Biopolitics and border externalization: neoliberal securitization and subjugation in Australia’s irregular migration information campaigns

Josh Watkins
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“No government can ultimately tolerate a situation of self-selection”, Neil Bratt of Australia’s Labor Party remarked in 1977 in reference to Indo-Chinese ‘boat people’ (BRATT quoted in NEUMANN, 2015, p. 268). Of course, “self-selection” referred to people deciding on their own to cross borders, uninvited, to request asylum. Across the globe, deterring self-selecting migrants has since become a prominent feature of border security, and scholarship has accounted for this under the banner of ‘border securitization’ studies (BIGO, 2002; WALTERS, 2002; HYNDMAN & MOUNTZ, 2008; DE GENOVA & PEUTZ, 2010; MARTIN, 2012). As the introduction to this Special Issue explains, ‘border externalization’, extraterritorial practices to deter migrants, is a growing component of border securitization. The contribution to this literature I aim to make is an analysis of extraterritorial practices attempting to deter migrants not through detention or deportation, the dominant themes in the literature, but by enabling superficially ‘empowering’ subjectivities that nonetheless are designed to immobilize potential migrants. To do this, I assess an under analyzed aspect of externalized border securitization, “Overseas Public Information Campaigns” (OPICs) -- ‘informational’ advertisements administered in migrant source and transit countries to address one of the “root causes of migration”: a person’s desire to migrate. Specifically, I evaluate the Australian Government’s OPICs educating “Potential Irregular Immigrants” about the risks of ‘irregular migration’. I

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1 This is a draft manuscript currently under review for publication provided to the UC Davis Temporary Migration Cluster. Please do not copy.
analyze the advertisements themselves, 38 internal government documents (most released through Freedom of Information Act requests), and the Department of Immigration and Border Security (DIBS) and Australian Customs and Border Protection Service’s (ACBPS) annual reports -- the agencies who implement the campaigns. Foucault (2007, p. 275) tells us states act on the conscience of subjects, attempting to modify opinions and behaviors. What makes OPICs a worthwhile focus is they do not merely educate, but extraterritorially subjugate through attempting to mold ways of thinking and acting.

Throughout the article, Australia’s OPICs are demonstrated to be performances of neoliberal governmentality, operating as technologies of biopower and discipline to disseminate *homo œconomicus* subjectivity -- the economically rational, self-entrepreneurial, subject. OPICs attempt to enlist people within *homo œconomicus* rationalities to deter mobilities through producing subjects who view ‘irregular migration’ as financially irresponsible. I support this claim not through measuring the cognitive effects OPICs had their viewers however. Subjugation is not determinate but promotes and elicits (DEAN, 2010, p. 43-44), and while a worthwhile research endeavor I nor anyone else know how many people have seen, were deterred, or otherwise affected by OPICs. In fact, the ACBPS (2011, p. 3) has determined that the effects of OPICs cannot be “assessed for impact with any certainty”. Rather, I understand subjects as contingent and overdetermined (GRAHAM, 1990; MARTIN, 2010), and aim to show how government attempts to influence people through suggestion (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 252-253). I see subject-making as the power to suggest coupled with the actual or perceived authority to engender consequence. Subjugation is not mind control and someone is no less a subject if they disregard direction; we become subjects through receiving, at times acknowledging, but not necessarily following guidance. Essentialized subject positions like ‘bare life’ or the ‘other’ are
useful, but can abstract from the actual processes of subjugation (ONG, 2006, p. 196). Too often border securitization scholarship essentializes subjects of the “Banopticon” (BIGO, 2007) as merely the excluded ‘other’, failing to highlight the contingent, complex, and at times counterintuitive processes of subjugation.

This article has two primary goals. First, to show how OPICs biopolitically construct populations of “Potential Irregular Immigrants” extraterritorially. Mobility, of some sort, is a constitutive element of human life (CRESSWELL, 2006, p. 737) and OPICs subjugate populations of non-citizens beyond borders as particular kinds of mobile life. However, biopolitics are often presented as working through binaries, that “populations governed by neoliberal technologies are dependent on others who are excluded from neoliberal considerations” (ONG, 2006, p. 4). I plan to demonstrate how excluded ‘others’ are also produced through neoliberal subjugation, that the world is not neatly divided between the domestic and foreign, neoliberal, liberal, and illiberal spaces and subjects. The second goal is to show how OPICs attempt to deter ‘irregular migrants’ specifically through homo œconomicus subjectivity. This is important as neoliberalism and border security literatures generally equate homo œconomicus solely with the transnational citizen-subject. In doing so, I aim to demonstrate that nation-states exclude undesired ‘others’ by including them as specific kinds of extraterritorial subjects via state power producing ephemeral sovereignty regimes through transnational collaborations between nation-states and nation-states and private firms.

