

ORGANISED CRIME

A Global Business



24–26.11 2023 · Studio 1 · Kunstquartier Bethanien · Mariannenplatz 2 · 10997 Berlin · dnlb.org/31

Friday Nov 24, 2023

16:30 · Doors open

17:00 – 17:15 · **OPENING**

Tatiana Bazzichelli (Artistic Director, Disruption Network Lab, IT/DE), **Mauro Mondello** (Investigative Journalist, IT/DE/PT).

17:15 – 18:45 · KEYNOTE · **Corruption Unveiled: Austria's Troublesome Path from Strache to Kurz**

Julian Hessenthaler (Private Investigator, AT). In conversation with **Frederik Obermaier** (Investigative Journalist, DE).

19:30 – 21:30 · PANEL · **Narconomics: Transnational Drug Trafficking & Corruption**

Stevan Dojčinović (Investigative Reporter & Editor, OCCRP, SRB), **Floriana Bulfon** (Investigative Journalist, IT), **Shehryar Fazli** (Author & Senior Policy Advisor, Open Society–Asia Pacific, PK/UK). Moderated by **Denisse Rodriguez Olivari** (Researcher, School of Transnational Governance, EUI, PE/IT).

Sunday Nov 26, 2023

11:00 – 13:00 · WORKSHOP 1:

Think Like a Criminal

Stevan Dojčinović (Investigative Reporter & Editor, OCCRP, SRB).

Saturday Nov 25, 2023

15:30 · Doors open

16:00 – 16:10 · **INTRODUCTION**

Tatiana Bazzichelli (Artistic Director, Disruption Network Lab, IT/DE), **Mauro Mondello** (Investigative Journalist, IT/DE/PT).

16:10 – 18:15 · PANEL · **Politics, Money & Rifles: Exposing Global Mafias, Authoritarian Power & Corruption**

Vincenzo Musacchio (Criminologist, IT), **Dritan Zagani** (Whistleblower, Former Anti-Drugs Police Officer, AL), **Pleurad Xhafa** (Artist & Activist, AL), **Andrea Dip** (Investigative Journalist & Researcher, BR/DE), **Anton Radniankou** (Chair of the Board, Center for New Ideas, BY/PL). Moderated by **Verena Zoppei** (Advisor, Anti-Corruption & Integrity, GIZ, IT/DE).

18:30 – 19:00 · PERFORMANCE · **Find Your Tongue** · **Pleurad Xhafa** (Artist & Activist, AL).

19:15 – 20:45 · KEYNOTE · **Undercover: Combating Organised Crime in Africa**

Anas Aremeyaw Anas (Investigative Journalist, GH). Moderated by **Stephanie Busari** (Senior Editor for Africa, CNN, UK/NG).

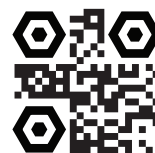
14:30 – 17:00 · WORKSHOP 2:

How to Spot Corruption in the International Arms Trade

Julia Auf dem Brinke (Co-Founder, Corruption Tracker, DE), **Ruth Rohde** (Co-Founder & Programme Manager, Corruption Tracker, DE/UK), **Rhona Michie** (Director of Projects & Planning, Shadow World Investigations, UK).

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Fri Nov 24, 2023

Fri 16:30 · Doors open

Fri 17:00 – 17:15 · OPENING

Tatiana Bazzichelli (Artistic Director, Disruption Network Lab, IT/DE), **Mauro Mondello** (Investigative JOURNALIST, IT/DE/PT).

Fri 17:15 – 18:45 · KEYNOTE

Corruption Unveiled: Austria's Troublesome Path from Strache to Kurz

Julian Hessenthaler (Private Investigator, AT). In conversation with Frederik **Obermaier** (Investigative Journalist, DE).

In 2019, a scandal rocked Austrian politics as journalists from Der Spiegel and Süddeutsche Zeitung revealed a secretly recorded video featuring Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of the far-right FPÖ. In the video, he offered state contracts to a woman who claimed to be a millionaire and the niece of a Russian oligarch with close ties to Vladimir Putin. Among other statements in the video, Mr. Strache mentioned his desire to create a media landscape similar to what Viktor Orbán had done in Hungary. Just hours after these initial reports, Mr. Strache resigned, prompting Chancellor Sebastian Kurz to call for new elections.

