Celebrating Allies – part 3: Are you looking for a ghostwriter?

Sarita Fae Jarmack
April, 2016

Today we continue our celebration of the Allies who handle much of the behind-the-scenes work that is needed to keep fan-bu-tastic (=fabulous meets fantastic) content appearing on our beloved website. Over the past two days we have celebrated our Managers of T & S – aka Ninnu and Andrea – and today and tomorrow we celebrate our language editors. As a general rule we are quite amazed to note that most of the content that we receive is very good to begin with, requiring very few linguistic edits.

> *Let this be a reminder to all of us Anthros: if anyone attempts to say that we are poor writers, just let them know that Allegra vehemently disagrees!*

Yet, of course all texts benefit from an additional diligent pair of eyes which – in addition to exploring content – caressingly polish up any remaining hick-ups that the prose may continually entail. In this we have from the beginning been very lucky: we have benefitted from the expert eye of Marie-Louise Karttunen, whom we'll highlight tomorrow, as well as the diligent gaze of Sarita Fae Jarmack.

What needs to be also noted is that – because of the 'rogue kid' that Allegra is, remaining insistently outside established academic institutions – we continually run the website with no outside funding. In practice this means that also Sarita and Marie-Louise volunteer us their work, something that we appreciate immensely and can only treat as embodying genuine dedication toward academic pursuits.

We mention this also for the following reason: if in the near future we approach you again for funds, you'll know why! It would be so nice to be able to compensate these fabulous Allies for the work that they put in for the website, thus helping to spread 'anthropological gospel' to the world!

Here to celebrate Sarita we share a post that she wrote for us on (some of) her experiences as an editor, a post first published in April 2015. Have *you* every sent out that email – or thought about it?

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Dear Academics: Are you looking for a Ghostwriter?

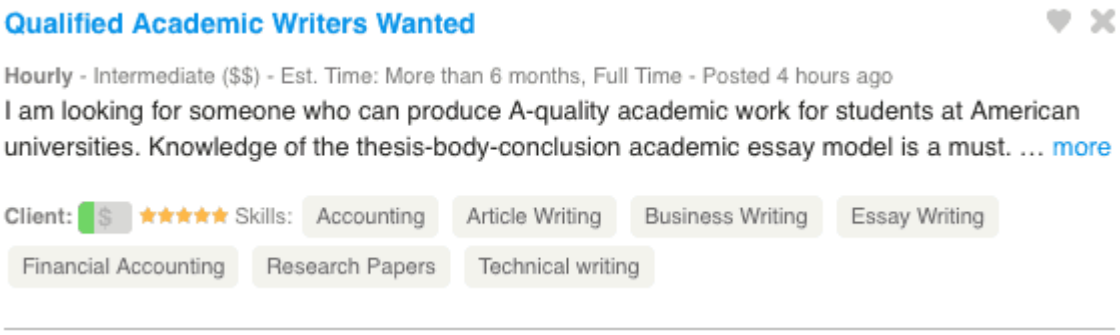
Time is ticking and though your confidence is dwindling with blank pages, your office and every other room is getting cleaner. Anxiety sets in, confusion, and your self-inflicted isolation leaves you treading water in a vast academic sea.

Finally, your fingertips meet the now spotless keyboard. In complete desperation they type out a few words and across the glowing screen now reads:

> *"Can you write this for me?"*

…. [sip of cold coffee]… and send.

Is this you? Probably not, but if it is, don't worry I don't know you. However, I am the one receiving these notes and adverts. They can be found all over freelance websites and editing pages. The following is one from oDesk, which can receive 10-40 bids from willing writers around the world.



Having conducted my own research, written a thesis and obsessively revisited my data for conference papers, I began officially offering editorial services to other academics and researchers in 2012. This includes all the normal editing stuff along with detailed feedback on argumentation, structuring and the importance of storytelling. I also make myself available to discuss content or analysis (much like you would with a colleague or supervisor) and with a background in education and international settings I offer tutoring for ESL writers.

It is a pleasure to mingle in the crevices of minds and ideas, delicately urging critical thought as the authors and I work together to development their writings. It has provided insight into various systems and how they and its scholars crank out journal papers, dissertations, and books. However, mostly shared are the insecurities, lack of resources and pile of flaws that line our academic systems – a

driving motive for many to keep *the email* at their fingertips.

Mushing ideas together can obviously be an incredible experience, and necessary when working with abstract processes of thought. We all have different motivations for pursuing higher education and sometimes we need assistance articulating and forming ideas, especially across languages. Most of those I work with usually approach me with these motives, however it is after a few meetings or edits, sometimes panicking, when I most frequently experience *the request*. As a short-term solution, some offer to tag on a little extra cash, while others requests PhD dissertations for $100 USD or a research proposal for $50. First, I am always utterly baffled at how an editor does not take insult to a priced offer of this sort; much less undergo the task of writing a dissertation. However most importantly noted, paper writing cannot be made into a thing of immediate, instantaneous production. It is a slow process, a tool, to help organize our thoughts, knowledge, ideas, combining them with those already created for those that are to be created. It is a creative process, a platform to showcase, explore, learn, and develop through. And, if you don't have an idea for a proposal nor can attempt to write one, I urge you to question your pursuit in this very long journey ahead of you.

The public doesn't seem to mind a practice of ghostwriting (if you want to call it that) amongst politicians, celebrities, and busy CEO's. Even if the public finds out it was not actually written by the named author, they are quite forgiving. However, higher education assumes those writing under their name, have organized the knowledge themself. Which is then peer reviewed or graded – determining if you, the person who has the name on the paper can be accredited with the process of generating it. When using a ghostwriter, you did not. Or as Forbes contributor on Business Communication Cheryl Conner puts it, "The ethical breach is asking an imposter to create material and then pretending that it was written by the person who hired the ghostwriter."

While I cannot morally or financially afford to write the papers, I am curious about the individual's motives and how our academic systems support or drive

these actions. And where have we developed this idea that dissertations are anything less than the slowest of processes? Why are we going outside our institutes, away from supervisors, to ask questions about the 'one way', the 'right way' that data should be written about? Why are researchers approaching me with these propositions? While some of our Allies have dug deeper into necessary topics on publications and our academic systems to address these concerns, I urge a reflection on what is being gained by having work written or maybe more detrimentally what is being lost when not writing it.

> *Simply put, if this original creativity in our academic writings are extracted, what is left?*

So, as the one receiving your ghostwriting requests for your dissertations and journal articles, my response is this:

1) Make a cup of tea.

2) During tea, exercise getting amazed at stuff.

Try reading your tea box (its contents travelled around the world twice just to make it to you – from where? Have you been there; what is in it; what information has the company made available to you; what are the words you don't know? Taste it. Is it any good; how do others prepare it?)

3) Start small, but start. Apply the same 'tea curiosity' to sections of your writing projects. What, who, where – maybe Google the face of that long ago inventor,

scholar, activist. Were they bald? What did they like to eat; what failures did they learn from?

4) Have another cup of tea. Wander and daydream with thoughts on how you get to form/write words and ideas that connect you and your existence with others – then do it.

5) Lastly, muster up all the courage you possibly can and slip your paper to someone for feedback. (This is when you send me your work!!).

> *WARNING: Obviously, all of this takes a lot of time and tea!*

As our systems and its ideas around publishing, productivity, and creating continue to drive actions like *the email,* there too will always be someone out there that will ghostwrite work for a price. But as someone concerned with the dynamics of academia as a whole, I want to acknowledge that there is also always someone out there that will want to do **more** than write it. As we play with ideas, create space, assist each other in our curiosity, we fumble into creating. That's where I'm told all the good stuff happens; where life happens. With a slew of circumstances that foster a space hardly supportive of slow processes, are we not all still responsible for the delicacy of our own mind, thoughts, and dignity? I suppose if part of higher education, of academia, of education it comes down to what we as individuals and as a whole are in pursuit of… is *the email* the answer?

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Celebrating Allies – part 2: Combating stereotypes with Rusty Radiators – REDUX

Allegra
April, 2016

Yesterday we highlighted one important development that took place for the Allegra team in March of 2014, namely that we were joined by Ninnu Koskenalho who for the following two years acted as Allegra's Manager of Things & Stuff. Well, something at least equally significant happened in November of the same year: Allegra's team was joined by Andrea Klein, a wizard of websites and a true perfectionist, in the best possible sense of the word.

Of course 'core Allies' had both known and worked with Andrea for quite some time before and thus we knew what a fabulous fortune it was to have her join our team – as has since been proven many times over. Andrea is today indispensable for so many aspects of the website that, well, in fact we don't even know what all she is capable of.

This post – first published on November 11, 2014 – was the first one that Andrea

ever did for us. This post as well as the Rusty Radiators initiative are among our all-time favourites, and thus it is a great pleasure to share them as a part of this tribute to our Allies.

We have no idea how many posts Andrea has done since herself – and more importantly still, as of January 2016 Andrea has followed Ninnu Koskenalho as Allegra's Manager of Things & Stuff, which in plain language means that she oversees everything with our 'production line'. In case there remains any doubt: there is NO way that we could run the website without her!

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Enough already! Combating stereotypes with Rusty Radiators #humanrights

By Allegra, SAIH & Rusty Radiators team

One of Allegra's ABSOLUTE favorite projects of 2013 was the Rusty Radiator Awards criticizing prevalent stereotypes within international humanitarian work. We are all familiar with them – the blond woman from the global north, or the young male determined to save the world's underdogs, namely the brown-skinned undereducated 'hordes' of an area commonly referred to simply as 'Africa'. (Remember also our own take on 'the Good Celebrity').

This week has given this issue unsuspected new visibility as Bob Geldof announced that he is re-releasing his aid single from 1985 'Do they know it's Christmas?' to target the current Ebola crises. This announcement was met with great upset over it's ill timing – fight against Ebola has been ongoing with full intensity in different parts of Africa via local efforts for a good while already, and thus Geldof's initiative this late comes forth as belittling them. Geldof's initiative does also resonate with unfortunate 'White Savior' complexes, which feel sorely out of place today.

Thus the Rusty Radiators campaign of 2014 arrived at a pivotal moment, and it is raising headlines all around. The video accompanying the 2013 awards ‘Aid for Africa Gone Wrong’ did some delicious work in challenging these perceptions with their smarty pants lead child actor who – despite of his impressive range of emotions including ‘the sad African’ – failed to keep a straight face while he witnessed the frail development worker struggling to complete her very first aid video.

By the end of the video, as this delicately robust kid whizz was depicted as falling behind the pack of kids running with gazelle-like speed after the departing aid vehicle, one could not agree more with his out-of-breath statement: It’s hard work to be in the aid business!

The video for the campaign of 2014 features a very familiar seeming game show – didn't I just watch this last week? – titled 'Do you want to be a Volunteer?' The punch line of the skit is the following question, the very last one in the long process to become a Volunteer: How many countries are there in Africa? And the answer? Well, just watch the video for yourself! (It's worth every second!)