OVERSEAS PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Nation-states have used OPICs since the early 1990s, targeting migrants and those at risk of trafficking (PÉCOUD, 2010, p. 188). The IOM has had a significant role in normalizing OPICs, implementing campaigns across Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe (PÉCOUD,
In 2000, OPICs were codified into international law through the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (SCHLOENHARDT AND PHILIPSON, 2013, p. 3). Recent OPIC examples include ads by the USA in Central America in 2014 to deter potential child migrants (GORDAN, 2014), and ads by European countries in 2015 in the Balkans to discourage asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa (BRAENDLIN, 2015). With the aid of the IOM, Australia began implementing OPICs in 1999 (DIMIA, 2002). The 1999 “Pay a People Smuggler, You’ll Pay the Price” (PPSYPP) campaign ran through 2001. The campaign corresponded to an increase in asylum seekers arriving to Australia by boat, mostly South Asians and people from the Middle East. Arrivals increased from 200 people in 1998, to 3,721 in 1999, 2,939 in 2000, and 5,516 in 2001 (PHILIPS & SPINKS, 2013, p. 23). In late 2001, PM John Howard implemented a number of anti-asylum seeker deterrence policies entitled the “Pacific Strategy” and in 2002 when no boats arrived OPICs ceased. Currently, there are no government records available describing the PPSYPP campaign’s rationale, extent, or effectiveness (SCHLOENHARDT AND PHILIPSON, 2013, p. 9), and beyond corresponding to the ceasing of boat arrivals, one can only speculate as to why the campaign was discontinued. However, the Pacific Strategy was dismantled under PM Kevin Rudd (2007-2010) and in 2009 boats carrying asylum seekers from South Asia and the Middle East again resumed. In 2009, OPICs resumed as well. Since their resumption, ACPBS has administered at least 14 campaigns in 19 countries corresponding to the origins and routes of asylum seekers arriving by boat (Table 1).
According to ACBPS (2012), the rationale for resuming OPICs is providing information to potential migrants abroad to “dissuade” them from making boat journeys, to induce “behavioral change” through modifying the opinions of potential migrants about the rewards of ‘irregular migration’ outweighing the risks. ACBPS’s OPICs include a variety of formats: radio; TV; newspaper; internet ads; dramatic performances; community workshops; billboards; posters; leaflets; comic books; branded merchandise; and YouTube videos. Certain campaigns have been

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implemented both domestically and internationally, and some solely online. During the 2009-2010 fiscal year, A$7.8 million was budgeted for OPICs through 2014 (ACBPS, 2011, p. 4). However, in 2013 OPIC budgeting receiving an additional A$30 million, presumably due to the over 20,000 asylum seeker arrivals that year (ANAO, 2013). In 2015, another A$39.9 million was budgeted for OPICs through 2019 (WHYTE, 2015). Yet despite OPICs increased use by Australia and other nation-states, OPICs have received little scholarly attention, though there are notable exceptions (NIEUWENHUYS AND PÉCOUD, 2007; PÉCOUD, 2010; CARLING & HERNÁNDEZ-CARRETERO 2011; HIGHTOWER, 2013). However, detailed accounts of how OPICs are implemented abroad to extraterritorially govern non-citizens, or their messaging, are lacking. Below, I will address these gaps by analyzing how the ACPBS designs and implements OPICs, along with their messaging, to assess how OPICs enable extraterritorial subjugation.

