Marquette University

Rohingya by any other name: smuggling in Southeast Asia and the politics of terminology
Sarnata Reynolds | Refugee International

Crossing the border, blurring the boundaries: smuggling from the Horn of Africa
Milena Belloni | University of Trento

13:15-14:15  Lunch Break
Session 6: Risk, Security, Protection and Crime
Chair: Marie McAuliffe | Australian National University

Decency adrift at sea
Claudia Tazreiter | University of New South Wales
He used to be a pollero: Smugglers and the Securitization of Migration at the Mexico-Guatemala Border
Rebecca Galemba | University of Denver
Precarious Waters: Fishermen, people-smuggling and limited choice for earning money in Eastern Indonesia
Antje Missbach | Monash University
Casual Encounters? Changing market conditions and organizational responses among smugglers of migrants and drugs.
Gabriella Sanchez and Sheldon Zhang | UTEP and San Diego State University

16:15-16:45  Next Steps
16:45-17:00  Closing remarks