

# Migration in the Western Mediterranean

The upheavals of the Arab Spring grabbed the world's immediate attention, and concern quickly grew over their potential aftermath, with the fear that a 'tidal wave' of immigrants and refugees would 'flood' European territory. The Arab Spring has highlighted the Mediterranean as a migration region, and new research is now required to bring to light too often neglected mobility patterns and border practices that predate and outlast the tumultuous spring of 2011.

The edited volume *Migration in the Western Mediterranean* tackles these contemporary issues related to migration in the Mediterranean region. It brings together high-quality, original academic contributions from both empirical and theoretical points of view by scholars from diverse disciplines, who draw upon Anglophone, Francophone, Spanish and Italian research. It re-examines borders in the light of a now full-blown body of literature that seeks to capture the complexity of their contemporary features beyond their most direct visual enactments, in particular the sweeping deployment of policing devices and operations along the North/South fault line. Another distinctive binding thread in this book is that it emphasises migrants as active subjects interacting with local events, national policies and the bordering process.

Offering an examination of the intricate interplay among the events of the Arab Spring, migration's multiple types and actors, and the evolving relationship between migration control and borders in the region, this book is an essential resource for students and scholars of migration studies, European Union Studies and Mediterranean Studies.

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# Introduction

## Migration, mobility and borders in the Western Mediterranean – old spatial divisions, new agenda

*Laure-Anne Bernes, Hassan Bousetta and Caroline Zickgraf*

Stemming from an international academic conference held in Brussels in November 2011, co-organised by the University of Liège (ULg) and the Free University of Brussels (ULB), the edited volume *Migration in the Western Mediterranean* tackles contemporary issues related to migration in the Mediterranean region. The objectives of this book are to address these major themes of migration in the western Mediterranean through an edited volume of high-quality, original academic contributions from both empirical and theoretical points of view by scholars from diverse disciplines, national backgrounds and who draw upon Anglophone, Francophone, Spanish and Italian research. It is a timely and needed text because we look at the intricate interplay among the events of the Arab Spring, migration's multiple types and actors, and the evolving relationship between migration control and borders in the region.

Conventional wisdom has it that the hardening of Europe's external borders has transformed the Mediterranean into what King (1998) once coined 'Europe's Rio Grande'. The advent of the Arab Spring and its aftermath have certainly given further ground to this representation. Metaphors drawing on the maritime or martial lexical field saturate the media and political coverage of events, tending to distort views of the migratory phenomenon, blur its complex features and nurture a somewhat worn-out but still dominant imagery, that of 'Fortress Europe'. Researchers have crafted competing conceptions as they look into the dissonant set of European policies implemented in the Mediterranean and the logic(s) governing the resurgence of walls in democratic regimes (see among others Celatta and Coletti 2012; Ferrer Gallardo and Kramsh 2012; Peraldi and Bennafla 2008).

One of the most frequently evoked is a faraway echo of the Roman era and its '*limes*'. It is certainly the case that some outer sections of the Empire took on solid linear guises, as evidenced by the *Fossatum Africae* fortification spanning present-day Tunisia and Algeria. However prominent these dividing markers were, the *limes* were in fact akin to "an international system associating – through the use of force and/or unilateral agreements – populations and states located on the margins" (Trousset 1984 cited in Foucher 2001: 94). Drawing parallels with contemporary European politics towards its southern vicinity has

therefore been tempting (see among others Anderson 1997; Bensaad 2008; Peraldi and Bennafla 2008; Walters 2004). Mirroring the *limes*, the expansion of the contemporary border infrastructure (see Rea, this volume) has gone hand in hand with the signing of bilateral and associational agreements, also strongly determined by the involvement of southern actors in controlling migration flows.

What matters here is the suggestive power of the analogy. The EU external contours in the Mediterranean are not clear-cut, not least because there is no such thing as a “single and unequivocal political representation” of the border (Celata and Coletti 2012). Their patchwork-like features result from the “superposition” of multiple policies, actors and practices (Berg and Ehin 2006; Celata and Coletti 2012: 13). In fact, the processes of regionalisation and, more specifically, the European Neighborhood Policy itself, amalgamate a logic of ‘spatial assemblage’ and one of ‘spatial fracture’, driven by the securitisation of borders. Though the latter has arguably dominated (Ferrer Gallardo and Kramsh 2012), the bordering process is also characterised by its shifting spatiality and transient nature. As for the much-heralded ‘Europeanisation’ of Schengen, assuming that the border is ‘uniform’ simply overlooks quotidian implementation practices (see Infantino, this volume).

In line with these most valuable insights into the composite Euro-Mediterranean spatial make-up, one pressing task is to break the analytical divide and better grasp grassroot processes that subvert old spatial divisions. It means promoting research that straddles both shores, tackles the changing features of traditional dividers and explores new concepts to capture the variety of trajectories and movements that crisscross the region.

This agenda has inspired the present collection of contributions, some of which delve deeper into the early days of the Arab Spring, shedding light on its most immediate consequences for both mobile subjects and pre-emptive and reactive border control practices. The upheavals of the Arab Spring that kicked off in 2011 in North Africa grabbed the world’s immediate attention, but concern quickly grew over their potential aftermath. On the European front, national and supra-national eyes first watching Tunisian, Libyan and Egyptian shores quickly shifted to their own southern borders with fear that a ‘tidal wave’ of immigrants and refugees would ‘flood’ their territory. Paradoxically, Europeans and their institutions celebrated grassroots democratic protests and political change while simultaneously fearing and bracing themselves for their migratory consequences.

However these events may have drawn attention to the Mediterranean as a migration region, the scope of this book extends beyond mobility induced by the Arab Spring. While certain chapters highlight Italian responses to North African population movements and the narratives of Tunisian migrants during the Arab Spring, others highlight too often neglected mobility patterns and border practices that predate and outlast the tumultuous spring of 2011. Though irregular flows in the region appear to put serious strain on borders, this core aspect of the debate – ‘borders’ as objects of study per se – has systematically been overlooked. It is somewhat ironic given that border controls have in fact been given undisputable academic and media attention. Most disturbing and prominent

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1 Mediterranean narratives have been shaped by events like Lampedusa's boat  
2 wrecks, the revamping of Melilla's fence with razor blades or migrant fatalities  
3 purportedly caused by unbridled policing practices in Ceuta. However, borders  
4 themselves have largely remained unquestioned, impeding our deeper under-  
5 standing of the forces that either constrain or allow the mobility of people in the  
6 region.

7 This book identifies the Western Mediterranean as an important migration  
8 region and unit of analysis linking European and North African interests, shifts  
9 and developments in a physical space marked by geographical proximity, socio-  
10 political history, and most importantly the movement of people. We break the  
11 traditional dichotomy between North Africa and Europe with contributions that  
12 look at migration within the region as not only unidirectional from North Africa  
13 to Europe, but also migration within and through North Africa. Borders are also  
14 re-examined in the light of a now full-blown body of literature that seeks to  
15 capture the complexity of their contemporary features beyond their most direct  
16 visual enactments, in particular the sweeping deployment of policing devices  
17 and operations along the North/South fault line. Another distinctive binding  
18 thread of this collection is that it emphasises migrants as active subjects interact-  
19 ing with local events, national policies and the bordering process. These lenses  
20 reveal the stops, relocations and itineraries that shape the Mediterranean as a  
21 transitional space.

22 The three central themes that structure this edited volume are borders as  
23 changing sites of control of the movement of people; migration control and the  
24 advent of the Arab Spring, structural aspects of border control and migrants'  
25 agency; transit migration and new mobilities in question.

### 27 **Understanding borders and mobility in the Mediterranean**

28  
29 The last decade has witnessed the consolidation of a field of inquiry seeking to  
30 deconstruct the classical conception and representation of political borders as  
31 lines and barriers (see among others, Bigo 2011; Wilson and Donnan 2012;  
32 Parker and Vaughan Williams 2012; Popescu 2012; Weber and Pickering 2006).  
33 A look at the "choreography" of border controls (Van Houtum 2012) suggests a  
34 multilayered and versatile network taking the form of a temporal and spatial  
35 system of multiple points including land border checkpoints, detention centres,  
36 embassies, ports and airports. To keep pace with the growing complexity of the  
37 geography of control, research has consequently shifted the focus from state  
38 boundaries to the *process* of bordering, that is to say the "activities which have  
39 the effect of constituting, sustaining, or modifying borders" (Parker and Vaughan  
40 Williams 2012: 729). The Mediterranean is in this sense a rich example of those  
41 dynamics that contribute to redefining both imagined and practical articulations  
42 between the two shores. Migration control in the Western Mediterranean  
43 involves the complicated interaction of policies and practices of cooperation and  
44 control among European and North African countries. Facets of European migra-  
45 tion control have been pushed outside of Europe, rooting control into sending

and transit states, placing the responsibility of migration control on North African shoulders and non-state actors. On European soil, the proliferation of camps arguably follows a logic of “inclusive exclusion” (Mountz 2003) while technology-driven surveillance has expanded to preventively address a vast array of purported and discursively conflated threats.

Taking stock of these discussions, the first part of the book explores the most salient features of borders in the context of the Mediterranean through a set of conceptual, theoretical and empirical contributions. It emphasises the need for new types of policies and alternative approaches to the process of bordering, more focused on mobility rather than on territorial borders. An empirical exploration of visa delivering procedures in Morocco prolongs the panoramic analysis of the mushrooming set of bordering *dispositifs* in the Mediterranean.

Echoing Balibar’s warning against the “false simplicity of an obvious notion” (1998), that of the border, Zapata-Barrero first outlines its contours as a political category, elaborating on the definitional turn in academic debates that led borders to be conceived of as dynamic processes and institutions inseparable from their historical background (Newman 1998). The exploration of their main properties provides a basis for the subsequent charting of most relevant theoretical approaches to the category of border alongside power, security, identity and welfare dimensions. Zapata-Barrero succeeds in rendering the conceptual complexity borders encapsulate by isolating and articulating separate principles of action and logic of argument. While political power forms the backbone of it all – or the core approach as a logical outcome of borders being primary institutions – Zapata-Barrero highlights three main deriving functions, namely stability, the protection of identity and fair redistribution. Since the debate on migration, to name but one, has the category of ‘border’ as its main referent, the chapter goes on discussing the foundations for restrictive admissions and practical inconsistencies in liberal democracies. Following in the steps of Kymlicka (2001) who rightfully observed that the issue of borders in normative political theory has long been muted, Zapata-Barrero asserts the need to tackle ethical issues in admission policies – that is, the “moral arguments for closing borders”, as a way to address contemporary problems in a world in motion. As the analysis unfolds, the author certainly goes down a less conventional path by reverting the terms of the debate. Dissecting the asymmetry between entry and exit options that looms large in present-day practices of border control, Zapata-Barrero discusses the arguments *against unrestricted* human mobility. His systematic analysis of the recurrent use of analogies as a debatable basis for constraining human mobility is followed by an urgent call for laying out conceptual foundations and prompting a Political Theory of Borders (PTB).