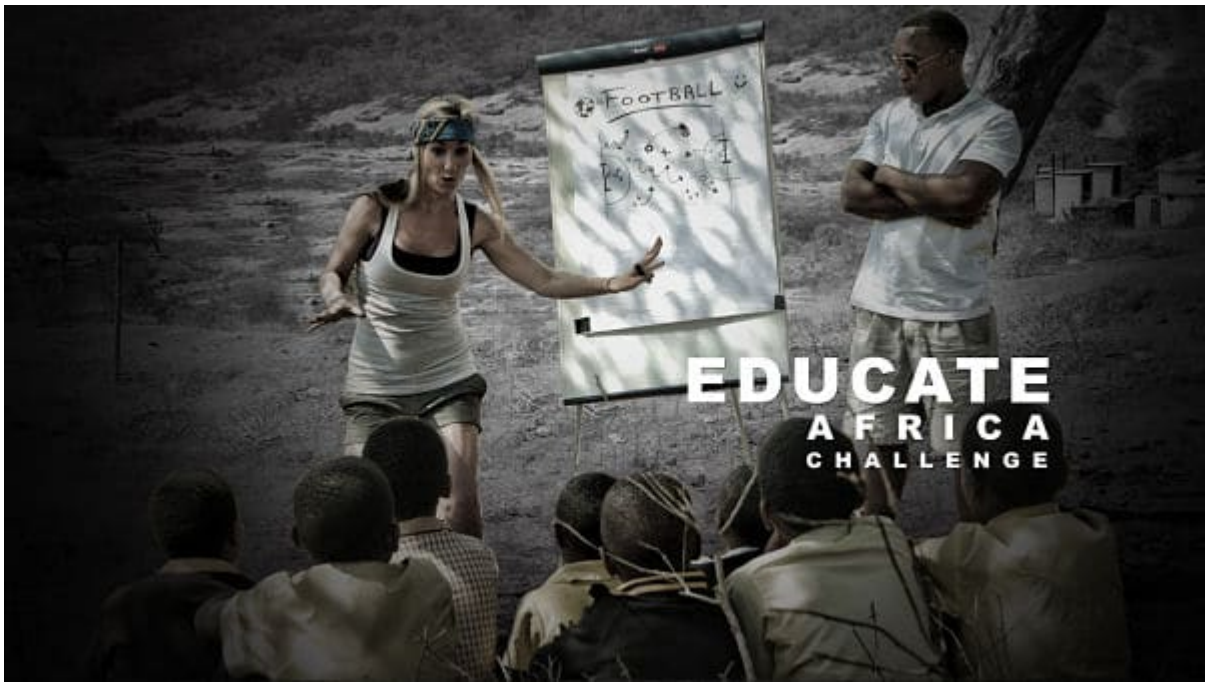
Rusty Radiators is an initiative launched in 2013 by the SAIH – Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund, an entity founded in 1961 as a part of the Norwegian students' anti apartheid movement.

> *Today the Fund is involved in numerous projects – and being the critical observers that we are, we cannot but notice that some of them do resonate with familiar rhetoric in international aid which we, alongside infinite other scholars, have argued is equally troublesome for reproducing stereotypes: their website mentions 'education in development cooperation, as well as North/South information and political advocacy in Norway'; 'support for local organisations and institutions working with higher education, research and capacity building in southern Africa and Latin-America'.*

However, if the Rusty Radiators project is a testament of anything, it must certainly be of the awareness of these perils – and if any further confirmation is needed, then just check out their very first campaign from 2012 Radi-Aid also known as 'Africa for Norway'.

Allegra is very pleased to sit down for a virtual chat with some of the creative wizards behind Rusty Radiators and Radi-Aid. We look forward to learning much more not only of the project itself, but also its reception. Also, we are eager to learn how the SAIH and this project envisions international humanitarian work

that *is* able to escape reproducing negative stereotypes. And of course – giving our growing frustration with the limits imposed on us by our collective scholarly genres in addressing these issues with some *real* zing – we look forward to inspiration on how to add some new 'bite' to our own writings.



Dear Rusty Radiators: First and foremost: our warmest congratulations for this amazing project! Over the past year, because of Allegra, we've kept a very close eye on social media initiatives in this area, and this one clearly stands out as one of the most original, poignant and carefully executed ones we have seen!

Thank you very much! We are really happy you like it and that you've noticed our initative.

How did the idea for Rusty Radiators get started initially – who came up with the concept, how did the development process get moving, where did the money come from? (We are in AWE over the beautiful quality of your videos!) Who nominates for these videos concretely, and how does the decision process then continue?

Our organization SAIH has worked with a topic we call “Our view of the South” for many years already (in Norway only) – about stereotypical portrayal of development countries, aid and development in charity campaigns and media.

Our first video “Radi-Aid: Africa for Norway” was initially planned as a parody on Band Aid’s “Do they know it’s Christmas?”, with the title “Yes, we know it’s Christmas”. The idea came in 2011. The students who came up with the idea also knew some people from iKind, a multimedia company based in Durban, South Africa. That’s how it started. As the process evolved, we decided to take it a bit further and “create” a fictive NGO called Radi-Aid and turn the whole image upside-down: Africans upon seeing images of freezing Norwegians and children with frostbite donated radiators to Norway, to help us get through the harsh Nordic winter. The video was initially meant for a Norwegian audience, but got a lot of attention worldwide. It was crazy!

We received financial support from Norad – The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – a specialised directorate under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Norad supports several civil society organizations in Norway, and has also financed our project in 2013 and 2014. Without this support, we would never have managed to do all this.

When we developed Rusty Radiator Awards, we got together an independent jury with different expertise and requested nominations from people all over the world. Also this year we’ve done the same, and researched a lot ourselves to see

what kind of fundraising videos can be found out there. The independent jury decides the final nominees.

The attention that your videos have and are receiving is amazing! Your 2013 campaign received also high international recognition and awards too, right? Does this reflect all the feedback that you have gotten, or has there also been some negative backlash? You do make some rather direct reference to the ad companies of the most powerful international aid agencies. How have they reacted to your initiative?

Yes, we are very honored. We're a small organization in Norway, so the attention we've received is more than we could ever dream of.

> *"The enormous attention showed us that we'd struck a chord. The first videos we've made have been seen more than 3 million times on YouTube, and have been screened in development conferences, university lectures and other places all over the world. We've received countless of inquiries and greetings from all over the world – media, NGOs, people from anywhere."*

Using humour and satire was certainly a good way to debate on these issues – which our former Information Officer Sindre has written more about here.

So far, we haven't received that many reactions from the nominated international NGOs. But the Norwegian ones that have been nominated have of course responded, and we got an interesting debate last year with Plan Norway. I will say a bit more about the comments below.

We're also tempted to think that you must be working with some real 'insiders' in the video & commercial industry, maybe some who have also worked on these 'real' campaigns – the quality of your footage is just that good. Could you shed any more light on this issue? Just who is doing these videos for you, and how did you find them? (here are the best, or worst, videos of 2013)

We have been very lucky to continue working with the multimedia company iKind. They are excellent and definitely the reason why these videos have been produced with high quality. It is important for us to collaborate with someone actually from the continent when working on such a topic. Also to get their point of views as well.

Moving to the substance of this campaign then. In 2013 you featured the wonderful young actor depicting 'the African Child' – just a great talent all around! But he was in a very distinctive role, would you agree? I mean, you don't often see a 'deserving child' spitting out pastries 'especially delivered' all the way from the North. It's both so mundane, ordinary – and subtly provocative at the same time. Are you not making fun of needy children thereof; are you suggesting that there aren't children who would benefit from such gifts?

Of course, that is not our suggestion. And we are very aware of and engage in conflicts around the world, human rights issues etc. – also through our own projects in SAIH, where we focus on education and collaborate with student associations all over the world.

> *"The point with all our videos is to use humor to illustrate the stereotypical images reflected in charity campaigns. The point with that specific scene is again to illustrate how "the white savior" thinks he/she has all the right answers to what the poor African needs – which sometimes, however, turns out to be wrong. Then it is also the bigger message with our campaign."*

We really enjoy the fact that your project also includes the 'Golden Radiator' part, meaning recognition for the best aid video. What do you wish to say with these videos: that international aid as such does have a continued role, it just needs to be executed more carefully? What is the bigger message that you want to make with this campaign?

Yes, in many ways.

> *"Of course we are not against aid. The problem we focus on is how it is communicated. For decades now, we've seen the same stereotypical images of Africa in both the media and in fundraising campaigns. Africa is often portrayed as a country with poor, hungry children, helpless women and warlike men. It reinforces the image of Africans as an "exotic other", which makes us think that we are substantially different from them. When we start believing that we are substantially different, we stop believing that we are all the same, and it becomes easier to accept that people are suffering. We believe that these images create apathy, rather than action. We need to educate ourselves on how stereotypes and simple solutions to complex problems are more damaging, than helping."*

SAIH wishes to create a bigger understanding for how a certain kind of communication can be harmful. That is why we started the Rusty Radiator Awards.

We also want to highlight the many excellent ways NGOs can communicate better – through the Golden category. Also this year, the nominated fundraising videos are really good examples, showing us that it IS possible to find other ways. This is also what we refer to when NGOs tell us that it is very difficult to find other ways to communicate poverty and need – in a way that makes people donate money and engage. We are aware of this dilemma, and have been there ourselves, but these examples show us the proof. NGOs here in Norway have also told us that the communication departments are very aware of the "stereotype trap" one can fall into, and that SAIH has contributed to making this even more important to work against.

See also the jury's comment on this year's Golden nominees, which explains more about what we want to see in fundraising campaigns. Our hope is of course that next year or the year after, we'll only have the "Golden Radiator Awards", as the "rusty" ones are disappearing. It IS possible!

Thank you SAIH and the Rusty Radiators team – we believe it IS possible too!

Celebrating Allies – ALL WEEK! Glimpses from behind the scenes!

Allegra
April, 2016

Over the past few weeks, Allegra has been deeply engaged with a theme that is

both topical and urgent: human smuggling. Close observers may have noticed that with these weeks arrived also an entirely new feature at our beloved website: namely Projects, a new sub-category under which we'll highlight projects with which Allegra collaborates. In addition, these past weeks included a rather impressive roundtable realised in collaboration with openDemocracy.

Now, close observers may likewise have guessed that with these kind of online incarnations we are deep in the 'tech' side of the blogosphere – to the extent that few anthropologists dare to venture thus far. And indeed, despite of our bold and experimental spirit, none of Allegra's board members have. Rather, once again, in realising these past weeks we have relied on our cherished Allies – trusted members of our editorial team who keep the website running! (With the addition that realising the Projects-page took some *actual* coding, and hence exceptional outside aid – warm thanks to Aashysh!)

Just who are these people? We are, of course, referring to the list of people to be found under Allegra's About-section! What is it exactly that they do, and why do we owe them so much for everything that appears at Allegra? Just think about it!

Every time that we share a piece of writing on the website, someone has searched images for it – possibly processed the image a bit too – done the layout, fixing bits of text so as to make them appealing to the eye; someone has placed the post in the appropriate category, and added links to relevant contexts. Someone has created a profile in our authors' gallery, including adding an image of the author, as well as overseen that all of this gets done, every day, every week – week after week!

Although we repeatedly get praise for the beauty of our website and our posts, we doubt that many people realise how much work it takes to make all of the fab analytical insights and colourful ethnographic depictions come to life.

> *We are not exaggerating when we say that each post takes in between 1-3 hours of technical editorial work – that is after everything in terms of substance has been finalised!*

Thus, this week we want to celebrate our Allies by a week dedicated to behind-the-scenes action! We will introduce to you Allegra's two wonderful Managers of Things & Stuff, namely Ninnu Koskenalho and Andrea Klein, in addition to our two hard-working language editors, Sarita Fae Jarmack and Marie-Louise Karttunen.

We want to thank them for their continued hard work, which is essential for Allegra's general mission of sharing 'anthropological gospel' to the world. In addition we want to thank all the people who are a part of our social media team, as well as everyone who either has been or continually is a part of the 'tech ed ass team' taking care of the technical layout of posts.

THANKS ALLIES – none of this would be possible without you! And simultaneously: the fact that you all exist is certainly one of the most concrete embodiments of Allegra's success – and we like to think, of the perseverance of genuine intellectual pursuit also!

Featured image by Matt Batchelor on flickr, derivative work: Octave.H (CC BY 2.0), via Wikimedia Commons

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If we question the figure of the 'smuggler' and the 'trafficker', we should also raise questions about the state

Josiah Heyman
April, 2016

When we raise questions about the assumed figures of the ‘smuggler’ and ‘trafficker’, we must also in parallel raise questions about agencies, officers, policies, and discourses of the state. These include enforcement efforts against smugglers, service providers to smuggled people, and those tasked with generating publicity around the issue of smuggling. Additionally, we must question the role of NGOs that mobilise around this issue and that receive state contracts in this domain as well as in human trafficking (e.g., shelters and transition houses).