Following the "Ibiza affair," Austria has weathered a series of subsequent scandals. Investigations have exposed illegal donation schemes, election tampering, and inquiries funded and manipulated using taxpayers' money. Searches were conducted at various locations, including the Austrian Chancellery, the Ministry of Finance, the ÖVP party headquarters, and the media house *Österreich*. Consequently, Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz was compelled to resign, as he and his closest associates are suspected of misappropriating taxpayers' money to purchase favorable media coverage and manipulate fake surveys on behalf of the ÖVP, with alleged involvement of the Ministry of Finance. Austria, once again, is synonymous with a country plagued by endless scandals.

Julian Hessenthaler, the private detective who set the trap for Strache and triggered the "Ibiza affair,"

delves into the issues of power and abuse of power in the state of Austria with Frederik Obermaier, one of the journalists to whom he leaked the video.

Fri 19:30 – 21:30 · PANEL

Narconomics: Transnational Drug Trafficking & Corruption

Stevan Dojčinović (Investigative Reporter and Editor, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, OCCRP, SRB), **Floriana Bulfon** (Investigative Journalist, IT), **Shehryar Fazli** (Author and Senior Policy Advisor, Asia-Pacific, OSF, PK/UK). Moderated by **Denisse Rodriguez Olivari** (Researcher, School of Transnational Governance, EUI, PE/IT).

Drug trafficking is a highly lucrative market worldwide, with an estimated value of 30 billion Euro per year in the European Union, and is estimated to account nearly 1.5% of total global trade. In the context of transnational organised crime, it is an especially complex form of criminal activity, frequently involving several states and often overlapping with other offences, including financial crime and cybercrime. This panel details how drugs are trafficked and how this impacts technical and organisational complexity, with crime groups involved becoming more specialised and more fully interconnected.

Organized crime has grown in size and strength over the past three years. While citizens in various countries were still isolated due to the coronavirus, organised crime was moving drugs and money across the globe, and effectively organising murders of opponents. Investigative reporter **Stevan Dojčinović** will dwell deep into new ways criminals are organising themselves, and how super cartels are making organised crime organisations larger. Today, seizures of one to ten tons of drugs are a regular occurrence and are no longer as damaging to criminals as they once were. **Dojčinović** will describe how global narcotic smuggling works from the Balkans and Europe to North America, and from South America to the Pacific. His focus will be on the various ways in which criminals overcome barriers to grow their businesses, protect themselves, and hide their money. Trends include adopting software to encrypt communication, using offshore companies to launder billions of euros, moving leaders of organised crime groups to Dubai where they are protected from international warrants, but most importantly,

investing a lot in corruption and making connections with governments on the highest level.

Award-winning author and journalist **Floriana Bulfon**, who has spent years investigating transnational organized crime, will examine the boom in drug trafficking in Europe, which in a decade went from importing quintals of cocaine to tons per shipment, enabled by a web of collusion. Relations between criminals and men of institutions have different characteristics – in countries like the Netherlands, where mafia organisations are a recent phenomenon (such as Ridouan Taghi's *Mocro Mafia*), 'simple' bribery of port authority officials has been used to facilitate the passage of containers full of narcotics. On the other hand, in places with deep-rooted presence of clans, as in Southern Italy, organised crime has been able to exploit its capillary control of the territory, like the Calabrian port of Gioia Tauro, historically dominated by the 'Ndrangheta. At the same time, the global narcotics market has seen the rise of new players – the brokers: hybrid figures between entrepreneurs and bosses, able to weave licit and illicit relationships more easily with institutions, to build logistical networks, shell companies, and diplomatic protection. A dowry that has allowed them to move hundreds of tons of cocaine while living undisturbed in the Arab Emirates for years.