**OPICS AND NEOLIBERALISM**

It has been widely recognized that neoliberalism is a fuzzy concept, less a totalizing entity than uneven process (PECK & TICKELL, 2002; BRENNER et al., 2010). As a process, government rolls out projects of neoliberalization transforming institutions through neoliberal ideals (PECK & TICKELL, 2002; BRENNER et al., 2010). Neoliberalism can thus be viewed as an art of government, a governmentality emphasizing market-driven ‘truths’ and efficiencies (ROSE, 1999; ONG, 2006; FOUCAULT, 2008). As governmentality, Aihwa Ong (2006, p. 6) suggests analyzing neoliberalism as “technologies of subjectivity” inducing self-governance among individuals, and “technologies of subjection” regulating populations. Thus, neoliberalism is often conceptualized as techniques of ‘macro’ governance and ‘micro’ subjugation, interconnections of biopower (population) and discipline (individuals) (LARNER, 2000; LEMKE, 2001, p. 203; SPARKE, 2006).
Biopower brings population’s capacities into question as human characteristics to intervene upon (ONG, 2006, p. 6-13; RABINOW & ROSE, 2006, p. 196-197). Populations, meaning certain kinds of human life, are discursively produced as distinct fields of intelligibility; governmental objects (ROSE, 1999, p. 32; RABINOW & ROSE, 2006, p. 197). According to Matthew Sparke (2006, p. 157), such “nitty-gritty” biopolitical practices are too often abstracted by researchers. Another nitty-gritty aspect of neoliberalism is good governance. Leitner et al. (2007, p. 1) go as far as to argue neoliberalism has become a hegemonic signifier for “best-practice governance”. Good governance refers to governmental action incorporating practices of audit and private sector expertise (ROSE, 1999, p. 151-155; LARNER & LE HERON, 2004), a technocratic endeavor where policy and practice is monitored through ‘apolitical’ knowledges (ONG, 2006, p. 3). Expertise is deployed to develop, measure, and assess governmental action through calculative systems: economics, statistics, indicators, benchmarking, best-practices, etc. (LARNER & LE HERON, 2004). Part of this audit and fiscalization fetishism is “breaching the division” between the state and private sector so expertise can be harnessed by the state (HARVEY, 2005, p. 77; DEAN, 2010, p. 175). This results in the state’s privatization, the outsourcing of government functions to non-state actors (ONG 2006, p. 10). In the section below, I describe how the ACBPS extraterritorially constructs populations, “Potential Irregular Immigrants”, as the governmental objects of OPICs. I outline how this is done through a privatization of the Australian state, and how privatized research abroad constructs PIIs through geographic, sociological, and psychological characteristics. Lastly, I show how calculative evaluations attempt to ensure OPIC efficacy and develop best-practices for future campaigns.
Australia’s OPICs- Privatization

Australia uses multinational firms and the IOM to implement entire OPICs, outsourcing governmental functions to extend the Australian state beyond borders. Smaller firms, often local firms in the target country, are also subcontracted for specialized functions – research, advertising, or campaign evaluations. Beyond the IOM, foreign firms hired to research, implement, or evaluate campaigns include Porter Novelli, Universal McCann, McNair Ingenuity Research, TBWA/TAL, WISE Strategic Communications, Leo Burnett, STATT Consulting, Manhattan International, and Saatchi & Saatchi, among others. For example, in 2010 Porter Novelli, a communications firm, was hired to design and implement the “Don’t be Fooled” campaign in Malaysia targeting asylum seekers from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan residing there based on the fear they desired to travel to Australia. Porter Novelli then subcontracted “experts” in Kuala Lumpur for advertising, and the Merdeka Center, a Malaysian research firm, for post-campaign evaluation (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011, p. 4-34). They also consulted the Malaysian Government, local NGOs, community leaders, the UNHCR and IOM (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011). This collaboration is characterized by Porter Novelli (2011) as a best-practice, and occurs across campaigns revealing how close relationships between certain actors (the IOM, UNHCR, and multinationals) comprise the international OPIC marketplace. While the selection criteria for firms is unclear, the model is quite discernable: entire campaigns outsourced to the IOM or multinationals, narrower campaign functions to specialized firms. By outsourcing governmental functions to multinationals and the IOM, the Australian state extends its governing capabilities beyond its sovereign territory. As will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, the sites of this governance become new territories of collaborative sovereignty. In the example above,
the use of Porter Novelli reconfigured not only the Australian state, but Malaysia’s sovereignty, in specific space-times, to subjugate non-Malaysian citizens on Australia’s behalf.