> *This is not to say that these activities are always suspect – they may actually be good choices in terms of morality and policy – but such matters need careful consideration.*

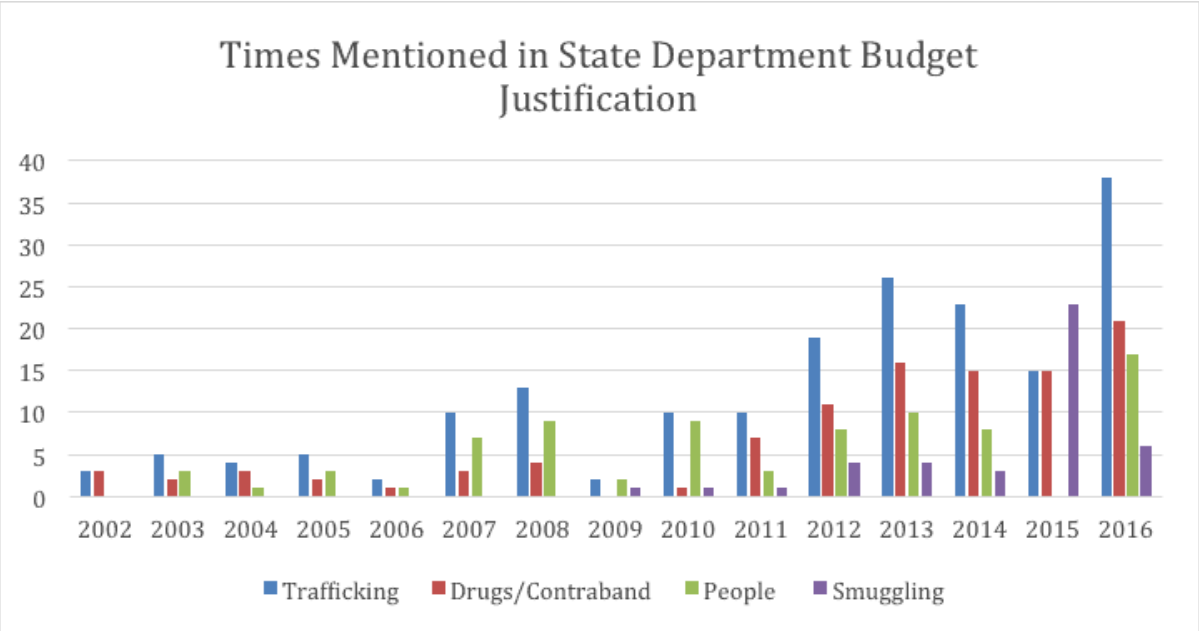
The state should not be allowed, unquestioned, to hide within the cloak of ideal law against a stereotyped evildoer. Laws are politically formulated, incompletely and selectively enforced, and sometimes ignored, even in the best of circumstances, and such considerations require close scrutiny of actual state activities and rationales. Or, more directly said, we should question the state as much as we question smugglers and traffickers.

Our work delineates the basics of US government actions against *traffickers*. Since the late 2000s, this has been a growth area amid a stagnant overall budget. For example, from 2007 to the present, the State Department's Office to Counter Human Trafficking (J/TIP) grew from a budget of $4,119,000 ($4,706,510 in 2016 terms) with 24 permanent staff to requesting $9,329,000 with a permanent staff of 47 in 2016. Yet there is no particular reason to think the issue has doubled over this period of time, though arguably this increase is catching up with an existing phenomenon. Other agencies have similar growth patterns: Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security (Coast Guard, Immigration and Customs Enforcement), Department of Justice (FBI), and so forth.

A notable feature is the political side (Congress) driving the expansion of administrative (enforcement and services) action in the trafficking domain. Interestingly, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), a part of the Department of Labor, attempted to reduce its human trafficking responsibilities. Their average funding requests from 2006-2009 were $13,229,750, yet an average of $78,045,000 was granted by Congress. The majority of the funding discrepancies occurred over the role the office was to play in wage theft and human trafficking. The bureau stated it wanted to reduce its efforts to an "advocacy" role, hence the reduction in funding needs, yet Congress sought an expansion of its activities. Our preliminary sense is that trafficking is a politically favored domain of state action. There may be key political alliances between advocates (often formed into NGOs), Congressional staff, and some but not all government agencies that have promoted this expansive path. This needs to be explored further.

> *Agencies of the state both help propagate the brutal trafficker image and benefit from it. The 'trafficking' label does work for the state side: it makes enforcement actions seem humanitarian and compelling, necessary and logical (a solution to a named problem), and it covers over actual complex realities on the state side because it is such a hard-to-question 'enemy'.*

There is also mission creep from anti-trafficking to anti-smuggling, anti-migrant facilitator, and anti-migrant operations. This blurring works to the advantage of police and diplomatic agencies. Because trafficking in people is a simplistic, morally compelling label, it helps justify rapidly increasing budgets. We have systematically tabulated terms used in the US State Department budget requests. For example, while trafficking is indeed the most frequently mentioned justification, more than half the requests in 2016 went outside of trafficking, to include drugs/contraband, the smuggling of people/migrants, and other forms of smuggling.



Alliances between state agencies and NGOs merit attention, as well as alliances between central and local states. Of the pool of $44 million awarded to government agencies in 2015, it was divided as follows: 36% to selected district

attorney's offices, 31% to police forces, 29% to municipal governments, and 4% to the Department of Labor. Across recipient agencies, 33% went to developing task forces, 19% went to task force enhancement and an additional 19% for victim services. The largest non-government recipient of grants was the Salvation Army, with 15% of all NGO funding, much of it passed through local state agencies.

In El Paso, Texas, we have seen some of this process from the inside. In this border city, the Salvation Army has been the driving local force with federal grant money. Local observers find that trafficking in El Paso actually centers on domestic transportation routes, primarily the major highway and truck routes passing east-west through the city. In contrast to this observed reality, the rhetoric of anti-trafficking refers heavily to US-Mexico border migration (south-north movement).

This blurs migration and trafficking. Money is pushed out in ways that reward key NGOs and police agencies: giant billboards (in English) on the main highway with police agency logos. Maybe this is indeed a good way to reach truck routes, but it seems expensive and indirect, and in El Paso use of Spanish is always needed alongside English. Some money has usefully supported a shelter and transition house. Furthermore, the budgetary expansion of the trafficking agency and the moral justification of the cause 'buy' local police agencies, academics, activists, and social service providers.

> *Finally, it is worth noting that the accumulated profits produced by migrant facilitation, smuggling, and trafficking actually provide significant revenues for the state – both local and central – above and beyond budget justifications.*

This occurs through asset forfeiture programs, in which seized monies, goods, and real estate are taken by law enforcement agencies and redistributed across local, regional and international levels, buying adherence to the state agenda.

For example, during "Operation Coyote", an anti-smuggling initiative in 2014, over $625,000 in illicit profit was confiscated from 288 bank accounts. The

Immigration and Customs Enforcement asset forfeiture branch, which obtained and passed through these funds, is part of a large family of federal asset forfeiture accounts in the Treasury Forfeiture Fund (TFF), administered by the Treasury Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture (TEOAF). That fund totaled $807 million in Fiscal Year 2014, though certainly not only from human trafficking or smuggling. It is worth considering the multitude of ways that various agencies and levels of the state are fiscally interwoven with criminal or covert enterprises.

Indeed, this should raise in our mind a crucial note of skepticism: governments and various illegal practices, networks, and actors have mutual dependencies and interconnections. They are not just polar opposites, locked into a battle of good and bad. From this questioning stance, we can more openly explore the ambiguous fields of politics, advocates, state agencies and officers, and migrant traffickers, smugglers, and facilitators.

Our co-producer openDemocracy offers more food for thought on human smuggling:

- Beyond common-sense notions of human smuggling in the Americas, by SOLEDAD ÁLVAREZ-VELASCO and MARTHA RUIZ
- Smuggling as social negotiation: pathways of Central American migrants in Mexico, by YAATSIL GUEVARA GONZÁLEZ
- The call to become a smuggler, by LUIGI ACHILLI
- Precarious livelihoods in eastern Indonesia: of fishermen and people smugglers, by ANTJE MISSBACH
- Governing migrant smuggling: a criminality approach is not sufficient, by ANNA TRIANDAFYLLIDO
- The struggle of mobility: organising high-risk migration from the Horn of Africa, by TEKALIGN AYALEW MENGISTE
- Communities of smugglers and the smuggled, by NASSIM MAJIDI

Featured image (cropped) by Jonathan McIntosh (flickr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Buddhist people smuggler

Bodean Hedwards
April, 2016

Since the 1950s, there has been a continuous flow of Tibetans fleeing across the Himalayas, seeking refuge in exiled communities in Nepal, India and around the

world. While accurate figures are limited in nature, the Central Tibetan Administration suggests that of the six million ethnic Tibetans around the world, only two million remain in Tibet, or what is now referred to as the Tibetan Autonomous Region. This exodus has continued against a backdrop of persistent human rights violations including cultural, religious and political oppression, forced internal displacement, arbitrary detention and torture in prison, limited (and discriminatory) access to education and employment opportunities, and an assortment of Orwellian surveillance practices. The combination of these policies and practices have been argued by some, including the Dalai Lama, to amount to cultural genocide.

Unlike other border zones, the Tibet-Nepal border and the thousands of border crossings that have occurred in the region remain relatively unexamined. Central to the Tibet-Nepal border is the international Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000) and the concern of states to criminalise and undermine people smugglers. This protocol frames people smugglers as facilitators of illegal border crossings, a perspective justified by the associated rhetoric perpetuating the image of migrants as exploited and vulnerable. By examining the experience of irregular Tibetan migrants on the Tibet-Nepal border, we can recast the assumptions that underpin this response.

The story of Dorjee

Dorjee (not his real name), a former monk, spent four years in prison for participating in the 1988 national uprising in Tibet. After his release, he continued his political activism and started organising group discussions about the impact of Chinese policies, collecting and distributing speeches from high profile activists in India and the Dalai Lama, and conducting lessons on Buddhism and Tibetan history for young Tibetans. Following the arrest of some of his colleagues for participating in the same activities, he decided to flee to India in 1993. Dorjee went into hiding, moving around the city with the support of friends (who were often in high places) until he could arrange to get out of the city and find a guide that would help him cross the Himalayan mountains to Nepal.

Dorjee's story is not unique. Ex-political prisoners and political activists driven by the fear of imprisonment (and their treatment in prison), as well as Tibetans seeking access to education and employment, continue to make their way across the highest mountain range in the world. The border region where many Tibetans attempt to cross into Nepal is approximately 7,544 feet above sea level, and the Nangpa La Pass – an ancient trade route between Nepal and Tibet that is now rarely used – is over 19,000 feet above sea level. In addition to the physicality of the Tibet-Nepal border, the region is also a heavily controlled area. This means that those trying to escape also have to navigate the multiple checkpoints and border guards stationed along the border to prevent Tibetans from leaving.

An event that illustrates the danger occurred in 2005, when mountaineers recorded the murder of Kelsang Namsto, a Buddhist nun who was shot and killed by border guards while attempting to flee Tibet. Since then, there has been significant Chinese investment into the Nepal border security efforts, with the forced repatriation of Tibetans playing a key part of the strengthened economic and political relationship between Nepal and China. As the securitisation of this border region has continued, and the enforcement mechanisms gradually expand into neighbouring Nepal, the risks Tibetans face in trying to leave are increasingly higher.

Guide or People Smuggler?

Whether it is the lack of information about border crossings, or the limited access to legal (or regularised) migration channels, the barriers to mobility are fundamental reasons for the emergence of a 'people smuggling' market. Outside official government policy and rhetoric, the term 'people smuggler' has rarely been used in relation to Tibetan guides and their role in facilitating the escape of Tibetans to Nepal and India. According to the international legal definition, the guides are engaged in people smuggling. However,

> *the experience of Tibetans in crossing the Tibet-Nepal border undermines the largely accepted notions of exploitation and vulnerability typically associated*

with the migrant-smuggler relationship.

This is based on three key features of their migration.

First, Tibetan migrants – particularly those who leave their homes outside the legal channels of migration – require a significant level of agency to navigate both the physical and political barriers present on the Tibet-Nepal border. This agency is inconsistent with the perpetuated stereotype of the 'exploited or vulnerable migrant', and extends to the relationship between the migrants and their guides. Personal narratives around this relationship indicate that *if* there are financial transactions associated with the facilitation of their migration, these are handed over on arrival at the migrants' destination as opposed to prior to their departure. This is different from some comparative examples where fees are typically paid up front, resulting in a higher level of vulnerability. This feature alone suggests that Tibetans, and irregular migrants more broadly, can and do make sense of the barriers associated with bordering crossings, and in doing so often reconfigure the power-dynamic between them and the smuggler, bringing it back into their own hands.