Sharing common ground with the previous contribution as it strives to place mobility centre stage in studying border issues, Rea reviews long dominant interpretations of (de)bordering and their pitfalls so as to substantiate an alternative conceptual framework. Much has been said and written about the defragmentation of the world by economic forces as we rushed into a globalised era (the ‘borderless’ world), the rise of transnational communities and subsequent



1 emergence of ‘de-territorialised spaces’, or the process of securitisation blurring  
2 the divide between internal and external spheres. Thinking of the border as a  
3 ‘network’ however shifts the focus from compartmentalisation to articulation.  
4 Though these forces are arguably two sides of the same coin, the insistence on  
5 the latter helps to make sense of the struggle at border sites to chiefly improve  
6 the mobility of people. Border politics are not reducible, as Rea argues, to  
7 “imposing constraints, norms or discipline”. Nor does it mean that borders are  
8 being wiped out, never to be drawn again as “lines in the sand”. The overarching  
9 principle of “improving mobility (and surveillance) for all and controlling some”  
10 is guided by a pervading network logic since it is ensured by the spatial dispersal  
11 of borders and the constellation of actors involved in their implementation. Bor-  
12 rowing the Foucauldian notion of security ‘*dispositif*’, Rea finally offers a com-  
13 prehensive account of the process of bordering in the Mediterranean, shedding  
14 light on social sorting through visas, bureaucratic categories of travellers and  
15 lists of safe countries; technologies of surveillance and selective targeting, as  
16 well as the acceleration of detention and expulsion processes.

17 Scant attention has been paid to the implementation of border controls and  
18 the most mundane aspects of the bordering process. As a formalised approach to  
19 the growing complexity of borders, Critical Border Studies have pushed to  
20 promote sociological lines of enquiry well equipped to better inform “everyday”  
21 practices of making borders (Parker and Vaughan Williams 2012: 3). Answering  
22 this call and endorsing the view that States cannot be dissociated from their offi-  
23 cials, Infantino’s work on visa issuance practices in Morocco uncovers signifi-  
24 cant parts of the making of visa policy on the ground and of borders at a  
25 distance. Drawing on a wealth of primary sources from three different consulates  
26 in Casablanca – Belgium, France and Italy – this empirically grounded com-  
27 parative research highlights the persistence of ‘national logics’ and ‘plurality of  
28 implementation styles’. Not only does this chapter detail a complex terrain, but  
29 it demonstrates where cross-national differences conflict with the representation  
30 of a uniform Schengen border. Infantino’s insightful look into coping strategies  
31 finally reveal, against the maze of Schengen gates, “the Europeanisation of appli-  
32 cants’ practices”.

### 34 **Migration control and the advent of the Arab Spring**

36 The second section of this edited volume explores the European responses to the  
37 Arab Spring in the Western Mediterranean and the lived experiences of North  
38 African migrants and their families. The Arab Spring launched on the Mediterra-  
39 nean’s North African shores, and while democratic transformations were celeb-  
40 rated by Europeans, their migratory impacts, both potential and actual, exposed  
41 the underlying trepidation and priority given to security by EU Member States.  
42 The grassroots calls for democratic institutions and developments first in Tunisia,  
43 then in Libya and Egypt quickly turned tumultuous and forced out decades-long  
44 political power holders, but the implications of these events stretched beyond  
45 the national borders in which they began, extending to other Middle Eastern

countries, and as people moved within North Africa but also to Europe's southern shores. The internal mobility and out-migration within the region struck fear into southern European countries, some of whom were already struggling to create and implement effective migration controls and border mechanisms. Italy had been calling for burden-sharing with its EU partners long before the 'crisis' of Lampedusa, but the events of the Arab Spring and the arrival of undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers, even if projections vastly outweighed the actual numbers, exposed the EU's internal tensions regarding migration policy and reticence to implement its goals of a border-free European Union.

This section explores these EU institutional responses surrounding migration at the advent of the Arab Spring in a chapter by Elif Cetin, but also includes chapters that bridge migration control and policy discourses with human narratives. The nexus between migration control and the Arab Spring is not only treated in the political macro-domain but also as it politically inspired various immigrant and non-migrant populations in a chapter written by Federico Oliveri. Lastly, this section explores the narratives of Tunisians held in Lampedusa, a population that was often discussed as threats in public and political discourse but whose own stories were rarely given voice in these same circles.

Elif Cetin first approaches the issues of migration control within the framework of the Italian national response to the events of the Arab Spring, linking domestic responses to the European political processes of migration control. She argues that the events of the Arab Spring as they played out in the European Union showcase the EU's limited capability to establish a coherent immigration dialogue and response in the Mediterranean. Italy's initial reaction, backed by domestic political alliances and xenophobic political parties, was to confine Tunisians and Libyans to the island of Lampedusa. However, Lampedusa's inadequate facilities and delays and uncertainties in processing led to the alternate strategy of issuing temporary residence permits for humanitarian protection to undocumented Tunisian migrants who arrived before 5 April 2011. This decision triggered diplomatic tensions with neighbouring France, affecting not only Italy's European relationships but also the migration trajectories of newly arrived Tunisian immigrants many of whom had planned to eventually make their way to France. Through her analysis, Cetin weaves together the Italian domestic political climate and public immigration discourse while locating them within European national and supranational contexts. She demonstrates how Italian responses to the arrival of people leaving North Africa in the midst of the Arab Spring exposed the frailty of the EU's efforts for a border-free Europe and its underlying securitarian approach to non-EU immigration. Without European cohesion on migration policy, Cetin questions the Member States' capacity to build an area of dialogue and stability in the Mediterranean.

Aide Esu and Simone Maddanu's chapter dives deeper into the biographies and journeys' narratives of Tunisian migrants and their precarious life waiting for temporal papers. This chapter – an urban ethnography in Lampedusa – focuses on a specific "moment", "a deferred time in migrants' lives", that is, the "forced relocation" in Lampedusa following their administrative detention.



1 In the second half of March 2011, almost 6,000 Tunisian migrants tried to reach  
2 the Italian coasts illegally. They participated in the Tunisian upheavals and even-  
3 tually took advantage of the weakened surveillance during Ben Ali's transition.  
4 Following Foucault's concept of heterotopia (1986), Esu and Maddanu retrace  
5 their stay in Cagliari's Reception and Identification Camp, "exploring their  
6 intimate emotions, their hopes and dreams, but also the police procedures of  
7 identification and de-personalisation". The authors argue that choosing to defend  
8 their own personal project over collective actions in Tunisia, the claiming of per-  
9 sonal rights, is in a sense the first manifestation of a civil sphere (Alexander  
10 2006).

11 Further examining the political impacts of the Arab Spring but shifting our  
12 attention to people's experiences "on the ground", Federico Oliveri explores the  
13 events in Tunisia and Egypt as they motivated "acts of citizenship", i.e. acts that  
14 *produce new actors as rights-bearing subjects* (Isin and Nielsen 2008) among  
15 three groups of people with stakes in EU migration processes: the thousands of  
16 young undocumented Tunisians who arrived in Europe after the fall of Ben Ali's  
17 regime; Tunisian families of people missing in crossing the Mediterranean Sea;  
18 Northern African and Sub-Saharan migrants who were already working in Italy.  
19 Through semi-structured interviews and press and document analysis, Oliveri  
20 demonstrates how these groups explicitly and implicitly appropriated the Tuni-  
21 sian and Egyptian revolutions to gain political solidarity and recognition. His  
22 chapter shows how they reinterpreted and asserted Tunisian and Egyptian claims  
23 for freedom and dignity: on the one hand, as they applied freedom in terms of  
24 freedom of movement against Mediterranean border controls and mechanisms  
25 and on the other as they claimed dignity in terms of dignity at work against  
26 exploitation and discrimination. First, they built their discourses upon two  
27 central claims of the Arab Spring, *freedom* and *dignity*: on one side, they called  
28 for *freedom of movement* against border controls and containment mechanisms;  
29 on the other side, they demanded *dignity at work* against labour exploitation and  
30 discrimination. Second, they employed political strategies inspired by the events  
31 in Egypt and Tunisia in order to have their rights recognised, especially in terms  
32 of self-organisation, creation of public spaces for deliberation and participation  
33 in collective actions. Third, Oliveri points out how these groups legitimised their  
34 claims by classifying the events in North Africa as multi-sided political argu-  
35 ments, providing motivation and seeking solidarity from the rest of the popula-  
36 tion. Through this analysis, his chapter teases out the wide-spread implications  
37 of the events of 2011, which provided models for certain disempowered groups  
38 to challenge their subordinated status within a "global hierarchy of mobility"  
39 (Bauman 1998) through "the insubordinate mobility of their bodies" (De Genova  
40 2009: 451).

### 41 **"Transit migration" and new mobilities**

42 The third and final section of the book explores new forms of mobility in  
43 the Western Mediterranean that cannot clearly be grasped through existing  
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categories such as transit migration. Both North African and Southern European countries are now simultaneous sites of emigration, immigration and transit migration. Migrants do not simply pass through the region in one fluid movement, but rather make several stops within both North Africa and Southern Europe as part of their migration journey. These nodes in the migration path allow for adjustment, rerouting and the acquisition of material resources and knowledge, which can facilitate subsequent movements and emphasise the importance of migrants' *interactions* along the way. Furthermore, the mobile lifestyles within the Mediterranean among Europeans and North Africans call for comparisons between the two that bridge the research divide between the Global North on one hand and the Global South on the other, both of which are encapsulated within and traverse the Western Mediterranean region.

Arguing that the notion of transit migration overlooks the phenomenon of relocation of migrants in 'transit countries', Mehdi Alioua puts forward the notion of staged migration. This notion is as much a framework embracing both time and geography as an interpretative tool to "understand how deterritorialised phenomena reterritorialise for a time". The objective is thus neither to concentrate principally on the original or destination societies, nor on the so-called "transit" societies, but rather on the deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation/re-deterritorialisation process and the interactions it produces. The research analyses the Moroccan stage of the transnational migration of Sub-Saharan Africans from various origins and whose migratory projects are often quite distinct and personal. Central to the analysis is the notion of circulatory territory. The empirical data collected by the author provide a vivid account of the difficulties these populations face while crossing borders or getting used to the feeling of deterritorialisation, as well as the complexity of the social ties they create between themselves. This contribution thus focuses on the 'circulatory know-how' (Tarrus 2001, 2002), the way in which they organise themselves socially in time and space to achieve their goal, along with the way they transplant their own boundaries where they settle. Mehdi Alioua offers a compelling example of "the departure from the image of the world divided by clear-cut state borders to a multidimensional picture which reveals the density of relationships".