*Australia’s OPICs- Populations and Evaluations*

Consistent with neoliberal ideals, OPICs are designed using the market logics of expertise, competition, and audit to ensure governmental action is efficient. OPICs perform good governance through requiring campaigns be designed based on ‘apolitical’ research constructing populations to be acted upon. The ACBPS labels these populations “Potential Irregular Immigrants” (PIIs), meaning those who may in the future ‘irregularly’ travel to Australia (ACBPS, 2011). ACPBS’s initial step in creating PIIs is identifying source and transit countries. Observations of asylum seeker routes inform source and transit country identification (ACBPS, 2011; ACBPS, 2012), however such clear divisions nonetheless essentialize an imaginary geography normalizing static origins, waypoints, and destinations. As discussed above, firms are hired to conduct pre-campaign research identifying PIIs in source and transit countries, informing OPIC design, while post-campaign evaluations develop best-practices for future campaigns. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups, qualitative and quantitative methods, all have been used. A contractor call by ACBPS characterizes pre-campaign research in the following way:

“The Contractor will obtain…the demographics and psychographics of a select range of target communities/groups… The research will:

1. Determine the size and locations of the target groups;
2. Determine motivations of the target groups;
3. Determine appropriate communications channels and methods;
4. Determine the most effective key messages to be delivered;
5. Identify potential methods for campaign effectiveness evaluation” (ACBPS, 2009).
Thus, research identifies the geographic, sociological, and psychological characteristics of those who might ‘irregularly migrate’ to tailor OPICs accordingly. Within these research projects PII populations emerge.

Geographically, PIIIs manifest from being bound within areas deemed to contain people who may desire to migrate. These sites are identified through surveys, asylum seeker origins, and expert consultations (WSC, 2010; ACBPS, 2011; PORTER NOVELLI, 2011). Sites range from city-regions for radio/TV broadcasts, to buildings where posters hang, to bodies where slogans are worn (T-shirts, hats, etc.). OPICs territorialize these offshore locations as sites of subject and border-making where the Australian state governs non-citizens. They become offshore sites of performativity where essentialized discourses of Australian borders and sovereignty in fact materialize ephemeral spaces of collaborative sovereignty between Australia and the host country. Sociologically, pre-campaign research constructs PIIIs through identifying the demographic characteristics of those most likely to ‘irregularly migrate’ (WSC, 2010; PORTER NOVELLI, 2011). Surveys have indicated acquaintances in Australia as important conduits of information (ACBPS, 2011, ANAO, 2013), and the social networks providing PIIIs with migration information are documented (WSC, 2010). Resultantly, PIIIs are identified based on their international social network. Research also documents how people within target geographies use media (WSC, 2010; MIR, 2013), and trusted mediums are used to broadcast OPIC advertisements. Thus pre-campaign research identifies actor-networks, grafting OPICs to connections between people and things.

Psychologically, pre-campaign research identifies migration motivations, measuring what people think about Australia, asylum seeking, and people smugglers, while also identifying actors influential to shaping perceptions about migration (WSC, 2010; ACBPS, 2011, p. 13;
Influential individuals and groups are identified both as OPIC targets and consultants/collaborators (WSC, 2010; PORTER NOVELLI, 2011). Documents often refer to “the diaspora”, meaning minorities in Australia, as domestic targets -- conduits to non-citizens abroad (ANAO, 2013, p. 5; DIBS, 2013a; MIR, 2013, p. 4). Such thinking has legitimized the ongoing “Targeting Diaspora Communities” campaign, transforming the domestic-internal into the foreign-external. In other words, by targeting domestic minorities on the basis they will disseminate campaign messaging abroad the internal ‘other’ becomes a bordering technology to exclude external ‘others’. Pre-campaign research also documents “situational awareness” (WSC, 2010; MIR 2013, p. 4). Situational awareness refers to general knowledge of seeking asylum, Australian policies, routes, dangers, people smugglers, likelihood of gaining residence, etc. People possessing ‘outdated’ or ‘inaccurate’ information are constructed as PIIs, governed through a prism of their lacking proper information (NIEUWENHUYS AND PÉCOUD, 2007). Situational awareness is benchmarked and compared during post-campaign evaluations (WSC, 2010; PORTER NOVELLI, 2011; MRI, 2013, p. 4-10).