Second, the role of the smuggler is at odds with national and international characterisations, particularly those associated with exploitation and abuse. Such negative depictions are missing at this border zone, and guides are viewed as vital to migrants' survival when crossing the Himalayas. Border crossings globally present physical dangers to irregular migrants, and for Tibetans these risks are significant. They risk slipping into glaciers, being trapped under landslides, frostbite and hypothermia. Not far from where people are being smuggled into Nepal, thousands of well-funded mountaineers and hikers are being guided through this territory in the same way to ensure they survive their personal journey to conquer some of the world's highest mountains. However, for those fleeing Tibet, these risks are exacerbated by the way that borders are securitised, controlled and enforced; when combined with the physicality of the Tibet-Nepal border there is an indisputable need for the skill of a guide to successfully and

safely navigate this border site.

Third, access to guides is often arranged in specific support of Tibetans attempting to escape political persecution or poverty, and occasionally at no cost. This appears to set this location and this border crossing apart from the practices that occur in other regions. Amala, a young Tibetan woman who fled Tibet with her younger brothers after their parents died, did not have to pay the guide who helped her cross the border into Nepal. While Amala's experience is not necessarily the norm, it highlights the culturally relative, non-monetary benefits associated with facilitating migrants' journeys into Nepal.

> *Grounded in the nature of Tibetan kinship and community networks, their strong sense of nationalism, and the pervasive knowledge of the human rights situation in Tibet, the ability to support Tibetans in escaping the country could easily be interpreted as a contribution to the continuity and survival of Tibetans as a distinct cultural and ethnic group.*

The relationship between Tibetans and their guides is not unique. Tibet-Nepal transits have largely remained in the peripheries of forced and irregular migration research, yet they offer a rich source of data on the variability and also continuity of humanitarian smuggling. This border zone is not the only case that challenges the contemporary stereotype of the 'exploited and vulnerable migrant' and the 'exploitative people smuggler'. By moving beyond the state-driven, criminal categorisations attributed to irregular migrants and people smugglers alike, we begin to see a more nuanced, contextually specific and socially accepted relationship borne from the need to access protection and support for mobility.

The experience of Tibetans and their interactions with guides challenge the state's criminalisation of people smugglers by demonstrating how guides (and people smugglers) facilitate escape from persecution and poverty into relative safety and security. By shifting our geographic focus, the structures and rhetoric underpinning policy responses to irregular migration begin to dissolve.

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How Immigration Policies Create Smugglers

Rebecca Galemba
April, 2016

In the spring of 2007, when I was driving with Ramón (all names have been changed), a Mexican man who lives along an unmonitored road that crosses the Mexico-Guatemala border, we passed one of the newer, two-story homes. I commented that the house had its outdoor lights on all day. Ramón shrugged. “He won’t care. He’s rich”, he said. “He doesn’t care about the lights”. Ramón told me that the owner – Gerardo – used to be a *pollero*, or a human smuggler, who brought many people to the United States. But he stopped, according to Ramón, when “things became more complicated” and Mexico intensified immigration surveillance in the mid-2000s.

Other border residents also whispered that Gerardo used to be a *pollero* or *coyote*, another term used to refer to migrant smugglers. The whispers were usually followed by an assertion that he was no longer a smuggler. Now he just

raised cattle. Prior to the late 1990s and early 2000s, many border residents provided Central Americans with rides into Mexico with little fanfare.

> *The recent whispers, silences, and rumours that began to surround migrant smuggling were not the only telling factors of a changing migration climate, but so was Gerardo's story. In fact, I was never certain if Gerardo was a smuggler, in part because the term and practices of smuggling had shifted over time in response to changing visa procedures and immigration policies and policing in Mexico, Guatemala, and the United States.*

Mexico's intensification of border policing and concerted securitisation of migration can be traced to the US-backed Plan Sur in 2001 to support US security concerns. The escalation of the drug war in Mexico in 2006, and Mexico's implementation of the Southern Border Plan in 2014 in response to Washington's outcries of a "surge" on the border in 2014, further intensified migrant policing.

Mexico has concentrated border surveillance on select, modernised border points of entry, as well as on ad hoc highway roadblocks to establish 'belts of control'. However, migrant desperation, continued demand for cheap labour in the United States, and widespread official corruption and impunity has meant that heightened securitisation has not deterred migration. Instead, migrant smuggling at the Mexico-Guatemala border has shifted from more informal networks and local guides to higher-priced smugglers and criminal groups as human rights abuses against migrants increase.

How Gerardo became a smuggler

The first border residents, whether from the Mexican or Guatemalan side, who went to the United States in the 1990s all went with Gerardo. Miguel, a Guatemalan border resident, joined other young men from the Mexican side of the border. "We all went to the United States with Gerardo before he was a *coyote*", Miguel said. They went to work on pine tree plantations in Alabama. Since Gerardo was the first to work at the plantation, he found work for others. At first

each man used his own money to travel to the northern border, where they hired *coyotes* to help them cross the US-Mexico border.

Gerardo did not charge any of them and also worked on the plantation. Subsequently, Gerardo recruited his friends more formally under work visas through his employer in Alabama. The ironic twist was that the visas were for Guatemalans, and so the Mexicans purchased false Guatemalan papers in La Libertad or Guatemala City. Border residents believed that work visas were easier to acquire in Guatemala than in Mexico, after the end of Guatemala's 36-year civil war in 1996. Due to fewer applicants, visas were also less competitive in Guatemala. When the visa process expired, people were still able to go north without documents, as the cross-border migration and work networks were by this point established. Later, Gerardo brought the same people from the same places to the same location. This time he charged, making him a *coyote.*

Yet the stories surrounding Gerardo's role shift depending on the point in time and the interlocutor. "No, he wasn't a *coyote*…they are from bigger cities", one Mexican border resident said. "Some people say he is, but he was a *contratista* [contractor], since his boss in the US would send him here to bring others … they went with visas, which they bought in Guatemala". Others mentioned Gerardo's role as a labor contractor and *coyote* as one and the same; the only thing that changed was how he could bring people to the employer in the US. In other words, Gerardo was converted from a fellow migrant to a labour broker to a smuggler depending on changes in US immigration and visa processes, all the while continuing to provide his Alabama employer with Mexican and Guatemalan workers.

Some residents wonder how Gerardo made so much money, but others see him as someone who helped others regardless of whether they called him a fellow migrant, smuggler, or contractor. "He is the one who helped many people from here go to the US", Gerardo's cousin noted. "He helped the majority from this region. Since he was one of the first to go, he helped others to go with visas and then others as a *coyote.* But then he stopped … when it got more dangerous".

When smuggling becomes a profession

As Mexico enhanced immigration surveillance and criminalised smuggling, and drug cartels expanded into human smuggling and preying on migrants, smaller-scale smugglers like Gerardo left the business. It became more dangerous to crossing through Mexico and more expensive to evade corrupt officials, checkpoints, and criminals. Locals preferred to go with local border guides and brokers since they trusted people with whom they shared social and kinship connections.

In recent years, border residents have had to search for smugglers in larger cities, those who may specialise in, or have deeper connections to, smuggling networks. Smugglers are increasingly necessary to helping locals navigate Mexico's proliferation of immigration checkpoints.

> *Some smugglers are trustworthy, but locals suspect that unknown smugglers may abandon them or have connections with more criminal actors as they hear stories about such incidences. Locals' efforts to distance themselves from migrant smuggling generate fear that perpetuates the image of the criminal, sophisticated human smuggler despite the diversity of arrangements that may still characterise smuggling.*

Eduardo, a Mexican border resident, referred to how migrant smuggling transformed from a networking service to a more lucrative and risky business that locals increasingly associate with drug trafficking regardless of actual overlaps. He mentioned that Gerardo probably never made much money bringing people. Eduardo also used to "deliver" migrants to smugglers locally and occasionally to the northern border as a teenager. But, he told me, "[in those days] it was very little and it was different…easy…I barely made anything".

Eduardo confided suspicions about Gerardo and his earnings that led locals to collapse migrant and drug smuggling together. Gerardo had a small horse track on his property in a region where horse races are often associated with drug

exchanges. “That is where they do exchanges … it is all *narcos*”, said Eduardo. Eduardo suspected Gerardo was collaborating with people working in “drugs and *pollos”.* But, he said, “do not tell people where you heard that”.

> *The discursive shift in seeing Gerardo as someone who helped his community members obtain work to someone suspected of working in the drug trade illustrates not only how the securitisation of migration and the militarisation of the drug war pushed these two fields closer together, but also how they became morally equivalent to border residents.*

Prior to Mexico’s intensification of migrant surveillance, smuggling migrants may have still been illegal, but it was a mundane, relatively benign aspect of border life.

Previously an activity that most residents engaged in to some degree, they have been pushed out of migrant smuggling by its increasing risk, price, and criminalisation under Mexico’s intensification of border policing since signing Plan Sur in 2001, and most recently, under the 2014 Southern Border Plan. In turn, the increasing criminality and corruption surrounding migration make border residents not only avoid it, but also fearful to even talk about it. Once a fact of border life, they no longer spoke about migrant smuggling, or talked about it as something they did in the past, or spoke about it quietly.

Just like the drug traffickers they knew passed through their community, they knew migrant smugglers used this route, but did not see or hear anything. As one border resident told me, “if drugs come through here, we don’t realise. They don’t bother us”.

> *Drugs and migrants, even though they are often carried by different actors and for different purposes, have increasingly collapsed together in the border imagination, just as heightened security policies have led criminal and drug-*

> *related groups to branch into and take over human smuggling routes in a larger contest over territory and control. They both belong to the same "public secret" that everyone knows, but about which one does not speak directly, or only through whispers, rumour, and hearsay.*

At this particular juncture, border talk around human and drug smuggling alternates between silence and rumour as the landscape shifts. Rumour can help people living in a constant state of fear navigate uncertainty while it also serves to govern the movements of the vulnerable. At the Mexico-Guatemala border, alternating silences and rumours protect local residents while they also enhance the illicit aura around drugs and migration and perpetuate silence and impunity.

As Gerardo's narrative demonstrates, the profile of the human smuggler is shaped by fluctuations in migration policy and policing. Nicholas de Genova critically examines immigrant illegality by pointing to how changing laws, rather than migrant and smuggler actions, produced "the legal production of migrant illegality". By extension, to understand the evolution and fear of the criminal smuggler, we must become attune to the criminalisation of human mobility. The criminalisation and uneven policing of boundaries has shaped and structured the strategies of those seeking to evade them, as well as created and altered the constellations of actors who serve as brokers at the disjunctures between borders, their incomplete enforcement, and human mobility.

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What makes a good coyote? Mexican Migrants' satisfaction with human smugglers

Daniel E. Martínez
April, 2016

Clandestine migration across the US-Mexico border is a dangerous process. Not only must one avoid detection by US authorities, but also encounters with bandits known as *bajadores*, drug smugglers, and venomous snakes. Migrants must also endure a long, difficult walk, the extreme temperatures of the Sonoran Desert, and the lack of water in the area.

Exposure to the elements, most notably hyperthermia, is the leading cause of migrant death in southern Arizona, with over 2,413 known migrant deaths occurring between FY 1990 and 2013 in this US state alone. Choosing a reliable, trustworthy guide is paramount in ensuring one's safety, avoiding detection by US authorities, and successfully reaching one's desired destination.

But how can scholars evaluate the quality of services in informal economies? What are the criteria used for judging people's satisfaction with these types of

services? In the context of unauthorized migration, the media and some academics tend to portray human smugglers as subjects without a moral compass, often situated on two extreme poles as either ‘villains’ or ‘heroes’.

It is important to develop a richer perspective on smuggling, one that takes into account the diversity of contexts and individual experiences among actors on both sides of this transaction – that is, smuggling facilitators and those who rely on their services. Our research examines the factors associated with migrants’ satisfaction with the services provided by their smugglers, known locally as *coyotes*. We also examine whether or not migrants would recommend the same smuggler to a family member or close friend.

We examine migrants’ satisfaction with and recommendations of *coyotes* by drawing on data gathered in the second wave of the Migration Border Crossing Study (MBCS). The MBCS is a unique data source consisting of surveys with Mexican migrants in five different border cities and Mexico DF. In order to be eligible to participate in the MBCS, migrants must have attempted a border crossing in the post-9/11 era, been apprehended by any US authority (either while crossing or in their destination community), and repatriated to Mexico within a month prior to being surveyed.

For this particular analysis, we focused exclusively on the 600 respondents who most recently crossed with a *coyote* within five years of being surveyed. And while all MBCS respondents had been removed from the US, the sample does include a mix of people who successfully made it to their desired destination as well as who had not.