Continuing into the theme of mobility within the Mediterranean, Marko Juntunen and Špela Kalčič focus on the countries of Spain and Morocco, examining two parallel populations that are rarely brought into the same conversation: European and African mobile subjects. In an ethnographic examination of Moroccan migrant men and new European 'nomads' who engage in mobile lifestyles between Europe, North Africa and parts of West Africa, the authors push for recognition and further conceptualisation of their emerging transnational mobilities without slipping into essentialised distinctions between populations from the global North and global South. While recognising the inequalities between their respondents, this chapter highlights their similar feelings of uprootedness and liminality and demonstrates the comparability between their mobile lifestyles. In response to the 2008 economic crisis, both groups are able to negotiate and even circumvent national and supranational sedentary norms



1 and bureaucratic restrictions by employing economic strategies of mobility in  
 2 the Mediterranean. Juntunen and Kalčić thus challenge not only our categorisa-  
 3 tions of ‘immigrant’ groups in the Western Mediterranean, but also how we con-  
 4 ceptualise migration and mobility itself.

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**Part I**

**Understanding mobility  
and borders in the Western  
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Proof

# 1 The conceptual dynamics of borders in a world in motion<sup>1</sup>

*Ricard Zapata-Barrero*

In the real world, we can't assume that existing boundaries are accepted, let alone that they will be accepted in perpetuity. Nor can we assume that people outside these boundaries have no desire or claim to enter the country. Any political theory which has nothing to say about these questions is seriously flawed.

(Kymlicka, 2001: 252)

## Introduction: why talk about 'borders' now? Context and theoretical framework

Beyond the short-term implications, today's human mobility and geopolitical transformation due to the Arab Spring is substantially altering the Mediterranean agenda. The 2011 events are not only transforming the dominant approach of the issue that was generally considered as valid until then.<sup>2</sup> They are also giving increasing visibility to the region's border management. In the context of the Western Mediterranean area, new heuristic instruments are needed in order to help interpret the new sense generated by the change of the notion of 'border'.

This chapter seeks to precisely theorise about what we have called the *conceptual dynamics of border in a world in motion*. Needless to say that the most important conceptual change experienced during the last two decades lies in consideration of borders as complex political institutions that (dis)connect social spaces – not only in administrative terms but also in cultural, economic, functional, symbolic, identity and emotional terms. Territorial borders are no longer understood by the scientific community as static entities, as mere fixed lines on the map. Today, they have been conceptualised as a process, as a socially constructed reality in constant motion.

From a political theory point of view, this has remarkable implications. First, it has an effect on the very traditional notion of state sovereignty, which only makes sense due to the existence of a border that legitimises it. With an increasing human mobility among states, the notions of sovereignty and border have been devoid of a substantial symbolic part of their traditional meaning. This has led to a debate revolving around the notions of flexibilisation, or even relaxation (and even disappearance) of borders as the main elements within a policy and speak about managing movement, which entails the continuous movement of

people. It should be said, however, that borders understood in terms of visas, citizenship, residence permits and physical control of the external perimeter of a state evidence the creation of new socio-spatial categories. In other words, they illustrate the new types of *bordering* (Wolff and Zapata-Barrero, 2011).

As a result, research on borders is no longer the analytical and descriptive exercise that it used to be (Minghi, 1963; Prescott, 1978). It has now become a field for scrutiny on the socio-spatial dynamics (Wastl-Walter, 2011). We are going from the idea of a static border line to the movement of bordering. In other words, the scientific approach related to borders is now entirely focused on the process of b/ordering (see for instance Paasi, 2005; Van Houtum *et al.*, 2005; Newman, 2006).

Over the last two decades, the analysis of border dynamics in the EU has mainly revolved around the tensions between the logics of debordering/permeability and rebordering/impermeability that are often applicable to any state (Anderson *et al.*, 2003). The free movement of nationals and third-country nationals within the EU (the so-called Schengen area) and the creation of an external common border have led to a series of geopolitical practices and discourses, often contradictory from a normative point of view (Wolff, 2010; Zapata-Barrero, 2010c). For years, the somewhat overused notions of 'Europe without borders' and 'Fortress Europe' have been applied simultaneously. The discourse on permeability vs impermeability, relaxation and intensification is still that applied to the EU and its borders, and more so in the Western Mediterranean.

In this scenario, the EU's management of borders cannot only refer to the mere control of its external perimeter. Rather, it should be considered in a wider context within the EU's external relations (Aubarell *et al.*, 2009). There are countless examples to illustrate how the control and management of border expand simultaneously both inside and outside of the 'bordered' territory. The EU's process of bordering is therefore taking place in origin, transit and destination. It is dissociated from the territorial border in its strict sense and adopts a slightly different approach, materialising in the drafting of cooperation agreements signed between the EU and third countries: in cyberspace; in biometric databases; in the polyphony of national and supranational geopolitical discourses on migration control; or in immigrant detention centres located both within and outside the EU borders (see different contributions in Zapata-Barrero and Ferrer, 2012).

The new dynamics of movement of workers that 'come and go' in a circular way (among the last works, see Constant, *et al.*, 2012; Zapata-Barrero *et al.*, 2012) also require new types of policies focused primarily on managing mobility rather than on the traditional territorial borders.

A theory on borders within the framework of the Western Mediterranean is therefore embedded in the changing constellation of EU practices and policies on migration and border management. It should not be forgotten that the multidisciplinary and multisemantic nature of the notion of border can become an important pitfall if there are no holistic considerations that give account to the plurality of approaches from where it can be tackled. It is commonplace to claim

1 that research on borders is a field without borders (O’Neil, 1994: 71). The task  
2 of theorising might help put some order to the different approaches, subjects and  
3 arguments around it so that it may create a link with the different disciplines  
4 envisaged. It may also propose new theoretical frameworks aimed at evaluating  
5 strategic policies and actions related with borders.

6 The main goal is to theorise on what has already been conceptualised as  
7 Borders in Motion.<sup>3</sup> Given this context, this chapter is based on the hypothesis  
8 that the relationship between politics and borders is being reshaped as a con-  
9 sequence of the movement of people between states. Against this backdrop, this  
10 article seeks to explore the link between the concept of ‘border’ and policies  
11 aimed at managing human mobility, taking the Western Mediterranean as the  
12 main geographical area case study.

13 Debates related to borders are perhaps one of the most visible signs that we  
14 are experiencing a process of change (Rumford, 2006). The way in which con-  
15 cepts and categories related to immigration policies are defined has always been  
16 related to borders.<sup>4</sup> However, political theory has not given sufficient considera-  
17 tion to the concept. This ‘conspiracy of silence’ is extremely important, since  
18 most of the inconsistencies in liberal political theory are based on the considera-  
19 tion of borders (Kymlicka, 2001: 250). For example, it is surprising to note that  
20 the notion of ‘border’ has long been a concept taken for granted in modern  
21 debates on immigration.<sup>5</sup>

22 In order to theorise the conceptual dynamics of border, the concept will be  
23 first **as** approached as a political category, and then some theoretical frameworks  
24 will be identified. I will then go on to discuss the arguments focusing on human  
25 mobility and border control to finally give some concluding remarks for further  
26 conceptual research.

### 28 **Border as a political category**

29 A system of categories can ideally be used to provide an inventory of reality – a  
30 catalogue of what exists in the world in itself (the Aristotelian tradition), or to  
31 conceptualise the world in order to understand it better (the Kantian tradition). It  
32 therefore has both an analytical and informative function, as it helps us to discern  
33 what is in reality vague and disjointed, while at the same time understanding  
34 some important aspects such as socio-economic conditions and inequalities in  
35 the world (inequalities of gender, social status, education, age, economic status,  
36 etc.). In analytical terms, the function of a category is to highlight something’s  
37 distinguishing feature. It is at this point that it becomes detached from its own  
38 etymology. Indeed, the ancient Greek word *kategoria* describes what could be  
39 said against someone in a court of law. This is the sense that Aristotle uses: what  
40 can be said of or about a subject, as a means to distinguish categories. More pre-  
41 cisely, Aristotle created his list of political regime’s categories after distinguish-  
42 ing between the ‘different questions that can be asked of something’, and noting  
43 that ‘only a limited number of responses can be adequately given to any par-  
44 ticular question’ (Ackrill, 1963: 78–79).  
45



From the political standpoint, the task of categorising is not a neutral task. It always has a system of strategic intentions and is always based on specific explanatory purposes. Categorising immigrants as workers, for example, is not the same as categorising them simply as people, even when we categorise them as political and social actors. Describing migration flows as a system of categories directly related to the market, as when using demographic categories such as brain drain, social education and status and actions such as remittances, is also not the same as describing the flows according to a broader framework (beyond the market), introducing categories such as gender, religion, language, etc.

This political dimension of categories also means that it is the result of a process which expresses a way of interpreting the world, and also has a foundational dimension, in the sense that it can help with understanding social change. We can also use categories to express *desiderata* and to demand new approaches for the transformation of reality.

In short, considering all the above, every society uses a system of categories that are part of its structural cement, until there is a gradual process of change that makes it unsustainable, and a process of reflection on the foundations that anchor the categories system thereby begins. At that point, the categories that only had a descriptive and social aspect become political categories.

Perhaps the most visible evidence that the political category of the border has been one of the concepts taken for granted in the social sciences debate is that the concept itself is not often mentioned in the definition of the state. It is taken for granted when discussing what is required by a population, a territory and sovereignty to exercise power. Even in the classical Weberian definition of the state as the ‘monopoly of legitimate power in a territory’, the territory is assumed to be defined by a border. Today, the border has become a political category that is the subject of discussion. It may be the focus for political disagreements over its management when it is linked to human mobility. It is this link between concepts and politics that we aim to highlight in this chapter.

This means that it should be regarded as a category that helps to understand power relations and inequalities, such as the classic identity-based socio-economic categories like gender, skin colour, ethnicity, social class, religion, etc. If we therefore consider what kind of inequalities and power relations are related to the existence of borders, the answer is directly related to the social inequalities between developed and developing countries, including democracies and democratising countries. Likewise, the system of argument based on borders has a historical relationship with Europe’s colonial past. The drawing of borders was related to the separation of communities and the spread of European domination.

As a political category, the border has at least three properties: it is a primary political institution, it is a process and it is a functional notion.