As part of neoliberalism’s audit fetishism, evaluations are used to assess campaign efficacy. Campaigns with quantifiable changes in situational awareness are deemed successful, used in developing best-practices (WSC, 2010; ACBPS, 2011; PORTER NOVELLI, 2011; MIR, 2013). Evaluations also assess post-campaign recognition of key messaging and visuals, and what actions the advertisements induced (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011; MRI, 2013), although suggestions of direct causation have not been accepted by the ACPBS (2012, p.3). However, a shift to more ominous ads emphasizing scary boats and drowning, argued to beneficially generate emotions of “fear, sadness, hopelessness, panic and tragedy” (DIBS, 2013a, p. 10), have been justified by post-campaign evaluations (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011). Evaluations perform
neoliberalism’s ideal of efficiency, refining the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of government as a preemptive “anticipatory action” (ANDERSON, 2010). Evaluations use calculative, ‘apolitical’, reasoning to construct risky populations (the ‘what’), and discern ‘how’ to best act upon them. As a risk governance (DILLON, 2008), OPICs signify PII as threats capable of acting upon Australia in an unknown future. Once PII is geographically, sociologically, and psychologically constructed as risky, the circumstances of particular individuals -- whether one desires to migrate or not -- becomes obscured and irrelevant (DE GOEDE, 2012, p. xx). The individuals comprising PII populations are disciplined within the Australian state’s territoriality, beyond borders, regardless of their intent.

**OPICS AND HOMO ÖECONOMICUS**

In tracing the genealogy of neoliberal governmentality, Foucault (2008) articulated the characteristics of the neoliberal subject -- *homo economicus*. Paramount to *homo economicus* is ‘the how’ of decision-making and behaving. Under neoliberalism, the self becomes optimized when all situations are interpreted as economic, when ‘reality’ is economic phenomena requiring economically rational responses (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 241). *Homo economicus* qua self-entrepreneur emerges when decision-making becomes financial cost-benefit analysis. Even love and family become calculable, either good investments or not (LEMKE, 2001, p. 200). *Homo economicus* accepts only circumscribed notions of ‘reality’ (FOUCAULT 2008, p. 270): ‘reality’ is calculable, non-ideological, technical knowledge. When presented with new information *homo economicus* responds to ‘reality’ in predictable, economically rational, ways and is therefore eminently governable (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 270). However, *homo economicus* is understood by the neoliberal state (and herself) as being governed through freedom (ROSE, 1999), the freedom to respond to ‘reality’ through self-interest. In this sense, neoliberalism aligns
subject mentalities with the state’s desired intelligibility: the economy (LEMKE, 2001, p. 198; MCNAY, 2009, p. 63). Resultantly, the self-government neoliberalism advocate has a unique relation to the state: *homo economicus* does not view herself as having claims upon the state (ONG, 2006, p. 14). Responsibilities are shifted to individuals (LEMKE, 2001, p. 201; HARVEY, 2005, p. 65). It is not the state’s, but *homo economicus*’ obligation to provide for herself (ONG, 2006, p. 14).

Below, I emphasize how OPICs disseminate *homo economicus* subjectivity, emphasizing subject formation as an important aspect of border security (MARTIN, 2010, p. 29). Australia’s OPICs certainly produce excluded ‘others’ through scare tactics emphasizing detention, deportation, and drowning. However, their prominent message is ‘irregular migration’ is financial irresponsible. This positions PIIIs not as subjects owed rights, but autonomous self-entrepreneurs responsible for using the information provided by OPICs to make the only rational decision: not to ‘irregularly migrate’. In the proceeding sections, I trace the intertextuality of this message across Australia’s OPICs from 1999-2014, first focusing on personal financial responsibility, then familial, and lastly OPICs representation of people smugglers as thieves.

**Financial Responsibility**

Good governance dictates that the neoliberal state teach subjects about the ‘reality’ of their environment, enabling profitable self-governance (FOUCAULT, 2008, p. 285). OPICs produce PIIIs as certain kinds of economic subjects by educating them about ‘reality’, constructing both ‘reality’ and how ‘reality’ should be acted upon. OPICs construct migration as purely financially motivated, the dream of economic migration being PIIIs lone consideration. OPICs teach their audience that the ‘reality’ of ‘irregular migration’ is its futility, a senseless waste of money. PIIIs are taught to respond to the temptation of ‘irregular migration’ as *homo*
economicus – one who understands ‘reality’ and how to avoid unprofitable, wasteful, migration. Other factors known to influence ‘irregular migration’, like violence or persecution, are absent from OPICs. Print ads emphasize financial language, while videos frame ‘irregular migration’ as economically motivated upfront. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the circumscription of ‘irregular migration’ as an economic lifestyle decision began with Australia’s first campaign in 1999.