Shehryar Fazli, specialist on political and security affairs in South Asia, will describe how Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, along with Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle, became Asia's most notorious drug smuggling hub. Since 2002, Iran and Pakistan have consistently accounted for more than 90 percent of global opium seizures, originating in Afghanistan. Central Asia, too, contributes significantly to drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe, with Tajikistan being the most critical country in this northern route. These states have all adopted highly punitive counter-narcotics regimes, relying on coercive and arbitrary force, but with largely limited political will to tackle criminal organisations. Combined with high levels of corruption, this approach targets those at the lowest rungs of the criminal ladder while effectively protecting the most resourceful traffickers. Other than serving organised criminal groups, the drug trade is deeply intertwined with local economies in the region. Poppy remains vital to Afghanistan's rural economy; for millions of Afghans, food security, children's education, and meeting everyday costs would be impossible without its cultivation. The interim Taliban's April 2022 edict banning poppy cultivation could, therefore, have enormous ramifications for farming communities amid a drought-prone and collapsing Afghan economy. Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan share long porous borders and deep cultural ties with Afghanistan. Cross-border informal trade and

smuggling is a way of life and financial lifeline for border communities. Yet, the infrastructure that sustains these cross-border economies also lend themselves to drug and other trafficking, through transnational networks of transporters on land and sea, corrupt officials at entry and exit points, and recruiters and middlemen connecting suppliers with clients. International counter-narcotics assistance that has largely supported coercive state organs has not only failed to tackle the official corruption and collusion that enables a flourishing narcotics trade; it has also often fed that very problem.

Sat Nov 25, 2023

Sat 15:30 · Doors open

Sat 16:00 – 16:10 · Intro

Tatiana Bazzichelli (Artistic Director, Disruption Network Lab, IT/DE), **Mauro Mondello** (Investigative Journalist, IT/DE/PT).

16:10 – 18:15 · PANEL

Politics, Money & Rifles: Exposing Global Mafias, Authoritarian Power & Corruption

Vincenzo Musacchio (Criminologist, IT), **Dritan Zagani** (Whistleblower, Former anti-Drug Police Officer, AL), **Pleurad Xhafa** (Artist and Activist, AL), **Andrea Dip** (Investigative Journalist and Researcher, BR/DE), **Anton Radniankou** (Chair of the Board, Center for New Ideas, BY/PL). Moderated by **Verena Zoppei** (Advisor Anti-corruption and Integrity, IT/DE).

This panel connects different organised crime and corruption strategies from the local to the global at the political and financial levels. Globalised crime will be analysed through various local contexts: money laundering, drug-, human- and organ trafficking by Italian and global mafias; the current state of Albania regarding organised crime, corruption, and its entanglement with government and politicians; the connections between Brazil's religious far-right, political power and organised crime; as well as corruption, sanctions and the role of media in authoritarian Belarus.

Vincenzo Musacchio will describe how the globalised financial system and the consequent deregulation has facilitated money laundering, allowing the world's mafias to hide their illicit profits. He will show how the mafias benefit above all from financial deregulation, as it provides the path for them

to launder money through placement, stratification, and full integration into the legal financial system. The global mafias have been able to make the most of the negative effects of globalization processes by expanding their networks of influence and power in every part of the world. They currently have access to cutting-edge technologies (airplanes, submarines, drones) for trafficking drugs, human beings, and organs. They also use complex financial and IT operations (most recently crypto currencies like Bitcoin) to launder dirty money through lawful activities. Trafficking of drugs, including cocaine, generates income to fund other crimes. It is no coincidence that the main global mafias (Italian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and South American) constitute the economic power in many developing countries and are capable of overturning the rules of the market, of conditioning the legal economy and democracy. Transnational crime demands transnational strategies. Twenty years after the UN Palermo Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), it will be necessary to take further and decisive steps in the direction of an integrated system that is capable not only of guaranteeing the effective implementation of the existing legislative framework, but also of coordinating supervision of anti-money laundering efforts.