First, it is an institution.<sup>6</sup> In fact, I contend it is a *primary political institution*. As an institution, it involves at least three theses. First, the historical thesis: we state that there are no ‘natural boundaries’ and they have never existed. The notion of a ‘natural border’ is simply a political myth (Balibar, 2001: 174). Linking the border to a river or a mountain range is based on the desire to



1 ‘naturalise’ a notion that is essentially political. In this process of naturalisation,  
2 its meaning is essentialised, to the point where just as it is impossible to change  
3 the course of a river or a mountain chain, the border ‘is there forever’. That  
4 means that as an institution, the border is primarily a historical category that  
5 must always be understood within its own biography, as a result of a particular  
6 history. Balibar (2001: 163) is correct to point out that borders have reached  
7 their ‘historical limit’, beyond which it is increasingly difficult for them to  
8 perform their internal and external functions.

9 The second idea can be formulated using the theory of stability: namely, that  
10 the border is not only an institution, but also a limit-institution. This expression  
11 comes from Balibar (2001: 174). The author asserts that borders (*frontières*)  
12 must be considered as *limit-institutions*, in the sense that “they must be able to  
13 remain stable while all other institutions are transformed: they must give the  
14 state the possibility of controlling movements and activities of citizens without  
15 themselves being subject to any control”. If we accept this stability thesis, when  
16 the institution becomes unstable (which basically means its original function is  
17 changing), as is the case at present, all other institutions that depend on this  
18 stability automatically become a subject for discussion. Finally, we come to the  
19 non-democratic thesis, in the sense that as institutions, borders are the result of  
20 an undemocratic decision.

21 In some respects, the stability thesis also introduces the dimension that it is  
22 not only an institution, but in fact a *primary institution*, in the sense that it is an  
23 institution that is independent of all others, and on which others depend. The  
24 basis for this dimension is as follows. Using the analytical difference in Rawls’  
25 theory of goods, which was the focus for the debate on justice in the late twenti-  
26 eth century, i.e. the distinction between primary goods and secondary goods, it  
27 is possible to say that there *primary political institutions* and *secondary political*  
28 *institutions*. Primary goods are those required by any rational person to achieve  
29 their expectations in life, and are those that are distributed in a theory of justice.  
30 Walzer added citizenship to the list of primary goods, as the condition without  
31 which a person could not even be a subject for a theory of justice. Citizenship as  
32 a distributable primary good means that it is a condition without which other  
33 goods within a state cannot be distributed.

34 Using the same logic, but applying the concept of the border, it can be said  
35 that they are *primary political institutions*, in that their existence is the precondi-  
36 tion without which other political institutions cannot exist. Today, the ‘physical  
37 border’ has become a *primary institution*. For example, for the theory of nation-  
38 alism, without this institution there can be no state or political community  
39 (Miller, 1995). For a theory of immigration, without this primary institution it  
40 would not even be possible to distinguish between an immigrant and a citizen.  
41 This primary institution is therefore essential.

42 Second, the border *describes a process*, which is the result of political deci-  
43 sions. As mentioned above, the border is not a naturalistic and static notion. To  
44 make this dimension explicit, the academic literature prefers to use the notion of  
45 *bordering*, or for even greater emphasis, ‘*the bordering process*’ highlighting the

internal dynamic of inclusion/exclusion inherent in the notion of the border.<sup>7</sup> It is this process that makes possible political communities different from each other. As a process, it is the basis for the creation of ‘otherness’. In other words, separate identities are created and consolidated by the maintenance/modification of the border. As Newman (2003: 15) correctly points out, “the bordering process creates order through the construction of difference”. As such, it must always be conceived as a changeable primary political institution, and one that is established by criteria of variation. We must take into account not only the changes that may take place in the physical location of the border, as the line that separates two states, but also the changes that are supposed to regulate the movement of people and goods, for example. In this second sense, the border-process is the answer to two basic questions: who comes in? And how many? This is the level of analysis that takes place in the debate on open/closed borders, and the idea of establishing a basis for regulating the control of the flows.

Finally, the border is a functional notion. This characteristic has already been identified in the conceptual analysis performed in the previous section. Here it assumes a different meaning, as a political category. This implies that the border cannot be defined without mentioning the functions it performs. This involves the notions of border-security and border-protection. As a functional notion, it has also been the great implicit factor in contractarian theories, which have always taken an idea of the border for granted. I refer to both the classical contractualism of Hobbes and Rousseau, and the contemporary version of Rawls, among others. The state of nature that is the basis for classical contractualism is a state-without-borders. For Rousseau, this state of arts is the ideal. It is the basis for the romantic ideal of a world without any borders. The first border is not so much the collective boundary, which is defined within a community, but the individual one: that of private property. This idea of a limit for action is also advocated by Hobbes. The state has a need to restrict the extent of unbridled freedom, freedom without borders. In the original position of J. Rawls’ theory, people also have no idea of the border. Rawls himself took this idea as a given, and this shows the extent to which his universalism is highly contextualised within his time. Rawls’ theory of justice, and the tradition that it created by proposing a just society, took the existence of borders for granted. Without borders, the most basic principles of justice would be difficult to implement.

Given these three basic properties of the concept of the border as a political category, and assuming it as a premise, we need to consider the most relevant approaches.

### Theoretical approaches to the border as a political category?

Figure 1.1 shows the most relevant theoretical approaches to the border as a political category. Each approach can be identified by means of a principle of action and a prevalent logic of argument.

The core meaning is based on Power. Three approaches characterise the border as a political category: the approaches based on identity, security and

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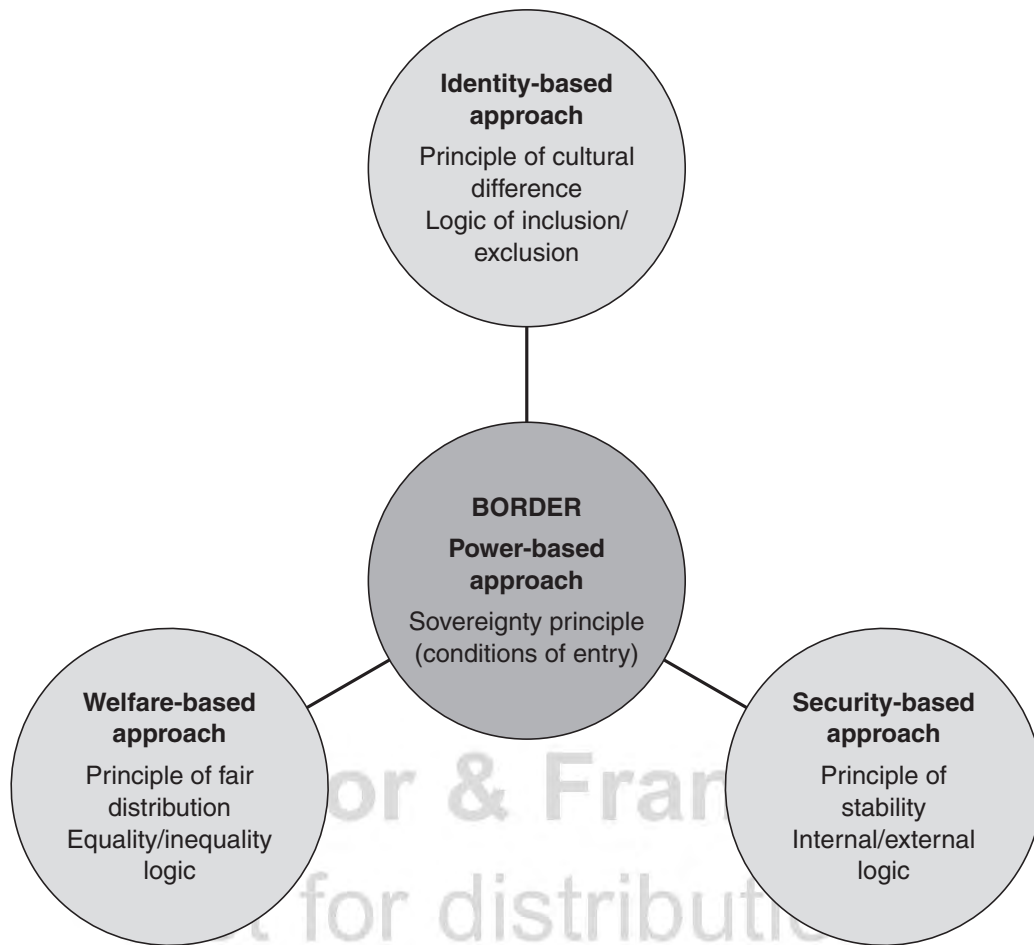


Figure 1.1 Approaches based on the border as a political category.

welfare. Here we look at each one separately, starting with the core approach (Power) that provides the basis for the other three (Security, Identity, Welfare). We will also see how the functional dimension of the concept of the border is expressed, as something that provides functions of security, maintenance and protection of identity, and which ensures the welfare of those that live within it.

The power-based approach: The border is the ultimate expression of political power. Political borders are essentially coercive. Indeed, the functional definition of the border is that it is what legally delimits a territory. This approach includes the classical definitions of national and state sovereignty that began in the Westphalia period and which are the basis for studies of international relations. The border is a line that can be crossed, but under conditions imposed from *within*. The increase in human mobility is expressed in terms of a selection logic, which defines the profile (answering the question of who enters) and the quantity (answering the question of how many may enter). The principle of sovereignty is the basic principle of action. Monopoly of control over borders is perhaps the last bastion of state sovereignty, and the driving force behind our

historical era, which began at Westphalia. There is a direct relationship between the border and the state, to the extent that they need each other to define themselves. The border is the answer to the question about the need for the state and is part of its justification. As a process, it can also be said that any cultural community wishing to build a state needs a border to shape its sovereign power. The sovereignty of a state lies in its ability to control its borders. It is here where all its plasticity and pragmatism is expressed.

This core approach can be used to analytically separate three approaches based on the three main functions of the border as a political category, which has power as a central theme.

**The security-based approach:** The border is the ultimate expression of security. In fact, this link is related to the etymological sense of the ‘border’ as the ‘front’ and a ‘protection barrier’ (a rampart, wall, etc.), against any potential external danger. The principle of action in this approach is stability, i.e. ensuring a stable society. The logic of the argument is what distinguishes the external from the internal, and preservation and protection. This logic of action differs from the logic of inclusion/exclusion which we will discuss below (the identity-based approach), as it focuses more on the container than on the dynamic process of the transition from without to within. At this point, the arguments for maintaining order within borders and preserving stability come into play (Albert *et al.*, 2001). When the effects are reversed, and borders disappear, the main problems are related to order and stability. This explains, for example, why the Freedom/Security/Justice triangle is the basis for action by the EU internally, after the disappearance of borders and the establishment of the Schengen area. The argument that it is necessary to strengthen external borders to ensure an internal space of freedom is the same process that is behind the construction of the EU that began in the Tampere period (1999). This framework includes images of Fortress Europe, which evoke the medieval symbol of a castle that protects its population from external dangers, and may be the cornerstone of the normative outlines of the EU (Zapata-Barrero, 2010a).