What satisfies the smuggled?

Overall, we find that there is little variation in *coyote* satisfaction according to demographic characteristics or smuggling fees. Rather, satisfaction is best explained by instrumental outcomes and effective protection from risky situations.

For instance, migrants who successfully reached their desired US destination

were more likely to report satisfaction, while border crossers who were abandoned or physically mistreated by traveling companions, or witnessed the physical mistreatment or abandonment of others, were less likely to report satisfaction with their *coyote*.

However, our research also uncovers an interesting relationship between 'satisfaction' and 'recommending' a *coyote* to family/friends. First and foremost, and unsurprisingly, people who were *unsatisfied* with their *coyotes* were overwhelmingly *less likely* to recommend them to a family member or friend. However, this relationship is not as straightforward for people who reported satisfaction with their *coyote*.

For example, 68% of MBCS respondents who used the services of a *coyote* during their most recent crossing attempt were satisfied with their guide. When asked whether or not they would recommend their *coyote* to a family member or friend, only 38% of respondents indicated that they would. Furthermore, among the migrants who stated that they were satisfied with the services provided by their *coyotes*, only 53% would recommend their guide to a loved one.

> *Why would someone be satisfied and yet not be willing to provide a recommendation?*

This disconnect represents one of the core challenges for evaluating the relationships between clandestine service providers and their clientele. First, the *coyote*-migrant relationship has some unique characteristics that are not wholly transferable to say, drug users and drug dealers. While both migrants and drug users rely on a certain level of trust that operates outside of the normal guarantees of society, entrusting one's physical wellbeing to a guide is different from the more transactional nature of most illegal services.

A migrant's well-being and safety are the direct responsibility of the *coyote,* not just their delivery to a foreign country. There are no third party enforcers in the clandestine world that can protect one from various forms of victimization or bad

faith actors.

For example, in the formal economy, if someone does not deliver goods or services that were paid for there is generally some legal recourse. However, in the informal economy, the only recourse is violence.

We found some important differences in what drives people's logic for a satisfactory interaction, versus why they would or would not give a recommendation. Namely, satisfaction is a product of instrumental factors (e.g., success, abandonment etc.), while a recommendation has a more expressive, qualitative dimension.

As noted above, people who were satisfied with their *coyote* were much more likely to have successfully crossed the border. Conversely, those who had been abandoned or witnessed others be abandoned were much less likely to be satisfied. However, when analyzing open-ended responses about whether people would or would not recommend their guides, they relied heavily on the frames of trust, treatment, and smuggler conduct.

This is an important difference that opens up new questions about migration and smuggling as a whole. Because the smuggler-migrant relationship is one born out of necessity, the need to cross the border likely outweighs issues of treatment, trust or quality; however, when thinking about subjecting a loved one to the same treatment, these issues become far more important.

For migrants, especially in the predominantly male Mexican population we surveyed, the expectations of good treatment are rather low. It is important to distinguish between the cold calculations born out of the desperation to cross a border illegally, subjecting oneself to extreme danger and even risk of death, and the idea of entrusting a loved one's well-being to this person, a person whose motives and actions are outside of anyone's control.

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Featured image: Border Patrol sign in California warning "Caution! Do not expose your life to the elements. It's not worth it!", via Wikimedia Commons

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Smuggling evolutions in North Africa: the need of a new approach

Paola Monzini
April, 2016

In what follows I present the evolution of migrant smuggling in north Africa over the last decade in order to understand the foundations of smuggling in this region and its specific features. My goal is to argue against the prevailing eurocentric approach to irregular migration matters and for new paradigms focussed on the local level. First, I reconstruct the main features of the institutional assets creating, at the international level, the pre-conditions for smuggling activities. Then, I move to some general considerations on the specific forms organised crime may take in this region of the world, specifically with respect to corruption and irregular migration matters. The aim is to introduce a new hypothesis on the place that smugglers and the smuggling activities may take in local societies.

> *North Africa is a strategic area in the migration system connecting Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and regional institutional assets for the governance*

of migration are in permanent evolution.

In most the north African states the introduction of new visa policies, the increased patrolling of borders, and the detention of undocumented migrants became common practices during the 2000s, following a trend inaugurated in Europe in the 1990s. Progressively, punishments for not only irregular migrants but also for facilitators and smugglers have been introduced.

In comparison with the EU system, the architecture of the institutional management of migration in north Africa lacks a fundamental pillar: minimum standards for the treatment and protection of asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants (such as minors and trafficked persons). Specific provisions for them are not included in national laws, with the two exceptions being Morocco and Tunisia, which are slowly introducing reliable instruments to protect asylum seekers and regularise practices for undocumented migrants.

Professional smugglers in the north African region have operated as key agents of migration processes in this 'incomplete' institutional framework since the early 1990s. Initially they assisted seasonal migrants of Mediterranean countries to overcome the increasing number of obstacles introduced by, predominantly, Spain and Italy. Efforts at the European and international levels to stop irregular migration by sea have intensified in the ensuing decades, often at great cost to both the human rights of migrants and the treasuries of EU member states. Nevertheless, all these efforts have periodically vanished due to the political instability of the neighbouring regions, which has precipitated new migration flows of newly created – and unprotected – displaced populations.

Migration flows by land and sea – pressed by institutional restrictions and fuelled by new migration pressures – have changed direction and composition many times over the years. In general, the routes have tended to either stretch further and further or to be reduced because of repressive activities, creating forms of polarisation in different cities and countries all over the region. Specifically, the reinforcement of border controls between African states has increased the

demand for smuggling services not only by those heading toward the EU, but also by those moving within the region.

Diversifying flows and increasing regional migration

As a result, north Africa has become one of the regions that sees the most presence of smuggling practices, increasingly organised by structured groups. This trend was already recorded by a UN regional study in 2010. It reported a reduction of the irregular migration flows from Africa to Europe, and an increase of the movements inside the north African area. The trend was described as a result of the EU politics of 'externalisation' of immigration controls beyond the borders of the European Union.

As migration has intensified over the last five years, the composition of flows and the nature of smuggling networks have evolved.

> *Because of economic processes and political instability, on the one hand, and because of the increase of patrolling at sea, on the other, regional irregular migration in north Africa continues to increase.*

Today, those still using the sea to access Europe are mainly asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants, those with the possibility of being accepted for protection within the EU. The number of north African nationals arriving in Europe – who were the first to move with the smugglers' assistance – has fallen.

States in north Africa and the connecting regions are still facing serious and growing difficulties in managing these flows. Their responses are similar to those in place in Europe: decisions are taken to arbitrarily stop migrants with the introduction of visa systems on regional borders (between Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan; between Tunisia and Libya; and between Egypt and Libya for example), thus increasing smuggling practices; new fences are constructed and massive deportation practices implemented. Only a portion of migrants have

access to assistance from international organisations (for example, UNHCR) and their human rights are often not respected.

Data gaps and exploitation on the periphery

The effects of these policies deterring migration in the region are only scarcely recorded and an analysis of the evolution of the smuggling networks operating in the countries of the global south is still lacking. At the same time, research on migrant smuggling in the Mediterranean area has always been explicitly eurocentric. From the mid-2000s onward, analysis on smuggling in the Mediterranean was conducted with data collected in Italy, to a lesser extent in Spain, and scarcely any in Turkey. Greece has become a field-study hub only recently, while academic research has rarely been conducted in key countries such as Libya, Egypt, Algeria, or in many countries of origin. This discrepancy has produced quite a significant lack of consistency in the discourse on smuggling and smugglers.

As a result, we lack a lot of the information needed to understand the impact of recent political changes on smuggling activities in North Africa. It is certain that traffic along the routes (except those heading to Spain) has increased dramatically since 2013, with a concomitant increase of deaths and accidents. Also, recent analysis based on interviews with migrants, and supported by results of judicial proceedings based on telephone intercepts of conversations between smugglers, has revealed that smuggling practices are often blurring into trafficking and kidnapping for ransom, both in Egypt and Libya. Such interviews detail the hostile environment migrants now encounter in Egypt and Libya. Quite often they move without a specific destination or goal, other than to flee precarious living conditions in their places of origin.

> *For them, the main objective of crossing the sea to the EU is often to find protection from persecution, not only in their origin countries, but also in other countries, such as Egypt and Libya, where they were vulnerable to exploitation including forced labour, kidnapping and sexual violence.*

The role of organised crime

Professional smugglers can be considered as part of a wider system of exploitation of vulnerable migrants, part of an illegal environment formed to take advantage of basic needs and survival strategies of migrants living in hostile environments. We know that, due to vulnerabilities of undocumented migrants, a complex system of black economies has been formed around them in the last 20 years, both in Europe and in non-European countries. Recent literature has extensively described the flourishing of ghettos, the secluded economic and social areas in which undocumented migrants live. There the intermediaries, who are well connected with employers and exploiters of hosting countries, are often of the same nationality as the migrants or speak the same language.

From studies on organised crime, we know that the symbiosis and coexistence that exist between criminal systems and the wider society are constantly evolving. Also, we know that the degree of integration of illegal systems – their ability to continuously carry out fundamental economic activities in a local context – is proportional to the degree of extension of their 'inter-organisational' relationships in the broader legal field. As sociologists of the Chicago School pointed out a century ago, the leadership positions of criminal organisations are occupied by individuals with a talent for mediation, those best able to resolve disputes within the 'underworld' and to maintain 'good relations' with the outside world at the same time.

According to this approach, organised crime systems are primarily the product of an illegal organisation of power at different levels, namely supported by the corruption of the political system and the failure of the justice system. Organised crime is an expression of a social context in which the primary values are directed to immediate and personal interest, and it is successful in social arenas where all the actors act in their own interests.

> *Organised crime rings are successful if predatory attitudes are shared in the local environment, by politicians, businessmen, representatives of law*

enforcement and justice.

Given the specific institutional assets in some of the southern Mediterranean countries, highly permeated by corruption practices, it is perhaps more useful to analyse smuggling not only as an enterprise that aims to profit, but also as a network strongly connected to the political system and local administration that participates fully in the informal management of an awkward population of newcomers.

Today the crisis of the states on the southern shore, namely Libya and to a lesser extent Egypt, run parallel with a growth of mass migration movements composed of people seeking alternative living solutions. The hypothesis is that, in this framework, smugglers have had the opportunity to develop a high level of systemic integration, participating informally in local migration governance processes as well as in a wider system of exploitation of migrants. Research so far has not focused on the complex social relations supporting smugglers, entrepreneurs, officials, and militaries, all of whom benefit from smuggling activities.

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ANNA TRIANDAFYLLIDOU

- The struggle of mobility: organising high-risk migration from the Horn of Africa, by TEKALIGN AYALEW MENGISTE
- Communities of smugglers and the smuggled, by NASSIM MAJIDI

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Rescuing Refugees in the context of Europe's Fight Against Human Smuggling

Ilse van Liempt
April, 2016

Human smuggling has been considered a crime in the European context since the beginning of the 2000s. It has been defined in the Council Directive 2002/90/EC as the facilitation of unauthorized entry, transit, and residence, and is conceived as covering all phases and all types of migrant smuggling. Over the last two years sentences for human smuggling have gone up and, in the context of the current 'refugee crisis', new solutions to fight human smuggling are at the forefront.

In March 2015, the European Commission launched its plan and priorities for a 'new comprehensive European agenda on migration' in which it expressed its wish to enhance actions "in fighting irregular immigration and smuggling more robustly". This agenda was complemented by the 'EU action plan against migrant smuggling', which underlines the critical need of state agencies to better collect and share information on the modus operandi, routes and economic models of

smuggling networks, in order to understand the business model of criminal networks and design adequate responses. Europol's new European Migrant Smuggling Centre is presented as an important EU information hub in this fight against migrant smuggling.

> *Despite the proposed comprehensive approach, the dominant way smuggling is framed and understood is clearly one of organized crime.*

This particular framing makes it easier to legitimize the 'fight'. Who can be against fighting organized crime? But it is important to realize that this crime-dominated focus overlooks the structural reality of migration and important underlying characteristics of the smuggling business.

It is misleading to use the term smuggler for all actors who help migrants in their border crossing process. Alongside the highly organized, criminal actors, there are also local people living in border regions who have managed to turn border crossing into a way to make a living. They sometimes charge low prices. Moreover, smuggling is often organized by family members, relatives, or friends who are helping each other to find ways to escape desperate situations. Increasingly civil society in Europe has also become involved in helping refugees out with their often difficult border crossing processes.