*Figure 1. Chinese “Pay a people smuggler, you’ll pay the price” advertisement. Read from right to left.*

*Source: DIMA, 1999*

The PII in Figure 1 dreams not of safety from persecution but a prosperous cityscape, only to be returned home, having lost his money.
OPICs consistently present images of PIIs gathering vast sums of money, only to be lost, wasted, in repatriation. Consider Figure 2 below, the first three pages of a 2014 graphic novel targeting Hazara PIIs from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The first two pages present a visibly poor family; a son toiling as a mechanic, parents dreaming of a better life for him. On page three, the son is given a handful of cash only to lose it later in the story through offshore detention (not shown in Figure 2).

*Figure 2. Pages 1, 2, and 3 of a 2014 OPIC.*

*Source: Guardian, 2014*
Neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan’s ongoing violence, nor the persecution of Hazaras in those countries is presented, only a son reluctantly taking money for economic migration. The parents are insistent, intent on investing their savings into ‘irregular migration’. The story arch is clear: ‘irregular migration’ is a financial decision bound to backfire.

As depicted in the “Don’t throw your money in the water!” campaign, ‘irregular migration’ as financially irrational, senseless even, is a dominant campaign theme. The campaign’s signature video, Boat People Campaign TVC (2014), opens with a little girl breaking her piggybank, giving the money to her parents, followed by a series of adults gathering money and traveling to the sea only to, literally, throw money in the water (Figure 3). The only words come at the end: “Throwing away your hard earned money is a waste. The journey to Australia by boat without a visa is futile” (2014).

Figure 3. Stills from “Boat People Campaign TVC’” YouTube video.

Source: ACBPS, 2014

The No to People Smuggling (2010a) YouTube channel has many similar videos, mostly dramatizations. Financial risk is prominent (Table 2). Nearly all the videos speak in an active
voice directly to PIIs. The message being: if you are thinking about ‘irregular migration’, you will lose your money.

Table 2. Australian Government YouTube Videos with Financial Risk Emphasis

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<th>TITLE</th>
<th>THEME</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Smuggler</em> (2010c)</td>
<td>Funding people smuggling is a crime</td>
<td>• “don’t fund it”</td>
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<td>• “new laws target people who send money overseas that aid people smuggling”</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Australia by boat – no advantage!</em> (2012a)</td>
<td>Risk of offshore detention</td>
<td>• “There is no advantage in paying a people smuggler”</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Family Deception</em> (2012b)</td>
<td>Dangers of boats and people smugglers</td>
<td>• “send money”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “work in Australia, to make journey possible”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• “risk of…losing your money and being cheated by people smugglers, is real”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Safety Gear</em> (2012c)</td>
<td>Dangers of boats and people smugglers</td>
<td>• “Easy Money”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• “risk of…losing your money and being cheated by people smugglers, is real”</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Transfers to PNG begin</em> (2013b)</td>
<td>Risk of offshore detention</td>
<td>• “people smugglers guarantee is now worthless”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “it’s buying a ticket to another country”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>You won’t be settled</em> (2013c)</td>
<td>Australian policy change</td>
<td>• “people smugglers cannot sell you a ticket”</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>No Way</em> (2014)</td>
<td>Australian policy change</td>
<td>• “steal your money”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• “for nothing”</td>
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*Homeward Bound* (2010b), a fictional testimonial spliced with dramatized flashbacks, is a great example. The protagonist Ramasami, a Sri Lankan IT engineer, goes into debt being smuggled to Australia (the people smugglers “wanted lots of money”), is rescued at sea by Australia, detained, and repatriated. Ramasami’s first line in the video is that he wanted “to go to a better place”, indicating he was an economic migrant not an asylum seeker. After his asylum claim is denied he cries because he “paid so much money”, exclaiming “the people smugglers
just want the money”. Upon learning he will be charged A$18,500 for his rescue, escort, and repatriation, Ramasami responds, “I must work really hard, try to do something in Sri Lanka first, save the money, and then come the right way”. Reflecting, he expresses being “angry with himself”, that he “was stupid” for trusting people smugglers.