**The identity-based approach:** an acknowledged fact that the border acts as a marker of cultural difference and identity. It is directly related to the definition of otherness. It is also a historical fact that one of the functions of borders is to define cultural communities. Within this framework, there are two directions for focusing the relationship: one going from borders to identity, and vice versa. In other words, this is the debate over whether borders create identity, or whether the prior existence of an identity leads to borders. The logic of the argument is in this case the logic of inclusion/exclusion, of them/us. There can be no political community without borders, and there can be no borders if they cannot perform one of their main functions: that of delimiting a political community.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, if borders are the main indicators of difference, they are inherently excluders, and the main container of the political sense of community.<sup>9</sup> The border is the line between identities, and it is the main source for legitimacy of differences/similarities. It is even possible to say that the study of racism is based on a concept of borders between groups of people with identity variables (racial or

1 cultural). A racist argument raises barriers to relationships of identity and legiti-  
2 mised power relations between cultural groups. What is interesting is when  
3 attempts are made to make borders on the ground coincide with borders of  
4 national identity, and that inclusion/exclusion is legitimised by principles that  
5 are exclusively of national identity.

6 **The welfare-based approach:** Perhaps this approach is more European, as the  
7 European democracies are also based on a principle of equal social rights, and  
8 they require a minimum level of welfare for their population. The basic principle  
9 of action is to ensure a fair distribution of minimum welfare to at least the  
10 citizens living within the container of the borders. This fair distribution follows  
11 the logic of separating social inequalities and even social exclusion. According  
12 to this approach, the universality of the very concept of equality which has  
13 guided the debate on democracy, both equal treatment and equality of outcomes,  
14 is limited to application within state borders, and it therefore assumes that  
15 borders are a primary institution. Kymlicka covers this link between rights and  
16 equality appropriately. Borders show the limits of the allocation of rights. What  
17 is the justification for distinguishing between the rights of citizens within borders  
18 and those of foreigners outside them? If the principle of the moral value of indi-  
19 viduals has to be taken seriously, then the state must not violate individuals'  
20 physical integrity. This approach is summarised as follows: "[In all liberal theo-  
21 ries] a subtle but profound shift takes place in terminology. What begins as a  
22 theory about the moral equality of persons typically ends up as a theory of the  
23 moral equality of citizens" (Kymlicka, 2001: 249). In other words, the universal  
24 rights that liberalism confers on the individual are transformed during their  
25 implementation, and they are in reality reserved for some people, who are  
26 citizens of the state. As people with an inherent moral value, why do they not  
27 have the right to enter, work and vote in a liberal democracy? A Political Theory  
28 of Borders shows that full welfare, and therefore the full benefits of the liberal  
29 democratic principle of equality, is exclusively reserved to citizens. Herein lays  
30 one of the problems of our historical era.

### 31 32 **Arguments focusing on individual freedom of movement and** 33 **border control**

34  
35 There are at least two frameworks for political debate that involve an implicit tran-  
36 scendental consideration of the border: discussions on nationalism and the debate  
37 on immigration. They both **share their concerns over borders** and construct their  
38 basic political categories taking borders as their main framework of reference,  
39 either explicitly or implicitly. Turning the argument on its head, it is difficult, or  
40 even impossible, to have a theory of nationalism and a theory of immigration  
41 without a notion of a border. In other words, the justification for where to draw  
42 borders and the issue of their control, once they have been drawn, are two separate  
43 but closely linked frameworks due to their implicit categorisation of the border.

44 While the former follows a logic that aims to justify borders and constructs its  
45 arguments based on the logic of doing/undoing borders, or making/unmaking



22 *R. Zapata-Barrero*

boundaries (Buchanan and Moore, 2003), debates about immigration include issues directly related to the justification of barriers to human mobility as a new global dynamic, in comparison with the mobility of goods. This freedom of movement of people is conceived as an exercise of one of the highest expressions of negative liberty, which is so dear to the liberal tradition. In this context, debates on the justification for border control, as the most convincing exception of liberalism, come into play.

This analytical differentiation comes from Kymlicka (2001), in his seminal work on the justification for the territorial limits of the liberal state. Kymlicka addresses both the theory of secession and the human mobility that immigration involves. The problem of borders directly raises the question of justifying where they are to be drawn. The fact that existing boundaries are largely the product of historical injustice comes to the surface immediately in this type of argument (Kymlicka, 2001). However, if we ignore the historical circumstances of today's borders, the question remains one of justifying the legitimate grounds for the location of the borders. For liberals, the most important principle is that of free choice, which is limited by respect for the rights of others. If the majority in part of a territory do not want to continue being part of the larger area, they should have the right to secession. However, this position is at odds with current practice in liberal democracies.

From the point of view of human mobility, Kymlicka's premise is that the issue of borders has been taken for granted in the debate on normative political theory in recent decades. The best example is Rawls, who, as we have seen, simply ignores this question. For Kymlicka (2001: 252), this hinders attempts to deal with some of today's most pressing problems. As the political theorist notes,

in the real world, we cannot assume that existing boundaries are accepted, let alone that they will be accepted in perpetuity. Nor can we assume that people outside these limits have no desire or intention to enter the country. Any political theory which has nothing to say about these questions is seriously flawed.

These ethical questions were the first considerations as regards admission policies.<sup>10</sup>

Can closing borders be morally justified? (Gibney, 1988: xiii). This is the main question to be answered when examining the basis for the ethical issues of admission policies. Or perhaps we need to consider the premise behind this question: should ethical questions play a role in guiding policy for the admission of immigrants? (Zapata-Barrero, 2009).

Addressing ethical issues involves challenging three assumptions: sovereignty gives a nation-state almost absolute control over its borders, and immigrants are admitted only if they serve the national interest in market terms, as well as in terms of identity, in the sense that their entry presents no serious threats to national identity. A third challenge is related to security. Immigrants are

1 admitted if the nationals' security is not affected. We can therefore see that all  
2 three approaches (seen in the previous section) connected to power leave a line  
3 of analysis open: welfare, identity and security.

4 Since the beginning of this debate, Whelan (1998) has adopted the power-  
5 based approach that follows the principle of sovereignty. He is interested in  
6 examining the attitudes that support the moral legitimacy of exclusion, or if one  
7 changes the direction of the argument – he aims to reverse the argument, taking  
8 issue with those who say that people have the right to migrate and the state has  
9 the right to be open to receive them. He even uses the democratic argument that  
10 politicians must act in the national interest of their voters and bow to the 'peo-  
11 ple's will' and pursue the 'public interest'. The interests of immigrants should  
12 not be considered when designing an admission policy as a democratic policy, as  
13 immigrants do not vote and are not part of the sovereignty of the people who are  
14 to be protected. It is at this point that questions arise that pose ethical problems:

15  
16 May citizens, by virtue of their sovereign powers, enact a closed society, or,  
17 in what would seem to be a morally similar use of the same powers, set  
18 limits and criteria that are designed to ensure immigration serves the inter-  
19 ests of themselves (and their descendants), the interests of those admitted  
20 being served in this fashion only indirectly?

21 (Whelan, 1998: 6)

22  
23 A political theory that is intended to address the demands of all human beings  
24 will struggle to justify borders that act as barriers to free movement. There is  
25 even more justification for this when people and groups are unevenly separated  
26 for socio-economic and political reasons. In this regard, it is to be expected that  
27 cross-border movement has an equalising effect.

28 Following this line of argument and the debate on freedom of movement  
29 leads us to the didactic work of Cole (2000), who clarifies part of the current dis-  
30 cussion. In view of the real inconsistency between the right to emigrate and the  
31 right to immigration, with the former recognised as a human right (Article 13) in  
32 the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the problem arises when this  
33 human right cannot be implemented as the latter (the right to immigration and  
34 therefore admission) constitutes no obligation for states. This ethical and con-  
35 ceptual asymmetry (Cole, 2000: 46) becomes even more problematic with the  
36 argument that borders are not open/closed for the same reasons, for the same  
37 purposes and in all directions.

38 The basic approach is that the degree of openness of borders depends on what  
39 is moving across them. In general, there is some inconsistency between the  
40 movement of people and the movement of goods, and depending on the direc-  
41 tion of movement (import and export of products, money and finance, do not  
42 follow the same criteria or guidelines) and between emigrants/immigrants. In  
43 historical terms, the fact (and problematisation) that states do not use the same  
44 criteria for emigration and immigration policies is relatively new. It dates from  
45 after the First World War, when the visa policies were established, and was

enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which established the right to emigrate (Article 13.2), assuming that the right of return was granted (Barry and Goodin, 1992: 13). Today, the policy is based on the assumption that it is necessary to be ‘tougher’ on immigration than emigration. But on what grounds is this assumption based?

To provide some basis for these inconsistencies, it is necessary to favour one theoretical approach over the other. All political theories attempt to justify inconsistencies and admit a certain amount of them. The same criterion is not applied internally, within the framework of freedom of the goods, when moving arms and coffee. These criteria follow the same pattern for people who are admitted or excluded based on certain criteria. The justification for unequal treatment within the same freedom of movement is also analysed.

There is undoubtedly a historical reason for this asymmetry, due to the period when human rights were proclaimed in the last century (1948), during the early ‘Cold War’ between the two blocs (the liberal and the communist bloc). After World War II, there was an urgent need and consensus among European countries as regards marking the limits on states’ authoritarian tendencies towards their own citizens. They were designed primarily to defend citizens from their own state. This paradigm of the citizen/state relationship, which is the basis for human rights, helps when understanding the difficulties of its application to non-citizens, and especially to illegal immigrants. The right of admission is stronger than the right to leave, especially as regards people (this is not the case with money, goods and services). In the twentieth century, the ‘exit option’ was the empirical benchmark for the definition of borders, as part of the world’s population (in the former communist countries) had no opportunity to leave their country. In this context, the well-known Popperian debate on the ‘open society’ and the ‘closed society’ began (2006).

Given this framework, it is possible to talk about the one-directional nature of these arguments, since they were based on the ‘pre-judgment’ that ‘our’ open society can ensure the right to leave a territory (guaranteeing exit from the territory was a political demand), but not the right to enter. The ‘entry option’ today has the status of a human rights demand.<sup>11</sup> As a result, in the twenty-first century, the marker that defines borders is no longer an exit option (there are almost no states that do not allow their citizens to leave), but instead the ‘entry option’ (there is no rule in any state that guarantees the unconditional right of admission). The ‘exit option’ has a value in terms of human rights, but the right to enter any country one wishes does not. The basic argument is therefore that in order to understand the current liberal asymmetry, we have to introduce this context to argue that the current asymmetry is undoubtedly the result of asynchrony (two historical periods, the end of World War II and the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twenty-first century), characterised by a real dynamic: human mobility, which has difficulty adapting to an institutional structure of borders which was designed for a world without human movement, or at least for a world in which human mobility was seen as an exception rather than the norm.