Smuggling for Humanitarian Motives

The EU action plan against migrant smuggling notes that appropriate criminal sanctions should be in place *while avoiding the risks of criminalizing those who provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress*. Implicitly the inherent tension between the criminalization of smugglers on the one hand and of those providing humanitarian assistance on the other is thus acknowledged. The EU actions to fight against smuggling, however, have run in parallel with an incremental use of sanctions in the EU against individuals directly or indirectly involved in helping and/or providing humanitarian assistance to undocumented people.

In the autumn of 2015, during which substantial numbers of refugees in desperate situations left Turkey and travelled through both EU and Schengen states – some of them passing into western Balkan states and back into EU states – the EU's measures against facilitation of irregular migration were instrumentalized by some political leaders to warn their citizens and the citizens of neighboring states against assisting refugees on the move. However, NGOs and civil society all over Europe have provided assistance to irregular migrants despite the warnings and the intimidation.

> *Some of these 'rescuers' have now been criminalized, prosecuted or are under investigation. I argue it is questionable whether we should criminalize all these forms of assistance to refugees.*

Rescuing Refugees and Being Accused for Smuggling

In January 2015, the Greek police pressed charges carrying prison sentences of up to 10 years against a group of Spanish lifeguards who rescue refugees in Lesvos. A retired British soldier stood trail in France for attempting to bring a four-year-old Afghan girl from the Calais refugee camp to reunite with family in the UK. He was convicted but eventually the €1,000 fine was suspended. In March 2016, high-profile Danish campaigner Lisbeth Zornig was found guilty of human smuggling and fined DKr22,500 (€2,930) after giving a lift to a family of six Syrians. She was charged under Denmark's Aliens Act, which bans providing transport to people without a resident permit. Under the UN Law this could not be seen as smuggling as no money was charged.

The UN approach to human smuggling, as it emerges from the UN Protocol against Smuggling (UNPS), is however considerably different from that of the EU. Even though it does not formally establish smuggled migrants as victims, the protection of their rights is among the protocol's main concerns. Moreover, the term 'assistance' denotes an action that is being carried out at the request of the

person who is assisted. Under UN law smuggling is recognized as a commodification of human beings and the wrongness is defined around profit making. It is only smuggling unless it is committed in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial gain or other material benefit. Activities of those who provided support to migrants for humanitarian reasons or on the basis of close family ties were previously excluded from the scope of criminalization. This is different from the facilitation directive of the EU, where smuggling is framed as the procurement of illegal entry – a stand-alone action with a meaning of its own. Migrants and refugees are now seen in Europe as much more actively contributing to the deed.

The action plan presented by the European Commission seems ready to abandon the complicity approach to human smuggling. Smugglers are not depicted as mere migrants' facilitators anymore. Their relationship with those smuggled has begun to be interpreted more properly as one of exploitation. This terminological shift has important conceptual implications and changes the way smugglers are framed and the act of smuggling is understood.

Impact of Criminalization on Willingness to Rescue Refugees

History is full of examples of people who have saved migrants for humanitarian reasons; however, the hardening stance on migrant smuggling in Europe could impact day-to-day service provision by everyday humanitarian actors. The criminalization of smuggling for humanitarian reasons makes helping migrants riskier, and indirectly impinges on the chances migrants have to be helped when they find themselves in need of humanitarian assistance.

> *More debate is required regarding the significant differences from a citizen's perspective between smuggling for humanitarian motives and for profit.*

Following Council Directive 2002/90/EC, EU member states are *not* obliged to

impose sanctions on individuals whose aim is to provide humanitarian assistance. But the recommendation of humanitarian exemption is not written into EU law, and only a quarter of member states have national legislation that reflects – at least in some form – the safeguards allowing states not to impose sanctions when irregular entry is facilitated for humanitarian purposes.

Currently, facilitating irregular entry is punished in all 28 EU-member states. The European Migration Forum recently argued to revise the Facilitation Directive to exempt humanitarian assistance from criminalization. Neither the migrants themselves, nor those delivering humanitarian assistance to migrants in distress, should be criminalized. A humanitarian exemption clause in the Facilitation Directive is very much needed if we want to protect European citizens and refugees against criminalization of smuggling for humanitarian motives.

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Crossing the border, blurring the boundaries: alternative views on human smuggling from the Horn of Africa to Europe

Milena Belloni
April, 2016

Hundreds of thousands of migrants from the Horn of Africa have systematically crossed international borders throughout Africa into Europe in the last decade. Among them were over 150,000 Eritreans fleeing the lack of freedom and poverty in their country. In order to reach Europe, many of them had to cross at least three international borders undetected: from Eritrea to Ethiopia or Sudan; from Sudan onto Libya; and finally from Libya into Italy.

However, these borders are not easy to cross for those – refugees, in the first place – who have almost no possibility to obtain a legal visa, due to their typical lack of passports and the impossibility to provide any guarantee of return upon the expiry date of their visa. Refugees have to travel through impervious paths where they are less likely to be discovered by authorities. As they usually lack the knowledge and the means to cross these borders by themselves, they have to pay

professionals who can enable them to do so.

> *These professionals are usually depicted as cruel exploiters in the public debate, but my fieldwork with Eritrean refugees in Sudan and Ethiopia en route to Europe points in a different direction.*

First of all, it is important to consider that the word ‘smuggler’ in the Eritrean context includes a wide variety of professionals with very different responsibilities: there are guides, who accompany migrants across the borders on walk; drivers who take them by car; middlemen who put guides and drivers in contact with customers. Middlemen can do business in more or less professional ways. Some may occasionally connect customers with drivers and guides in order to receive a cut of the total price. Others work more systematically and turn the role of middleman into their main source of income. Middlemen can arrange different parts of the journey based on their contacts, or different kinds of services, such as the provision of fake documents and marriages of convenience.

During my fieldwork, I met two professional middlemen who were operating on the route from Eritrea to Libya. They were Eritrean refugees themselves. One of them, Tesfay, an ex-military man in his late twenties, had started the business after few years spent in a refugee camp in Northern Ethiopia. The other, 23-year-old Michael, had been in the smuggling business even before escaping Eritrea. Indeed, he told me that he had spent several years in the worst Eritrean prisons because of it. To me they were both kind and friendly: they believed that by talking to me they were helping inform the world of what their people had to go through in order to escape the lack of prospects and freedom in Eritrea.

In contrast to common images of ‘smugglers’, Tesfay and Michael were well-integrated in their national communities in exile. Tesfay regularly frequented church and contributed to its activities. Alongside his workmates, Michael used to spend time with a large group of Eritrean families and friends he had known since his childhood in Eritrea. He was generous to them and was manifestly loved by them. Although both Michael and Tesfay tended to keep their business separate

from their interactions with their closest friends and family, they did not seem to be too secretive about it or to be ashamed of it.

Asked how he felt about his own business, Tesfay replied with an interesting metaphor:

> *"You know, in life good things go together with bad things. Even a doctor has to do things that imply a high risk and sometimes the death of his patients. For example, when a doctor takes his patient into a surgery room, he has to ponder the possible risks and positive outcomes of the operation. Similarly I have chosen to look at the positive outcomes of my work: if my customers go through the surgery [and it is successful] they will have huge advantages."*

Unlike mainstream narratives, Tesfay did not consider his job as contributing to worsening the situation of his people. Rather it was a "remedy". He was just providing the means to quench people's thirst of a better life and freedom of movement.

Among refugees, middlemen were not judged negatively unless their services had proven to be untrustworthy. Gerre, one of my informants in Khartoum, once commented about a middleman we had just met: "*He is an honest one, all the people he sends are getting safe to their destination*". Other Eritrean informants in Italy relayed that they were still morally indebted to those middlemen who enabled their safe passage to Europe. Certainly, during my fieldwork I also collected several accounts of dishonest, inhuman smugglers, who cheated their customers or even sold them to traffickers known for torturing refugees in order to extort ransoms in the thousands of dollars from their families abroad. However, smuggling was not a despicable activity in itself according to my informants, but could become extremely condemnable in some circumstances.

> *A middleman should be trustworthy.*

Customers and middlemen alike said this to me repeatedly, the latter especially

stressing this several times during our time together. *"I take responsibility for the people I send"*, Tsegay told me once with pride. Likewise Michael stated on another occasion: *"I care for my customers….do you remember the other day when I told you that I was busy? It was because a truck of people from Ethiopia had been caught by the Ethiopian police. I paid money from my own pocket to free them!"* Tsegay's and Michael's caring attitude towards their customers and their claim of "being responsible for them" can be interpreted as part of their ethical code or an expression of empathy for the groups of refugees they smuggled, but it was also as a marketing strategy. In fact, they both knew that their business depended on their reputation as honest and reliable middlemen, who were able to make refugees' dreams of mobility come true.

In the current asylum scenario, those refugees who manage to flee their countries are mainly destined to long-term encampment in the first safe country. This is due to the fact that local integration there is often not allowed or limited, conflicts back home are often long-term, and resettlement to third countries concerns a minimum percentage of vulnerable refugees (something between 1% and 2% refugees worldwide). In this context, professionals of irregular migration represent one of the few chances refugees have to move out of camps and reach a place where they will not only be safe, but also able to access a decent life. From this perspective, it is not hard to see that even cruel smugglers can turn into heroes and that refugees may not judge these individuals as negatively as the public European debate does.

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Migrant deaths: explaining variations over time and across smuggling routes

Ferruccio Pastore
April, 2016

Large amounts of economic, political and communication resources are being invested (how effectively is another matter) in trying to deal with the refugee crisis. The same can hardly be said about intellectual resources, if one judges from the analytical poverty of our understanding of some key dynamics at play. In particular, although migrant deaths at sea represent a crucial dimension of the crisis, we understand still too little about what drives mortality rates up and down, however essential such kind of information would be in order to save more lives.

Media (and therefore political) attention towards migrant (I use this as a generic term, even if many or even most of these 'migrants' should be more accurately defined as 'refugees') deaths does not seem to be driven primarily by the *quantity* but rather by the *quality* of such deaths: the powerful image of a single

drowned baby can do more in terms of awareness raising and mobilising power than thousands of anonymous and unseen corpses.

Right or wrong, this is a deeply human reaction and there is no reason to be surprised or scandalised.

> *Nevertheless, a more systematic attention towards numbers, even in such a highly emotional field, would be beneficial, particularly because death patterns are far from linear, predictable or easily explained.*

This stands out if we juxtapose recent trends in migrant arrivals and migrant deaths along the two main smuggling routes across the Mediterranean to the European Union: the so-called 'Eastern route' from Turkey to Greece; and the 'Central Mediterranean route' originating in Libya (in much smaller proportions in Egypt and Tunisia), and heading across the Sicily Channel with the explicit goal of being rescued by the Italian and European (Frontex's Triton mission) search and rescue (SaR) apparatus.

No national or European agency takes official responsibility for counting migrant deaths. In part this is because it is technically a very complex task, with deadly events taking place in a huge maritime area composed mainly of international waters where no state or organisation has sovereign rights. But it is also because officially counting deaths could, in some way, imply an acknowledgement or, in the eyes of the public at least, an indirect assumption of responsibility that nobody really wants.

Clear trends from unclear data

Therefore, the existing data are very partial and/or of limited reliability. They are based on media reports of uneven accuracy, or on unofficial national sources covering only recovered bodies, or on survivors' accounts that are very hard to double-check. Thus, on the one hand existing figures certainly miss a great number of undetected shipwrecks with no witnesses and no survivors. On the

other, estimates are probably affected by a certain amount of double-counting. However, looking at the table below, which is based on the (not always perfectly consistent) data provided by UNHCR, Frontex and IOM's Missing Migrants Project, a number of interesting considerations can be made.