*Homeward Bound* (2010b) represents *homo oeconomicus* tropes running across Australia’s OPICs. Early in the video, Ramasami is established as an economic migrant migrating to leverage his human capital. Superficially, this is how *homo oeconomicus* should behave. However, Ramasami ‘cut corners’, lacking knowledge of the ‘reality’ of ‘queue jumping’, Australian policy, and people smugglers’ untrustworthiness. Thus, he rightfuely loses money in not being shrewd, failing to behave rationally by gathering the proper information before making a migration investment. Ramasami learns the correct lessons however. In being repatriated, he was not upset about returning, but the wasted money. His anger is not directed toward Australia’s refugee policies or the global refugee regime, but squandered money. Undeterred, Ramasami recommits to rational ways of building human capital through migration: “hard work”; “saving”; and using the “proper migration channels”.

*Family Responsibility*

OPICs also frame ‘irregular migration’ as mismanaging family finances, directly implying your family will suffer due to your irrational economic decision-making. Messaging targets both PIIs and ‘the diaspora’ for funding family members (*The Smuggler*, 2010c; *Family Deception*, 2012b; MRI, 2013). Familial themes are present in Figure 1 above. In the bottom left frame of Figure 1, the ‘snakehead’ counts the lost money while the wife and child cry, implying the father’s poor financial decisions negatively impacted them. Figure 2 and Figure 3 also present narratives of how parent’s ‘irregular migration’ decisions negatively affected their
child’s welfare. The 2010-2011 “Don’t be fooled” OPIC incorporated strong depictions of ‘irregular migration’ financially hurting families (Figure 4).

The illegible text of the image on the left reads:

“The boat was overcrowded, nobody survived. People smugglers will lie to get your money. They don’t care if you get to Australia or not. You are the same to them dead or alive. It’s not worth the risk” (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011, p. 57).

The illegible text of the image on the right reads:

“The people smugglers told me it was easy once I got to Australia. But they lied to me. The Australian Government is getting tougher. My money is gone, my dreams are gone. My family will pay the price” (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011, p. 57).

Figure 4. Two posters from 2010 “Don’t be fooled” OPIC.


While the image on the right in Figure 4 has clear financial messaging (“my money is gone”), the image focusing on the mother (Figure 4 left side) also emphasizes drownings. However, even
this advertisement incorporates financial themes: she mourns the financial loss along with her child. Similar to Figure 2 above, this advertisement educates parents about the dangers they impose on their children in forcing them into ‘irregular migration’.

As these examples demonstrate, OPICs use shock and sorrow to equate familial wellbeing with financial; the prism of economy. OPICs present financial loss less as risk than eventuality: you will impoverish your family qua enterprise through ‘irregular migration’. Thus, a ‘reality’ is communicated to PIIs: your economically motivated migration will surely fail and is therefore irrational. While rarely explicit, OPICs present immobility, and to a lesser extent ‘regular migration’, as the only rational forms of mobility investment.

*Thieving people smugglers*

OPICs construction of ‘reality’ also reflects the ‘fact’ people smugglers are thieves. In Figure 5 below, PIIs are presented with a supposedly frightening face to ‘the people smuggler’.
The illegible text reads:

“People who make money from smuggling or trafficking people are criminals. Why trust your life savings to criminals? Why trust your life to somebody who doesn’t care if you survive the journey or not? Don’t be fooled by the smugglers or your family could be left to pay for your mistake” (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011, p. 57).

Figure 5. Poster from 2010 “Don’t be fooled” OPIC.


OPICs construct people smugglers as the ‘bad guys’ almost to a cartoonish extent. The YouTube video Safety Gear (2012c), for example, depicts two people smugglers systematically taking all necessary safety equipment out of boats despite an incoming storm. Such examples, indeed nearly all Australian OPICs, construct people smugglers as shrewd thieves, yet simultaneously carelessly or ineffectually allowing boats to sink and be intercepted. Below are further examples:
• “Think twice – do not get misled – you can lose everything” (ACBPS, 2011, p. 12)
• “Don’t be misled by people smugglers” (ACBPS, 2011, p. 12)
• “Don’t be fooled by promises from people smugglers…They will take your money…it’s your money they want” (PORTER NOVELLI, 2011, p. 15)
• “Do not believe the lies of people smugglers. These criminals will steal your money.” (ABF, 2014)
• “No one can trust a people smuggler” (Left Behind, 2010d)
• They do not care about your family…Do not give them your money” (Strengthened anti-people smuggling measures, 2010).