1 A basic argument is therefore that the asymmetry is only visible when there is  
 2 a relationship between citizens/non-citizens, i.e. in the current historical context.  
 3 In other words, in a situation in which a citizen of a state wishes to enter another  
 4 state that is not their own, as defined by the concept of human mobility in this  
 5 book. Or to put it another way, from the point of view of citizens and their own  
 6 state, the rights of both entry and exit are absolutely symmetrical. To return to  
 7 the arguments of Cole, given a state X and a state Y, and a person P who wants  
 8 to cross the border from X to Y, there are at least three possible scenarios:  
 9

- 10 1 P is a citizen of X
- 11 2 P is a citizen of Y
- 12 3 P is a non-citizen of X and Y

13  
 14 Only situation 2 is symmetrical and can arise in both directions. In other cases,  
 15 asymmetry is the norm.

16 A citizen of a state is entitled to leave (the right to emigrate) and then to  
 17 return (the right to immigrate), if we take the notions of emigration/immigration  
 18 as a purely designating the direction of a movement from a fixed point (a state).  
 19 This is perhaps the first assumption that had to be questioned: what Cole (2000:  
 20 46) calls the positivist argument, which says that some people are citizens, and  
 21 have rights granted by the state, while others are not citizens and therefore have  
 22 no rights from the same state. The right to enter a state was designed under the  
 23 assumption that it was for the citizens of that state, rather than non-citizens.

24 Taking this framework into account, Cole states that there are three basic  
 25 positions to ensure free circulation (2000: 52):

- 26  
 27 1 *Illiberal symmetry*: when the state has discretionary power over emigra-  
 28 tion and immigration. The complete argument is that if control over  
 29 immigration is justified, then control of migration must also be gov-  
 30 erned by the state, and it should not let its citizens leave without any  
 31 restrictions.
- 32 2 *Liberal symmetry*: when there is no control over cross-border move-  
 33 ment in any direction.
- 34 3 *Liberal asymmetry*, which is the current state of affairs. States have the  
 35 power to control entry, but not individuals' exit option.

36  
 37 What are the basic arguments that justify this asymmetry? There are several  
 38 approaches that cannot be sustained when using the filter of *illiberal symmetry*  
 39 as a counter-argument. Most of them use analogies, giving examples of asym-  
 40 metries in a system and transposing the argument to the state's right to control  
 41 entry, but not departure. However, these analogy-based arguments are the  
 42 weakest, as it is not legitimate to compare states with other cases. What is ori-  
 43 ginal about our discussion is that we focus precisely on the arguments against  
 44 unrestricted human mobility, in order to highlight the problems with them. Let  
 45 us now present these arguments, albeit succinctly:

- *The argument based on consequences* (Cole, 2000: 46–48): this argument shares the common logic of the supposedly negative consequences of recognising human mobility. The asymmetry is justified in terms of costs/benefits. However, the asymmetry cannot be justified even within this logic, because the state’s right to control immigration has direct implications for the right of emigration, and therefore has negative consequences for people’s human right ‘to leave any country, including their own’. There are several aspects within this argument, all of which have the same problem: they have a one-dimensional view of the relationship between emigration and immigration:
  - The economic and utilitarian dimension: the asymmetry is justified because immigration has a cost to the recipient countries, while emigration is free. This is a simplistic view, as the opposite could also be true.
  - The numerical dimension: mass immigration imposes heavy costs on the receiving states. This justifies the need for control. If this is true, then it must also be true for control of mass emigration (this is the counter-argument against the illiberal symmetry).
- *Arguments based on identity.* In the words of Dowty (1987: 14): “control of entry is essential to the idea of sovereignty, for without it a society has no control over its basic character”. If the control is justified on these grounds, control of immigration is also justified because emigration could pose a threat to the character of the country, although Barry (1992: 286), following this line of reasoning, says that “emigration does not change a society in the same way”.
- *Arguments based on security:* this argument is perhaps best illustrated by the defence of the liberal asymmetry by M. Walzer (1983: 39–40): “restriction on entry serves to defend ... freedom and welfare, while restricting the option to leave is coercion, and therefore ‘the violation of freedom and welfare’”. This argument is clearly one-sided, as it is citizens’ freedom/welfare that is protected. We can also protect the welfare/freedom of those people who want to enter. If we consider Walzer’s argument, from the point of view of those who are not citizens, immigration control involves coercion. This is the positivist view that must be challenged – the construction of arguments to justify the asymmetry on the basis that citizens have more rights (privileges) than non-citizens. If we take the argument of freedom/welfare seriously, without this positivist approach it should therefore work in both directions (this is the cosmopolitan view argued in Zapata-Barrero, 2010b).
- *Arguments based on consensus* (Barry, 1992: 284). States within borders are said to be like associations, and thus have the right to accept people who want to belong.
 

It is similar to the employment argument: people are free to leave a job, but cannot be free to take a job. Or even like marriage: people may come together by mutual agreement, but no one can force others to be

1 together. A third example is the Walzerian argument of the club: states  
2 are like clubs – people can leave the club, but clubs are entitled to  
3 choose their members.  
4

5 But these analogies have a moral weakness, as states cannot be compared  
6 with all associations, marriage, employment or a club.

- 7 • *Arguments based on private property* (Barry, 1992: 154–160). The basic  
8 idea is straightforward: if one owns a property, one has the right to exclude  
9 others from entering, but not from leaving. There is a parallel here with  
10 states, which have the right to restrict entry but not exit. However, the argu-  
11 ment raises questions about the relationship between the state, territory and  
12 private property. The argument can be made by analogy, and it maintains  
13 that the relationship between the state and its territory is the same as that  
14 between people and their property. Nonetheless, the problem remains the  
15 same as in other analogies: why should we take these analogies for granted?  
16 The problem arises when we take the argument seriously, i.e. we are main-  
17 taining that it is the same, since the state must protect its territory as private  
18 property.
- 19 • *Arguments based on popular sovereignty* (Barry, 1992: 53–55). The legiti-  
20 macy of a liberal state is based on the consent of its members, and residence  
21 and citizenship is of significant importance within consent. Nonetheless,  
22 even this strong argument has the major drawback of not being fully imple-  
23 mented in both directions, as the right to leave must only rest on the assump-  
24 tion that we have the right to enter another state. Cole therefore concludes  
25 that the argument of sovereignty is an argument of symmetry, which estab-  
26 lishes that state's obligation to allow free emigration, but does not require  
27 that particular state to allow free immigration. The point is that to make  
28 complete sense, the argument of sovereignty should defend the symmetry of  
29 human movement.  
30

31 All these arguments that aim to justify restrictions on human mobility are based  
32 on questionable analogies, and justify the need to establish a conceptual basis  
33 that enables the development of a Political Theory of Borders.  
34

### 35 **Concluding remarks: towards a Political Theory of Borders** 36 **in the Mediterranean area** 37

38 Until recently, political theory took the concept of borders for granted. Political  
39 action has suffered as a result. Why is it crucial to talk about the border now and  
40 to break this silence? Because it is a matter of urgency they should not be  
41 taken for granted, and conceptualised as social constructions, which can adopt  
42 profiles other than those that most of them have at present, and give rise to dif-  
43 ferent management policies to those that are at present hegemonic. The concept/  
44 policy nexus has a normative theoretical meaning when the bridge is the concept  
45 of the border.

The conceptual foundations of a Political Theory of Borders are based primarily on the reasons for a debate, given the historical period in which we live, in which human mobility is still not perceived as the norm, despite the unprecedented global dynamic of human movement. This means that in this period of change in which we live, a Political Theory of Borders would undoubtedly help to incorporate all the conceptual complexity mentioned above within the semantic notion of the border, thereby making the transition from a simple to a complex conception of the border.

Likewise, in view of this multiplicity of meanings, a Political Theory of Borders maintains the functional and social construction aspect of the notion of the border when it is related to human mobility. From the point of view of the simple concept, there is also an initially open conception based on a citizen/state paradigm that is also a subject for discussion. Today's complex concept of the border shows that our liberal and democratic society is a society that is inwardly closed, and has difficulty in accepting the new non-citizen state paradigm.

Finally, the conceptual foundations of a Political Theory of Borders should also challenge the assumption that use of analogy is a legitimate rhetorical device to justify the control of human mobility. Border is in motion, and any political theory of border needs to address this dynamic within a concept/policy nexus framework.

Notes

- 1 To contextualise this chapter I have taken some arguments coming from the Introduction of the book of Zapata-Barrero and Ferrer (2012: 11–23). The conceptual reflections come basically from the second part of my work published previously in Zapata-Barrero (2013). I thank the editors of Oxford University Press for allowing this reproduction, which has been an opportunity to update some references.
- 2 See, for instance, the first reports which appeared just after the Arab Spring: Carrera *et al.* (2012) and Fargues and Fandrich (2012).
- 3 On this line of reflection, see the last work of Favell (2014).
- 4 For more arguments, see Zapata-Barrero (2012).
- 5 The common view is that borders have been taken for granted in liberal political theory and debates. See Barry and Goodin (1992), O'Neill (1994), Cole (2000), Kymlicka (2001), Miller and Hashmi (2001), Buchanan and Moore (2003) among others, and of course the pioneering work by Carens (1987).
- 6 Donnan and Wilson (1999: 62), Newman (2003: 14), Cassarino (2006).
- 7 See Berg and van Houtum (2003), Ruhs and Chang (2004), Ackleson (2005), Van Houtum *et al.* (2005), among others.
- 8 I refer mainly to the references on identity of borders related to the constitution of political communities. Among others, these are: Anderson and Bort (1998), Donnan and Wilson (1999), Albert *et al.* (2001), Buchanan and Moore (2003).
- 9 Border as a container and as an excluder is described in Wolin (1996).
- 10 See the following authors: Carens (1987), Barry (1992).
- 11 Some studies theorise about a world without borders, using international migration as a benchmark. See Pécoud and de Guchteneire (2007).