Route	1 Jan. - 21 Mar. 2016		1 Jan. – 31 Mar. 2015		1 Jan. – 31 Dec. 2015		1 Jan. – 31 Dec. 2014	
	Arrivals (A)	Deaths (E)	Arrivals (B)	Deaths (E)	Arrivals (C)	Deaths (E)	Arrivals (D)	Deaths (E)
East Med.	148,317	347	12,392	16	873,179	806	44,057	34
Central Med.	13,825	97	10,165	457	153,946	2,892	170,664	3,186
Total	**162,142**	**444**	**22,557**	**473**	**1,027,125**	**3,698**	**214,721**	**3,220**

Sources:
(A): UNHCR
(B): UNHCR
(C): Frontex, FRAN Quarterly, Q4 October – December 2015.
(D): Frontex FRAN 2015 (E): OIM, Missing Migrants Project

It is common knowledge that the geography of cross-Mediterranean mixed flows has undergone radical changes in the last couple of years. While in 2014 the Central Mediterranean route was largely predominant in terms of both arrivals and victims, the situation was spectacularly reversed in 2015 and a similar trend is in part confirmed for 2016 (although with a new increase of arrivals in Italy). While the macro-causes of this shift are largely undisputed (opening of the much less dangerous Aegean route accompanied by the introduction of visa obligations for Syrians by some transit states including Algeria), its impact on migrants' death toll has not been sufficiently researched.

> *Given the huge gap in the number of arrivals along the two routes, in order to grasp the implications of this change correctly it is necessary to look at relative*

numbers.

This can be done in a simple way by separately calculating the arrivals/deaths ratio for the two routes. In 2015, this ratio – that could also be framed as *survival rate* – was 53.2 in the central Mediterranean (almost unchanged from 53.6 in 2014), and 1,083.3 in the Aegean (down from 1,295.8 in 2014). One person died for every fifty-three who made it in the first case; one for every one thousand and eighty-three in the second.

This striking gap was reduced in the early months of 2016 (until 21 March, when the last data were made available): the survival rate almost tripled to 142.5 along the Central Mediterranean route, while it plummeted to less than half (427.4) for the crossings from the Turkish coast to the Greek islands. In other words, the death risk was cut to one third in the first case; it more than doubled in the second.

What saves lives on the high seas?

How can such a dramatic (albeit almost unobserved and totally un-researched) shift be explained? A solid and reliable answer would require in-depth analysis and sophisticated treatment of micro-data concerning the details of each deadly event. Although such data is largely unavailable and in any case hard to obtain, targeted research efforts in this direction are certainly possible and urgently needed. But already at this stage, some preliminary hypotheses are worth formulating.

> *A determinant of the mortality trends in the Central Mediterranean, which is consistently pointed out by practitioners in the field, has to do with the effectiveness of search and rescue activities.*

To wit, the interruption of the Mare Nostrum operation and its replacement with the much smaller Frontex-led Triton operation at the end of 2014 brought about

an abrupt increase in fatalities in the first part of 2015. Only a substantial (although implemented without much publicity) upgrade of the Triton operation in spring 2015 allowed for a partial return to the previous levels of SaR effectiveness. But mortality statistics were nevertheless marked negatively for 2015 as a whole.

Two other factors can explain the observed variations. One regards changes in smugglers' modus operandi. The ever more frequent use of low-quality, inflatable rubber dinghies instead of more costly and harder to get wooden fishing vessels certainly plays a role in the increasing frequency of fatal events in the Aegean. As suggested by the first results of a multinational research project coordinated by Coventry University, a similar effect can be associated with the spreading habit of transporting migrants at night as a countermeasure against enhanced patrolling efforts in the eastern Mediterranean.

Finally, the characteristics of the smuggled migrants themselves may play a role. The growing share of families with children among Syrian refugees is increasing their average vulnerability to extreme weather conditions, deprivation, and smugglers' abuses during the crossing, and might thus be another factor boosting the mortality rate along the Eastern route.

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Human Smugglers | Workshop Abstracts – Part 2

Allegra
April, 2016

The workshop "Critical approaches to irregular migration facilitation: dismantling the human smuggler narrative" is fast approaching! Unique in its genre, the workshop aims to problematise the figure of the smugglers beyond overly simplistic generalisations and representations.

There is a growing corpus of empirical and critical work on the facilitation or brokerage of irregular migration within migration regimes, which deserves to be fostered and strengthened. The workshop proposes critical and empirical engagements on the topic of the facilitation and brokerage of irregular migration as witnessed regionally and comparatively by its participants.

Only for its aficionados, Allegra will publish the full list of abstracts. Here's part two. Enjoy!

Indigenous Migration Merchants: Coyoterismo and Indigenous Mobility in the Migration Industry

Victoria Stone-Cadena, City University of New York

International migration from southern highland Ecuador is not new but the dynamics have changed significantly since its early inception in the late 1960s. Following the demise of the regionally based Panama hat export industry in the mid-1960s, middle class merchants and their children migrated to the United States, following the "Panama Hat Trail" (Miller 1986), connections made through the trade industry. The global petroleum crisis during the 1980s prompted another rise in migration, however this wave consisted mostly of young men from rural areas in the southern highland region. In late 1999 and early 2000, Ecuador again underwent a significant economic crisis. Migration to Spain, Italy, and, to a lesser extent, Germany and Russia, surpassed migration to the United States. Most, if not all, of this migration flow involved migration facilitators, in formal and informal venues, ranging from traditional coyotes to travel agencies. Migration brokers (coyotes) are continually cast as entrepreneurial perpetrators, discursively framed as coldhearted and profit-driven, offsetting critical analysis of the role of nation-states in the global uneven development that underpins labor migration. However, as this paper will show, not all of those involved in the smuggling market engage in extreme exploitation and the economic practices of entrepreneurial middle-men have deep historical roots in the region. Prior to 2008, most migrant brokers in the region were part of the merchant mestizo families who had cornered the market for the past twenty years, which in effect reproduced the socio-economic class structures from agro-artisan economies. However over the past decade, indigenous coyotes have taken the stage in the local migration economy. Based on long-term ethnographic research in southern highland Ecuador, this paper will contextualize the informal economic practices among rural communities and examine the role of ethnic identity as a strategic variable in migration market activity.

Decency adrift at sea

Claudia Tazreiter, University of North South Wales

This paper focuses on the dissonance between official (governmental) and unofficial (migrant) narratives of 'irregular' migration journeys and the role of human smugglers in these journeys. The paper explores the planning of boat journeys by asylum seekers between Indonesia and Australia facilitated by human smugglers and the interventions of the Australian government. Refugee politics in the Asia-Pacific region has a long history of contradictions and tough approaches to asylum seekers and refugee populations. Perhaps surprisingly from the vantage point of North America and Europe, Australia has led the charge in punitive policies toward asylum seeker arrivals, accompanied by official narratives of fear, risk, invasion and contagion and a frenzied rhetoric of human smugglers as 'the scum of the earth'. Indeed, Australia is alone among the nations who have signed and ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention in the detention of asylum seekers including children without time limits and without access to judicial review; a system of off-shore detention and processing centres; and the refusal to resettle asylum seekers once their protection claim has been substantiated. With this backdrop in mind, the paper draws on 150 interviews with Afghani and Iranian asylum seekers in Indonesia seeking to make onward journeys. The interviews were conducted in in 2014 in various locations around the Indonesian archipelago and designed to better understand and illuminate the decision-making of asylum seekers in relation to their migration journeys. The research identifies narratives of risk, security and protection seeking undertaken by individuals and families. Counter to the assumption of governments of the utility of official campaigns of deterrence in countries of origin and countries of transit such as Indonesia, this research finds that migrant decision-making is mostly informed though familial, community and ethnic group networks that also include those who assist in facilitating irregular migration journeys – the human smuggler.

Rohingya by Any Other Name is Not the Same: Smuggling in Southeast Asia and the Politics of Terminology

Sarnata Reynolds, Refugees International

There was (and continues to be) much debate about whether the Rohingya were trafficked or smuggled onto the boats stranded at sea in the Indian Ocean in May and June 2015. Part of this debate stems from the complexity of boat movements in the region, and particularly from Myanmar, and the lucrative nature of shipping destitute and desperate people across the sea. When RI spoke to Rohingya in Myanmar IDP camps in 2014 and in Malaysia in 2015, they described their initial experience as one of smuggling – they agreed to board boats under the condition that they and their families would pay for or work off their passage at a later point. They were not necessarily aware that they would be detained in Thai jungle camps until payment of their passage was completed, and at the same time, this smuggling passage was not new. If the terms of their passage changed during flight, then what may have started out as smuggling could have become a situation of trafficking before it ended. Either way, the decision to enter into this passage demonstrates the desperate persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar. At the same time, the vast majority of the media, many advocates, and governments characterized the Rohingya experience as one of trafficking only, which permitted Myanmar to immediately deny that the Rohingya were fleeing persecution, and argue that this was a law enforcement issue that Myanmar was willing to participate in ending. Six months later, regional governments have worked extensively (although likely selectively) to crack down on smuggling and trafficking rings, and the Rohingya continue to be persecuted in Myanmar and jailed in all neighboring countries. Terminology matters, and this paper will pull apart the different types of operations at work in the region to move people from one location to another, and perhaps more importantly, document the real consequences when journalists, researchers, and advocates misuse terms that trigger entirely different responsibilities and consequences.

Smuggling as a social negotiation in transit spaces: Pathways of Central Americans migrants in Mexico's southern border

Yaatsil Guevara, University of Bielefeld

Since August 2014, the Programa Frontera Sur (Southern Border Program) has been implemented within Mexico's southern States, as part of the binational border reinforcement actions between U.S. and Mexico. This 'lengthening of U.S. Southern border' has result in a reshaping of flows and crossing dynamics of migrants because of the increased control and repression by the Mexican State. These conditions are leading human smugglers and clandestine networks to reshape their facilitation strategies in order to offer "improved" and/or "good quality service" to their clients. Smugglers, unable to guarantee crossings tend to create "packages" that bill their clients for alternative services that may support their journeys. Building new networks through alliances and social actors for the creation of new markets are one of the challenges faced by smuggling facilitators at a time of border management and hunting policies. Relying on participant observation conducted at the migrant shelter known as "La 72" in Tenosique, Tabasco (an understudied point of transit for irregular migration processes) the present work addresses migrants' understandings of mobility and temporality within transitional migratory processes. Theoretically, I bring into the debate the notion of a third space (Bhabha, 1990) arising from these processes of migration, in-between trade and transit spaces. How migrants experience their negotiations with smugglers? Which kind of in-between communities emerge during irregular migration trajectories? Which kind of symbolic borders are built through migrants, local population of transit spaces and smuggling networks?

Humanitarian Smuggling in a time of crises: Examples from Europe

Ilse Van Liempt, Utrecht University

Since the mid-1990s human smuggling has been increasingly associated with the

profiteering and violent nature of smugglers, and linked to organized crime. The literature on human smuggling as a result is dominated by a business way of thinking about the relationship between the smuggler and the migrant and generally lacks the voice of the migrant. A remarkable finding from studies that take migrants' perspectives on human smuggling into account is for example that there is often very little stigma attached to the smuggling business from migrants' point of view. Migrants who have used the services of smugglers often describe them as "helpers", as people who "save lives", or as a "necessary alternative" in a world with many restrictions on mobility (Liempt 2007). Moreover, smugglers can be familiar people, usually friends of friends, but sometimes also family members.

In the current 'state of the world' with many people fleeing their country and in need of a smuggler the picture is changing. New people have entered the scene that either profit from people's need to cross borders (and some are very violent), or those who want to help out. This paper will focus on what has been called 'humanitarian smugglers', citizens who from a humanitarian point of view help immigrants in their border crossing process. These could be religious organizations, charities, NGOs like for example the Dutch *Vluchtkonvooi*, a group of students who recently went with a mini-van to the Hungarian/Austrian border to help people with their crossing, or even millionaires with private initiatives. Christopher Catrambone, an American entrepreneur who runs a company that provides insurances in conflict zones, but in the summer of 2013 decided to set up his own search and rescue operation in the Mediterranean. All of these border crossing acts would legally fit into the definition of human smuggling, but are these humanitarian smugglers prosecuted and if so, how are these prosecutions legitimized and understood?