In the context of organised crime and corruption in Albania, Disruption Network Lab invited **Dritan Zagani**, a whistleblower and former anti-drugs police officer, who currently resides in political asylum in Switzerland. In 2014-2015 after unveiling the collusion between politicians and organised crime in Albania, he was forced to leave his country. From his asylum in Switzerland he has recorded a statement for the conference in cooperation with **Pleurad Xhafa**, an artist and the co-founder of *Debatik Center of Contemporary Art*, a multidisciplinary platform that contributes on exploring critical themes such as power, corruption, colonialism, and resistance to the status quo in Albania and internationally. Both Zagani and Xhafa will contribute to the discourse sharing their personal experiences and offering insights into the current situation of political corruption and organised crime in Albania. Xhafa will take part in the panel discussion, intending to piece together a puzzle about the symbiotic relationship between organised crime and government in Albania and the effects produced by it.

Andrea Dip has been covering stories on youth, inequality and poverty, violence against women, hate crimes, and attacks against the LGBTQ community for a long time, and for the past few years, she has investigated the transnational coalitions of far-right religious movements. Brazil has one of the highest rates of trans people killed, as well as femicides in the world. In the National Congress, 20% of federal

deputies and 16% of senators are ultra-conservative religious, who mainly attack the rights of LGBT+ people and reproductive rights. This year, congressmen intend to vote on laws that could ban homoaffective marriage as well as abortions – even in cases of rape or anencephaly of the fetus, or life-threatening conditions for pregnant women. The ultra-conservative discourse created to generate moral panic in the population is inflamed by far-right groups, politicians and "bolsonaristas". *Bolsonarismo* remains strong, despite the new progressive government. Evidence of this was the attempted coup that invaded and vandalised public buildings in Brasilia earlier this year. These far-right politicians, ultraconservative religious and fascist groups have established international connections, especially with North American and European organisations with questionable sources of funding. Meanwhile, the relationship between ultraconservative Christian churches, the far right and the militia is also growing strong in the country.

Anton Radnianski will explore the intricate relationship between sanctions, corruption, and media influence in authoritarian Belarus. This presentation delves into the unintended consequences of sanctions, shedding light on how they can inadvertently fuel corruption within a regime. We will discover how Belarus has sought to export corruption to its allies while violating sanctions and learn about the role of the media in uncovering these intricate networks. The presentation will offer insights into the need for international cooperation, and the role of informed citizens in the fight against corruption.

Sat 18:30 – 19:00 · PERFORMANCE

Find Your Tongue

Pleurad Xhafa (Artist and Activist, AL).

Find Your Tongue is an invitation to the visitors to reflect on the topic of organised crime and corruption in Albania, offering them to drink water from ice glasses shaped like the tongue of the former anti-drug chief Dritan Zagani. In 2017, while still on duty, Zagani investigated an Albanian organised criminal group that cooperated with the government. As a result, the former Minister of the Interior of the Socialist Party, Saimir Tahiri, was convicted. Today, Tahiri is serving his sentence at his home, having been released from prison. Zagani was and still is persecuted by the Albanian government – according to them he is the one who should be punished. Still wanted by the Albanian justice, Zagani received political asylum in Switzerland. Nowadays he lives

under a new identity, carrying out various jobs, among others as a security guard at Art Basel.

Sat 19:15 – 20:45 · KEYNOTE

Undercover: Combating Organised Crime in Africa

Anas Aremeyaw Anas (Investigative Journalist, GH). Moderated by **Stephanie Busari** (Journalist and Editor for CNN, UK/NG).

Like many human activities, crimes have evolved over the years and become complex – making their resolution difficult. Most crimes are committed under the thick cover of darkness, and can only be uncovered through sophisticated operations. The necessity of permeating criminal rings is of utmost importance due to the impact of such crimes on society as a collective. In this keynote, impelled by his mantra to *name, shame, and jail*, undercover investigative journalist **Anas Aremeyaw Anas** will present the mechanics of undercover and sting operations through heart-rending stories born out of his work over the years, highlighting the challenges thereof. Pioneered in Ghana and Africa, “Anasism”, popularly called *the Anas principle* in Ghana, involves the use of undercover tools and has proven to be a very effective strategy for penetrating criminal rings operating under the shadows of darkness.