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## 2 The ~~border~~ network

### The articulation of mobility and immobilisation

*Andrea Rea*

#### Introduction

Since the 1990s, scholars from a variety of disciplines have pointed out the shortcomings of an approach to borders as physical and political-legal demarcation lines between the territories of sovereign states. With this “renaissance of border studies” (Newman 2006), came the recognition that the border was a complex phenomenon that required comprehensive scholarly efforts. The richness of the methods, findings and concepts produced in the field of border studies in recent years reflect the interdisciplinary nature of this field. Geographers (Fouchet 1988; Newman 2001) have pushed us to relinquish the notion of the border as a demarcation line, in favour of notions of the border as a zone, an area or a region where lives and landscapes are shaped by the presence of the border. Historians (Braudel 1977–1978) and economists (Wallerstein 1995) have inquired into the ways in which movement and exchange across the border as well as cultures and identities on both sides of the border reflect legacies of past movement and exchange, and how the nature of the border changes according to the shifting ways in which states instrumentalise and manage the border in distinct historical and geopolitical contexts. Sociologists and anthropologists have explored boundaries through binary notions of “here/ there”, “us/them”, “self/ other” or “inside/outside” (Barth 1969; Donnan and Wilson 1999), looking into individual and collective processes of identity construction and into how divisions and distinctions are constructed between individuals and groups. They have emphasised the symbolic nature of boundaries and the subjective meanings it may carry for individuals, groups and states. Finally, political scientists, legal scholars and experts in international relations have pointed out the multiple functions that borders fulfil for states, as well as the intricate but complex and ambiguous nature of relations between border, nation, state and sovereignty (Anderson and Bort 1998; Adler-Nissen and Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008). This contribution aims to present the main contemporary approaches of the concept of border. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to an alternative approach of the processes of bordering focusing more on the relationship between bordering and mobility rather than bordering and territory as often encountered in the literature. A special attention will be paid to the relation between Europe and the Maghreb.

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## Borders

1 While one may have the impression that globalisation causes borders to dis-  
2 appear, the number of international borders has actually increased in recent  
3 years. This has particularly been the case since 1989. After the Cold War, a sub-  
4 stantial part of the territory of Central and Eastern Europe and of the former  
5 Soviet Union was reorganised into smaller state-owned territories, creating new  
6 borders. The process of globalisation is thus not without paradoxes. One of them  
7 lies in the following opposition: on the one hand, the lowering of tariff barriers  
8 and barriers to the circulation of goods, services and people presupposes the  
9 abolition of interstate boundaries; on the other hand, we witnessed an increase of  
10 the number of borders due to the creation of new states and the reaffirmed  
11 importance of state sovereignty. Hence, paradoxically, globalisation goes hand  
12 in hand with an increasing salience of borders. In this respect, the European situ-  
13 ation is rather representative. Since 1990, the political borders of the European  
14 continent have increased by 26,651 km. In addition, borders have become subject  
15 to controversial political discussions on fences, metallic or electronic barriers  
16 and the protection of terrestrial and maritime borders (Foucher 2007). Finally, a  
17 number of conflicts – of very different nature – are sustained along the borders  
18 drawn in Europe (Ceuta/Melilla), the Middle East (Israel/Palestine), Asia (India/  
19 Pakistan) and Africa.

20 Most academic debates have centred on the link between state borders and  
21 state sovereignty. Since the beginning of the 1990s, analysis of the crisis of the  
22 Westphalian state model has focused in particular on the diminishing sover-  
23 eignty of the state as a result of globalisation. Although the classic interpretation  
24 of the Westphalian state model is broadly considered obsolete, certain con-  
25 temporary analyses but even some policies (walls, fences, etc.) are still largely  
26 dependent on this line of thought. In this classic conception between ana-  
27 chronism and prolepsis (Du Gay and Scott 2010), geographical boundaries are  
28 boundaries of states that exert their sovereignty on a territory and population. At  
29 the heart of this reasoning lies the territory to be secured and guarded. Territory  
30 is a physical space which is closed off by fixed lines of demarcation commonly  
31 designated as borders. This approach emerges with the generalisation of the  
32 nation-state in Europe during the nineteenth century, and its supremacy over  
33 city-states and state empires. Coming from a military conception, this approach  
34 defines the border as a continuous demarcation line between homogenous and  
35 unchanging entities which determine a political order and over which national  
36 sovereignty is exerted. The border as a continuous line determines a limited and  
37 closed space structured by the processes of political centralisation, of territorial  
38 unification (reduction of distances by the construction of mobility infrastruc-  
39 tures) and of identity homogenisation (common language, common cultural  
40 standards, etc.). This border has also served to encourage national belongings  
41 and to create uniform national identities. In this classic tradition, the border is  
42 the location of the boundaries of state sovereignty and the locus of the definition  
43 of the state. The border as the limit of the state becomes the sacred site which  
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separates the interior from the exterior. The border in this approach constitutes the shell of the territory. As part of the Westphalian state, control over territory has allowed for the extension of equal status to all citizens, and the production of a national culture (Gellner 1983).

In this conception, the border is the container of the state that allows for control of populations (Giddens 1990) and protection against the exterior (Holsti 1996). As is well known, in the classic definition (Weber 1922), the state is a social organisation, which exerts the monopoly of legitimate violence on a territory marked by borders. The power of the sovereign state radiates from the centre towards the periphery. Thus, the border delimits two autonomous entities in which two sovereign powers, independently from one another, control the entry and exit from the territory of goods, knowledge and persons. This conception results in a superposition of the Weberian model of the state on the one hand and the Westphalian model in which territorial borders coincide with adjacent but distinct spaces, on the other hand. Hence, there is no territory without sovereignty. In this perspective, the border is rarely studied first. It follows from the territory. The boundary of the territory then merges with the boundary of the state in which sovereignty and security are exerted.

### **From borders to bordering: four processes of debordering**

Transnational movements of capital, goods, services and persons in a globalised world have, however, produced ‘spaces of flows’ (Castells 1996). This constitutes a major challenge for contemporary businesses, which have long been determined by ‘spaces of places’ such as the territory of the nation-state. The constitution of these ‘spaces of flows’ has contributed to the creation of processes of debordering.

The debordering processes in the world’s states might lead to a “debordering of the world of states” (Albert and Brock 1996). The first process refers to the increasing permeability of borders and the decreasing capacity of states to curb this trend while the debordering of the world of states involves the response of states seeking to adapt to globalisation. In the literature, at least four processes are distinguished that contribute to debordering.

The first is the expansion of the world economy. The large movement of financial capital and the global strategies implemented by transnational companies constitute the central elements of current economic globalisation. Protectionist policies have not disappeared, but they are counteracted by the decrease in rigidity of national borders in international trade which results from the agreements reducing restrictions on trade or regional agreements aimed at the creation of free-trade areas (EU, NAFTA). Welfare state theorists using ideal types worry about these developments to the extent that social, economic and political borders do not overlap and “the effectiveness of national borders as filters or membranes has declined” (Zürn and Liebfried 2005: 23) no longer shielding closed welfare states from outside economic developments and also regulations. Hence, it is important to notice that economic globalisation is not only the result



1 of private economic forces but also of policies implemented by states through  
2 different institutions (regional agreements, WTO) (Harvey 2005).

3 The second process of debordering is indeed the increase in international reg-  
4 ulations, the growing involvement of international organisations and supra-  
5 national entities (such as the European Union) and the emergence of  
6 transnational networks or transnational social movements acting on a global  
7 scale. For his part, Taylor (1994) argues that there is a marginalisation of rela-  
8 tions between states in favour of the interaction between non-state actors. In this  
9 context, the rise of supranational entities goes hand in hand with increasing polit-  
10 ical competences for infra-national entities, be it cities or regions, eroding the  
11 regulating competences of states. Indeed, many authors insist on the rescaling of  
12 political competences, from the state to both international and regional/local  
13 levels: this has been described as globalisation (Robertson 1992). At the same  
14 time, some hold that since the end of the Cold War and the bi-polar world, the  
15 role of states has been transformed without disappearing in the emerging global  
16 governance structures which are associated with transnational networks of public  
17 and private actors.

18 The third debordering process is linked to the dematerialisation of the border.  
19 The most well-known example is the mobility of information and knowledge as  
20 a result of the internet. This process has important consequences for the  
21 economy, especially since the digitalisation of stock exchanges. Information and  
22 communication technology (ICT) generates a time-space compression (Harvey  
23 1990) or a time-space distancing (Giddens 1990). The mobility of capital is  
24 dematerialised not only on the financial markets but also when individuals use  
25 ICT (internet, mobile phones) for their financial transfers. The dematerialisation  
26 of the border also affects the mobility of people. The crossing of the physical  
27 border of a state is disconnected from the control of the right to move. Surveil-  
28 lance is no longer mainly localised at the physical borders of states. It operates  
29 first through administrative procedures and databases and only later, for some,  
30 upon the physical passage of the border.

31 The fourth debordering process is related to the evolutions of human mobil-  
32 ity. On the one hand, human mobility has tremendously increased in the last  
33 decades (Salt 2006; OECD-SOPEMI 2010). On the other hand, its nature has  
34 changed considerably (Claval 2002). Certainly, the classic notion of migration  
35 has become insufficient to describe all increasingly different forms of mobility:  
36 different types of elites (such as scientists, advanced service producers, artists,  
37 etc.) are moving around the world while often staying in the same type of social  
38 world. The increase in mobility accelerates the construction of global classes  
39 (Sassen 2007), transnational professionals (Nowicka 2006) and transnational  
40 communities in cosmopolitan universes. Also, besides production-led mobility  
41 of either a highly qualified or non-qualified nature, there is a growing  
42 consumption-led mobility which ranges from classic tourist mobility to different  
43 forms or more or less temporary migrations (e.g. pensioners) (Montanari 2006).  
44 An influential approach to analysing the transformation and intensification of  
45 mobility is the network paradigm. This network paradigm calls into question the

relevance of the concepts of states and borders for understanding the new processes of mobility in the globalisation era. Mobility is analysed as shaped by connections between places (cities) rather than by borders between states. This mobility takes place within a series of global networks such as transnational companies, diasporas, scientific networks, international organisations networks, informal economic networks, etc. Mobility within Transnational Companies (TNC) networks has been particularly studied and is considered decisive for global companies to survive. This increasingly serves as a model for other professional activities, such as international organisations (EU, UN, etc.), transnational NGOs, universities, artistic activities, etc. Mobility will continue to increase and raises new questions about the processes of bordering especially since there is an injunction to be mobile (Bauman 1998). This economic injunction of cross-border mobility is not restricted to specific professional networks but is also a political objective of the European Union as mentioned in the Lisbon Strategy (March 2000). These policies are the result of the state action. Following Torpey (2000), the state monopolises the legitimate “means of movement” and in doing so monopolises the authority to define the people who can circulate and those who need to be immobilised.

### **Interpretation of the debordering processes**

The analysis of these four processes reflects different interpretations of debordering, which have their opposition to classic interpretations of borders in common. Three different theoretical frameworks could be mentioned: borderless world, transnational communities and the processes of securitisation.