What makes a good smuggler? Customer satisfaction among Undocumented Migrants

Daniel Martinez (George Washington University) and Jeremy Slack (University of Texas at El Paso)

This article presents evidence form the Migrant Border Crossing Survey (MBCS) a unique data set consisting of over 1,000 post-deportation surveys. In particular we focus on a series of questions with deportees about their experiences with coyotes, regarding their satisfaction with services that were provided and whether or not they would be willing to put friends and family in touch with their most recent smuggler. While recent scholarship has challenged the straw-man argument that *coyotes* are always villainous and abusive, this article will add another layer of nuance to understandings of a fully articulate human smuggler subject. No one has previously evaluated which qualities migrants expect and desire from human smugglers. We explore the points where migrant's desires, needs and expectations rupture with the needs of coyotes as a way to better understand the dynamics of clandestine migration. What causes situations of abuse and mistreatment? What are legitimate expectations for treatment among people engaging in clandestine migration? This new data sheds light on important data about this understudied aspect of the migrant experience.

Casual Encounters? Changing Market Conditions and Organizational Response among Smugglers of Migrants and Drugs

Gabriella Sanchez (University of Texas at El Paso) and Sheldon Zhang (San Diego State University)

While reports on the alleged domination of drug trafficking organizations over human smuggling groups are widespread in media to the extent they have permeated the academic circles, empirical data on the practice is scant. Recent fieldwork among migrants who have relied on human smugglers to cross the US Mexico border suggests the existence of a complex web of interactions between individuals involved in multiple illicit markets along the borders, drug trafficking being one of them. In this paper, we explore the theoretical and practical implications of the alleged contacts, relying on empirical data. By exploring the specifics in both markets' environments, we attempt to better understand how different criminalized groups adapt and respond to market constraints while

maintaining a Profit.

Recent evolutions in the organisation of crossings of the Mediterranean sea

Paola Monzini, Independent Scholar

The progressive tightening of migration policies has increased in the last 15 years the number of would-be migrants recurring to irregular means to overcome the restrictions imposed by states (on exit and entry) all-over the Mediterranean region. Currently the three main crossings of the Mediterranean sea, with origin in Turkey, Libya and Egypt are run in different ways, and in these countries the growing demand of mobility due to increasing instability especially in 2011 and after 2013 has fuelled the organisation of smuggling activities, by sea and land. Patrolling activities have progressively reduced the part of migration having access to the EU shores without being detected by the authorities and almost all migrants coming by sea are currently apprehended and their cases are processed by national agencies according to the established legal procedures.

The paper presents the main evolutions in the organisations of these routes in last five years, with a view of formulating key questions to further explore the current functioning and recent evolutions of the smuggling and irregular migration systems through the Mediterranean area, and to identify under-explored areas of research. The paper takes into account the current grey and academic international literature on smuggling of migrants with a transnational and comparative approach, with a focus on the organisation of migrant smuggling involving Middle East and African migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. The empirical research, based on semi-structured interviews hold in Milan and Rome with Syrian and Eritrean migrants, is completed with interviews with stakeholders and the analysis of judicial proceedings in Italy.

Is There a Mutually Reinforcing Cycle Between Increased Attention and

Power of State Enforcement and Dynamic Organization of Human "Smuggling"/Trafficking?

Josiah Heyman and Simon Sam (University of Texas at El Paso)

A plausible argument (Heyman 1999) is that strengthened state law enforcement, specifically at borders, results in adaptive changes in the organization and capacities of illegal actors/facilitators, such as "smugglers." On the U.S.-Mexico border, we know that the post-1993 law enforcement build-up resulted in increased rate of use and cost of smuggling; other effects, such as changes in coercion, organization, relations to criminal groups, etc., are not as well understood. Hence, adaptive changes by illegal actors/facilitators deserve greater study and specification. Conversely, newly adaptive smuggling patterns may result in public or internal bureaucratic justifications for increasing state resources and rigorous methods. A key proposition is that the result is a mutually reinforcing cycle (or dialectic). This proposition needs considerably more exploration; the cycle itself seems plausible but we do not know if and how it works in specific cases. Other intervening components can include the actions of migrants, media reporting, the politics of sending, transit, and receiving societies, and the advocacy of NGOs. We provide initial information on the growth of anti-smuggling/trafficking branches of the U.S. state, partially in the context of the escalatory cycle of U.S.-Mexico border crossing and enforcement that started in late 1993 (and may be slowing now) and expansion of Mexico-based transnational criminal organizations/networks in the last three decades.

Precarious waters: fishermen, people-smuggling and limited choice for earning money in Eastern Indonesia

Antje Missbach, Monash University

Based on a survey of 90 verdicts from people smuggling trials in Indonesia between 2011 and 2015, it was found that a disproportionate number of offenders sentenced to jail for their involvement in people smuggling originate from Eastern Indonesia, usually considered the poorest part of Indonesia. This paper

investigates the socio-economic backgrounds of the offenders, first and foremost low-skilled fishermen, in light of their generally low success rates to earn a decent living in Eastern Indonesia. Due to a variety of problems, ranging from overfishing, climate change, pollution, underdeveloped local fishing industries and mismanagement of distribution chains, fishermen face massive problems making a living for their families. Many fishermen are indebted and they have few chances to repay their debts in the short to mid-term. High-risk voyages to transport asylum seekers to the Australian Ashmore Reef and Christmas Island have for years offered a 'fast buck'. However, these risky voyages entail very high social costs for the fishermen, such as arrest and imprisonment. Although not every transporter is arrested, prosecuted and imprisoned, many transporters have spent several years in Australian prisons, away from their families and isolated from community support. With the criminalisation of people smuggling in Indonesia, more and more transporters involved in transporting asylum seekers are imprisoned in Indonesia, which has even more severe consequences for the fishermen and their role as main income-providers for their families.

Next to the survey data, this paper is based on two fieldtrips to Rote Island (geographically the closest Indonesian island to Australia) in 2012 and 2014, in which a number of fishermen, convicted for people smuggling, have been interviewed both while serving their sentences in jail and after release. With the help of the narrative of the fishermen and the court documents the paper reconstructs decision-making and risk-taking strategies of fishermen who have been involved in the transport of asylum seekers to Australia. Understanding the local conditions for fishermen in Eastern Indonesia, and particularly in Rote, thus helps to draw firmer conclusions on how transnational people-smuggling networks operate and how they exploit local conditions of precarity in Eastern Indonesia.

Mapping Borderlands: Drawing Things Together
Nora Akawi, Nina V. Kolowratnik, and Jason Danforth

The Echoing Borders initiative, led by Nora Akawi and Nina V. Kolowratnik, is developed at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) through courses and field research. The project situates itself at the tension between the rising density and rate of forced migration across borders on the one hand, and the static definitions of contemporary citizenship and human rights on the other. Considering that frontiers are physically manifested through fences and trenches, but also through international networks of border patrol, technologies of body identification, access to shelter, jobs, and healthcare, and fluctuating policies and regulations, the projects developed through Echoing Borders attempt to redraw contemporary borders with a focus on elements of movement and time – challenging the static representations of what are in fact mobile and fluctuating conditions. Mappings developed focus on the spatial manifestations of forced migration of refugees, and on questions on mobility, citizenship, and access in contemporary borderland conditions. Jason Danforth (GSAPP M.ARCH 2016), will present his project "Means and Ends", part of the Echoing Borders initiative from Fall 2015. As both a research paper and cartographic exercise, "Means and Ends" seeks to problematize the image of the smuggler as a singular, monolithic figure by identifying the many roles and individuals which comprise the sprawling web of smuggling networks. Operating under the model of Bruno Latour, this project is an attempt to "draw things together," and represent the complex cultural, economic, and territorial figure(s) of the smuggler and their relationship to the current migration crisis spanning the Middle East and Europe.

"This is Jihad": piety and morality among Syrian smugglers

Luigi Achilli, European University Institute

Despite embodying the popular depiction of the immoral and deceitful villain who does not hesitate to toss human beings into the sea, human smugglers' services in the Mediterranean Sea seem to be in higher demand than ever. Of course, smugglers often constitute the only available travel option for those individuals

who flee a situation of immediate danger and distress. However, the desperate need of finding a refuge and the difficulty to access legal channels of mobility alone on the part of migrants and asylum seekers' are not sufficient to explain the resilience and strength of the bonds between them and the smugglers. While the reasons of migrants and asylum seekers to rely on smuggling services are often described in the migration literature, little is known about how human smugglers depict themselves and the relationships between them and their "customers". A truly effective answer to human smuggling requires a better understanding of the phenomenon from its actors. With that goal, this paper problematizes the common wisdom about one of the most discussed characters of our time and shifts the attention toward an exploration of smuggling's political economy. It builds on empirical research largely based on interviews and participant observation with Syrian refugees and smugglers themselves held in Turkey and Greece. An inside view reveals how human smuggling acquires social and moral significance for my both smugglers and their clients. It also highlights how smugglers negotiate long-held notions of morality and religious duties (one being that of jihad – understood as the Islamic duty of assisting others, a term without militaristic connotations) with the realities of being involved into what is popularly perceived as a criminal activity. In conversations, smugglers represent themselves as honest service-providers and pious persons who satisfy a need that people cannot fulfill through legal paths. Remarkably, accounts about the piety of smugglers were also often confirmed by many of their costumers. What my findings suggest is that the relationship between smugglers and migrant is far more complex than media and popular accounts would suggest. In so doing, I argue that human smuggling practices are in line with frameworks of morality and piety shared by smugglers and their clients.

The Struggle of Mobility: Organizing High-risk Migration from the Horn of Africa to Scandinavia Tekalign Ayalew Mengiste

Depictions on how migrants and refugees from the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia and

Eritrea) exit their homelands have been the subject of narrow portrayals of violence, victimization and suffering, burying the processes of how those in transit travel across the land and settle in European destinations. Based on work collected in the UK, Sweden, Italy, Sudan and Ethiopia, this presentation reflects on the interactions among diasporic transnational actors (migrants, their families, co-ethnics and co-nationals in origin, transnational and diasporic spaces) and how they engage in and organize multi-scale, multi-purpose mobility processes –the result of the entanglement of cross border social and smuggling networks, the emergence of migration routes and the settlement of former migrants *en route* and permanent locations in Sweden.

Taking up the intersection of notions of diasporic transnationalism, brokering practices, borders and irregular migration as points of departure, I explore how migrants and refugees generate resources and organize high risk journeys (over vast deserts and the high seas) as well as across multiple transnational spaces and destination communities. Smugglers play multiple roles in different stages of the migrant trails–exit from the homelands, transits across Africa and secondary mobility after Italy until migrants arrive at Sweden. They arrange particular transport services to cross borders, deserts, and seas; informal money transfer systems for migrants from families in diasporic spaces; timing travel routes with knowledgeable guides and appropriate hiding spaces. Former migrants settled along the route and in destination locations provide necessary information for prospective migrants about routes, smugglers, decisions pertaining to when to move, how to behave during interactions with smugglers, how to hide money, which clothes, medicine and food to carry, finding shelter and temporary jobs in transit lands.

Through the formation of what I refer to as a community of mobility, smugglers and migrants try to minimize the risk of violence due to kidnappings for ransom, robbery, rape, interception, detentions and deportation or imprisonment, injury and death as they cross the Sahara desert, move across Libya, cross the Mediterranean and move within Europe. Ethnographic data show the facilitation of irregular transits creates, feeds and sustains what I refer to as a collective

system of migratory knowledge that links migrants from the Horn of Africa to transnational spaces and destinations in fashions that improve the likelihood of a successful journey. I argue that the collective experience in irregular migrations constitutes a diasporic system of knowledge that challenges immobility regimes and impediments to transit and find economic and protection niches in European or similar other destinations.

The Buddhist people smuggler: challenging contemporary stereotypes of exploitation and vulnerability through the Tibetan migration experience
Bodean Hedwards

As the human rights situation in Tibet makes migration increasingly complex, Tibetans are forced to engage in irregular migration channels in an effort to navigate both the physical and political barriers associated with the Sino-Nepal border. The irregular migration experience of Tibetans is placed against the backdrop of decades of attempted cultural and political naturalisation policies that have sought to contain dissent inside the borders of the Tibetan plateau. In response to these policies, Tibetans are turning to a network of *guides* to facilitate their journey into exiled communities in India, and around the globe. Grounded in research undertaken in exiled Tibetan communities in Northern India, this presentation engages the Tibetan experience to challenge contemporary stereotypes of exploitative people smugglers who profit off the backs of vulnerable refugees and irregular migrants. By following the experiences of irregular Tibetan migrants into India, it will highlight the significance of the intricate socio-political and geographical factors that established the need for a network of guides in this context, and what lessons can be taken from the Tibetan experience for research and policy relating to people smuggling globally.

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