Interestingly, this narrative neglects the dramatic increase in asylum seeker boat arrivals. During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, 25 asylum seekers arrived on three boats (PHILIPS & SPINKS, 2013, p. 23). In 2012-2013, 18,119 asylum seekers arrived on over 200 boats (DIBS, 2013a, p. 24; PHILIPS & SPINKS, 2013, p. 23). Despite OPICs presentation of people smugglers as ineffectual, one could argue, at least in terms of gaining asylum seekers access to Australia’s asylum regime, people smugglers have actually been quite successful. This is not to valorize people smugglers, nor make light of tragic conditions, events, or the estimated 1,000 drownings (BCO, 2015). I am merely pointing to OPICs representation of people smugglers as ineffectual thieves, despite significant numbers of successful boat arrivals. Of course, OPICs also aggressively communicate risks of detention and repatriation, pushing the message people smugglers are lying if selling the possibility of resettlement.

Regardless of people smugglers’ success rates or morality, OPICs clearly present them as unnecessarily risky, poor investments any rational self-entrepreneur should avoid. As Homeward Bound (2010b) teaches, PIIs should not be angry with Australia’s policies, but with people smugglers and themselves for ignorantly trusting people smugglers. According to OPICs, it is lost money to be mourned and thieving people smugglers to blame. Responsibility shifts from the nation-state as a territorial mechanism of asylum seeker and migrant protection, to the nation-
state as a de-territorialized pedagogical technology guiding PIIs toward rational forms of
mobility, profitable means of self-government.

CONCLUSION

Mitchel Dean (2010, p. 20-27) sees power, truth, and identity as the general axes of
government, arguing that to analyze government is to consider practices trying to shape and
mobilize the choices, desires, needs, and wants of people. This is a useful schematic. When
applied to OPICs, we can think of how OPICs enact power through delimiting truth across space,
circumscribing a field of possibility around the ‘reality’ of ‘irregular migration’. OPICs
delimitation of truth creates subjects out of non-citizens beyond Australia’s sovereign borders,
extraterritorially encouraging new subjectivities for the ‘truths’ OPICs promote to graft upon.
This new subjectivity is *homo economicus*, replete with bounded notions of ‘reality’ qua
economy and a field of choices and desires to be performed within it: rational financial
investments performing self-entrepreneurship, assuming full risk and responsibility in self-
government as opposed to seeking the care of the state. In short, OPIC messaging attempts to
mold the way PIIs think about ‘irregular migration’ and themselves. It is in this strange sense
that Australia excludes PIIs from the bordered Australian polity through extraterritorially
including them as non-citizen subjects.

This article has demonstrated how Australia’s OPICs perform neoliberal techniques of
government to actualize territorial exclusion through extraterritorial subject-making inclusion.
As neoliberal governmentality, OPICs operate both at macro and micro scales. As a macro
manifestation of neoliberal biopolitics, OPICs engender techniques of calculative government “at
a distance” (ROSE, 1999), constructing populations, risk pools, of people believed capable of
traveling to Australia in the future. Through the calculative techniques of pre-campaign research,
mid and post-campaign evaluation, individuals are congealed into and biopolitically governed as PIIs. As a micro-politics of neoliberal subjugation, OPIC texts and images equate ‘irregular migration’ with economic migration, according to OPICs there is no other type. The ‘reality’ of ‘irregular migration’ being its universal financial irresponsibility (to oneself and family) and people smuggling as thievery. In doing this, OPICs have sought to discipline PIIs as particular kinds of rational economic actors - *homo economicus* - responsible for understanding and enacting the ‘reality’ of certain mobilities being financially rational, others irrational. A “translation” occurs where the neoliberal state’s desire for less responsibility corresponds to the subject’s desire for certain kinds of self-government (ROSE, 1999, p. 50). In documenting this translation, I hope this article sheds light on the complex and contradictory nature of subject formation, demonstrating that the excluded subjects of externalized border securitizations are produced in ways beyond mere banishment.
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