At the local level, the Anas principle has been employed to shed light on the callous treatment of individuals with mental health issues while under the custody of the agency responsible for their well-being. Subsequently, legislations were passed in the parliament of Ghana to deal with the maltreatment of individuals with mental health issues. In the story “Ghana in the eyes of God (Justice for Sale)”, several judges and judicial officers were caught taking bribes of varying degrees to bend the course of justice, free criminals, and jail the innocent. Over 40 judicial staff including judges, were sacked, and judicial reforms initialised, consequently. Internationally, Anasism was used to, for the first time, premiere the story “Number 12” which involved the uncovering of the grand and perennial corruption in football in Africa. Referees and other football officials were filmed taking bribes to change the outcome of the game which led to FIFA handing sanctions to those caught and leading to a total overhaul of football in Ghana: this work have not come without costs, with the recent assassination of Ahmed Suale, an agent of Anas playing a central role in uncovering football corruption in Africa. Through the Anas method, the story “The Spell of the Albino” was birthed, about a criminal ring harvesting human parts of albinos in Tanzania. Those involved in the horrendous act were

busted and prosecuted. A similar criminal ring was penetrated in Malawi in the story “Malawi’s Human Harvest”.

The list of stories involving the penetration and busting of criminal rings using the Anas principle is endless. Consequent reforms arising from such stories remain an indelible feature of Anasism.

Sun Nov 26, 2023

Sun 11:00-13:00 · WORKSHOP

Think Like a Criminal

With: **Stevan Dojčinović** (Investigative Reporter and Editor, Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, OCCRP, SRB)

- STUDIO 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin
- Participants: 20 max
- No previous experience/knowledge or equipment required

Organised crime is very creative in finding new ways to handle its businesses and avoid being discovered by law enforcement and investigative journalists. So, if you want to track down crime, investigate how organised crime groups operate all over the world and understand criminals - one of the crucial skills you need to learn is how to think like one of them.

Stevan Dojčinović, investigative editor of the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) will help you understand how different criminal groups function from the inside, “stepping into the shoes” of drug traffickers in this two-hour workshop.

Participants of **Think Like a Criminal** will be divided into groups and given tasks such as to “organize cocaine smuggling routes” or to “plan how to launder huge amounts of dirty money”. No worries, this will be pure role-playing, but the lessons will be real - after the workshop you will be able to recognize the main patterns of organized crime and corruption, and you really have to know them in order to fight them.

Before the workshop, Dojčinović will give a short presentation on organised crime and corruption trends, so that all participants will be able to fully engage in the session. Specific technical skills are not required for the workshop, nor is any equipment.

Sun 14:30–16:30 · WORKSHOP

How to Spot Corruption in the International Arms Trade: Identifying Red Flags with Open Source Investigations

With: **Julia Auf dem Brinke** (Co-Founder, Corruption Tracker, DE), **Ruth Rohde** (Co-Founder & Programme Manager, Corruption Tracker, DE/UK), **Rhona Michie** (Director of Projects and Planning at Shadow World Investigations, UK)

- STUDIO 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin
- Participants: 25 max
- No previous experience/knowledge required
- **Please bring a computer**

The Corruption Tracker and Shadow World Investigations have a longstanding history of scrutinising organised crime networks and corruption, with a primary focus on the arms trade. The international trade in weapons spans numerous jurisdictions, involves private and state actors, multi-million dollar deals, and is largely shielded from scrutiny by blanket ‘national security’ secrecy. It is therefore a hotbed of corruption, often involving new and existing networks of organised crime. Because of this and a lack of access to public information, investigators are challenged to use creative means to identify and track corruption. This workshop will provide the insight, skills and tools necessary to dive into open source investigations and recognise and track down corruption.

How to Spot Corruption in the International Arms Trade: Identifying Red Flags with Open Source Investigations will explore how corruption happens, what loopholes are being exploited and what to look out for. The workshop will explore corruption red flags with a focus on the use of intermediaries and the enablers of organised crime. Participants will then be guided through exercises that demonstrate how to leverage open-source materials in their research (please bring a computer). The workshop has a practical skill-sharing focus, and the participants will come away from the exercises with a broader understanding of how to use online tools and resources to scrutinise “red flag” warnings in international trade and use their findings to fight for accountability and justice. Previous knowledge or experience in the topic isn’t required to participate.