#### ***Borderless world***

The expansion of the world economy gave birth to the globalisation of economic activities, or what Ohmae (1991) calls *The Borderless World*, in which the state no longer occupies a central position, giving way to the market and consumer. However, the globalisation of the economy does not expand uniformly. The world economy is also fragmented and the continuities and fluidities of economic activities occur mainly between transnationalised regions (Ohmae 1996) and global cities (Sassen 1991). In the global cities perspective, globalisation favours the concentration of economic strategic functions in highly interconnected global cities, where specialised services and workers are concentrated, where face-to-face interactions are facilitated through infrastructures and where the environment is adapted to the requirements of the transnational elite (cultural facilities). In this context, the global economy is made of complex multiple networks that connect in the main nodes (global cities), and is thus highly territorialised. Other authors (Guéhenno 1995; Ohmae 1996) claim that we are witnessing not the end of territory but the end of the nation-state and in a certain manner the end of democracy. In contrast, others maintain that the extension of the world economy does not result in the dissolution of borders. The progressive





1 opening of markets, especially financial markets, and the intensity of the circula-  
2 tion of goods, services and ideas paradoxically leads to the territorialisation of  
3 states. The more globalisation gains strength, the more borders are strengthened,  
4 especially as regards human mobility. This process goes hand in hand with the  
5 designation of transit points, network barriers (airports, seaports and logistical  
6 platforms) and peripheral zones as locations to control. In an historical approach  
7 such as the world-system perspective (Wallerstein 1980) the process of debor-  
8 dering/rebordering is ancient and thus does not result in the end of nation-states,  
9 far from it. It represents the complex dialectical relation between capitalists and  
10 state: on the one hand, capitalists need to go beyond the state to build their net-  
11 works all around the world economy, to be able to use economic differential to  
12 their benefit, but on the other hand, they rely on the regulatory power of the state  
13 to build up and maintain monopolies' viable market shares, within as well as  
14 beyond national markets. From the very beginning, capitalism has been about  
15 bordering (the necessity to create markets within the territorial limits of the state)  
16 and debordering because, according to Braudel (1980), capitalism is the area of  
17 the economy that goes beyond state limits to exploit the most profitable lines of  
18 business. In the current second wave of globalisation (Chase-Dunn 1999), the  
19 processes remain the same but the scale and the intensity have strengthened.  
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### 21 *Transnational communities*

22  
23 Another interpretation of debordering insists on the creation of new dislocated  
24 and deterritorialised spaces: transnational communities. According to some  
25 scholars (Bash *et al.* 1994; Portes 1999; Vertovec 2000) transnational com-  
26 munities and diasporas have emerged as a result of increased transport facilities  
27 and telecommunication which allow for the maintenance of social relations.  
28 Appadurai (1996) insists on the importance of two types of movement: that of  
29 ideas and images via intermediaries, such as the media and internet, on the one  
30 hand and people in migratory movements on the other hand. Also, the flow of  
31 tourists and migrants contributing to the formation of ethnoscares (Appadurai  
32 1996) allows the bodies in movement to produce a social metanational imagina-  
33 tion. This approach centres on the creation of communities founded on a strong  
34 sense of belonging linked to a common origin (national, ethnic, religious, etc.).  
35 Culture is at the heart of connections (Hannerz 1996), offering new perspectives  
36 to the imagination, and all the more to dislocated imagined communities. The  
37 formation of transnational spaces (Faist 2000) allows for the construction of eco-  
38 nomic activities through diasporas and for transnational political mobilisations  
39 by multi-situated social organisations. According to this interpretation, borders  
40 are not dissolved, they are reconfigured. However, they are no longer linked to  
41 geographical borders: their construction is primarily based on boundaries, on  
42 ethnic and cultural borders that groups construe in their relations to others.  
43 Transnational communities span borders in the economic, social, cultural and  
44 political activities they develop. These transnational communities come to tran-  
45 scend the traditional link between state territory and identity. Debordering thus



finds its source in the link that allows movement between local and global levels. In this perspective, boundaries lead to the formation of new political orders that elude the sovereignty of countries of origin and destination. This perspective can be compared to work which emphasises the creation of international norms defining rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of a post-national citizenship (Soysal 1994) or transnational or external membership (Bauböck 1994). While ethnicity often serves as a reference in the construction of these transnational communities, social belonging or professional statuses can also produce transnational communities even if their common identity is less marked. Thus, the globalised upper classes (Sassen 2007) may form a cosmopolitan society (Beck 2006). These transnational communities are perceived to detach communities from territory and to offer an alternative to the nation-state as a social, economic and political organisation. Some authors perceive these transnational communities as distinct social forms, whereas they are necessarily rooted in territories even if they may choose their modes of affiliation (voting, paying taxes, identification, etc.). Transnational communities are not complementary entities to the nation-state; they are alternative social configurations or organisations whose members often depend on different legislations for many of their legal rights. However, they can use the diversity of their belonging to their benefit by choosing on which government they would prefer to depend.

### *Processes of securitisation*

The third interpretation draws more from political science and relates processes of debordering to processes of securitisation. New approaches in the field of International Relations recognise that the border is an area of demarcation rather than a barrier and that processes of bordering are disconnected from territory. However, public policies continue to be built on this representation of the border as a material fortification linked to a process of securitisation, or even militarisation. For several years, geographers and International Relations scholars have taught us to reject the concept of the border as a confine and to think of it as an institution instead. Borders are not simply points that are remote from the centre. They are no longer the peripheries of the territory: they represent dense condensations of power relations. However, even in this conception, debordering processes are still analysed with reference to territory or, since the 'return of identity', with reference to identity building, as the internal cohesion of states would diminish due to the globalisation process. The border remains a front line to be defended (Huntington 1996).

This conception leads to the development of narratives that state that new threats (organised crime, terrorism, drug trafficking, smuggling, human trafficking, irregular migration) threaten the domestic social cohesion of nation-states and the identities of their people. The weakness of states in controlling these new threats is a sign of political failure and the weakening of national sovereignty. In the discourses of academics, policy practitioners and journalists alike, 'loss of control' is the dominant border narrative (Sassen 1996; Andreas 1999; Guiraudon

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1 and Joppke 2001). This approach is based on the idea that one of the major risks  
2 of globalisation is the dissolution of borders which threatens the nation-state, its  
3 homogeneity and internal cohesion. This is based on the narrative of the border  
4 as an effective means of blockage. This forms the basis for the construction of a  
5 discourse and public policy of border control which obscures the importance of  
6 flows of passage in order to keep alive the false idea of the nation-state as a  
7 homogeneous entity. This allows the state to symbolically prove its capacity to  
8 protect the population and to govern in an open world (Strange 1996; Bigo  
9 2002). This conception has resulted in the very wide dissemination of Hunting-  
10 ton's theory of the clash of civilisations or Mearshimer's theory of new inter-  
11 national disorder (1990). The answer to these new threats is securitisation, which  
12 is also characterised by a blending of internal and external security.


13 This very naturalistic approach forgets what a constructivist conception of the  
14 transgression of norms has to offer to scientific knowledge. Indeed, agencies of  
15 internal (police) and external security (military) contribute to the production of  
16 insecurity and securitisation as much as they attempt to respond to it. More  
17 importantly, the production of a threat is not limited to a concrete practice; it  
18 also relies on the performative role of language (Dillon 2006). Several studies  
19 have shown the central role played by media discourses and discourses of  
20 security professionals in the construction of the threat through the creation of a  
21 securitarian framework for contemporary problems. In a critical reaction to this  
22 conception, some authors define borders as the borders of the political by  
23 viewing them as the places where the exception reconfigures the norm. The  
24 border is then the origin of power: looking at control practices at the border  
25 enables us to identify the order of the permanent exception (Salter 2006). The  
26 arbitrary foundations of the law become apparent at the border because only the  
27 sovereign administration and the monopoly of decision reign there. In this con-  
28 ception based on the approach of Agamben's *homo sacer*, the border is a place  
29 of passage similar to the experience of the *homo sacer* who knows he will be  
30 sacrificed but does not know when and by whom.

31 A recent interdisciplinary effort initiated by International Relations scholars  
32 has sought to overcome the limitations of this approach. It did so first by propos-  
33 ing a definition of borders as processes of debordering and rebordering (Albert  
34 and Brock 1996). Then it suggested a complex model of analysis incorporating  
35 innovative insights from various social science disciplines. Albert *et al.* (2001)  
36 have proposed a complex interpretive model called the IBO triad (identities–bor-  
37 ders–orders). This approach integrates the new questions raised by the analysis  
38 of post-Westphalian sovereignty. Albert *et al.* suggest a model emphasising the  
39 linkages and interactions between the three components of the triad, each defined  
40 in relation to the other two. Processes of identity, border and order construction  
41 are therefore mutually self-constituting. This approach integrates multiple terri-  
42 torialisations and practices of deterritorialisation (of capital, goods, information  
43 and people on the move). By studying each of the axes of the triad the authors of  
44 the IBO framework intend to go beyond static theoretical approaches while pro-  
45 viding a stable conception which allows for understanding contemporary

changes in bordering processes in a world where orders overlap and identities are no longer hierarchically organised by ideology. Despite the considerable efforts undertaken by this approach and its inspiring innovations, the IBO framework still remains committed to the primacy of territory. In stating that there is no erasure of state action but rather a transformation of territoriality, Albert (1999) reaffirms that debordering processes are fundamentally related to territory. Similarly, the approach remains state-centred with respect to political orders. This model still follows from the concept of state sovereignty and hence remains unable to abandon a coercive conception of security and surveillance.

### The border-network



Authors like Agnew (1994), Bigo (2010), Walker (2010) and Bigo *et al.* (2011) offer an alternative conception of the border. This alternative conceptual framework proposes to no longer think in such rigid terms as the separation between inside and outside (Walker 1993). Furthermore, the creation of networks (Castells 1996) resulting from the deepening of globalisation leads to the proliferation of new spaces that cannot be reduced to territories. This conceptual framework proposes to draw inspiration from biological research, so as to consider the border as a porous or broken line that cannot form a closed circle, since it is the exchange with the outside that permits survival. The border ensures communication. It is the location of crossings and interactions allowing the flow of objects, images and people.

This does not mean that borders are dissolved. However, they no longer appear as fortified lines which must be defended. The development of ‘spaces of flows’ as a result of globalisation makes it impossible to continue simply conflating borders with limits of the national space (national frontiers). In this approach the boundary must be seen as fluid. This approach conceives the border as a **border-network**. The border is defined as a lineal series of points rather than a shell containing a territory. However, the **border-network** is not only a series of points at the entrance of the territory.  Following the Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour 1987), the **border-network** is composed by chains of situations which occurred in social spaces (airport, seaports, external border, public urban spaces, private spaces) where human actors (border guards, police officers, street-level bureaucrats at the consulate or at the immigration administration, travellers, lawyers, etc.) and non-human actors (laws, procedures, databases, etc.) interact with the aim of producing practices of control that enact state sovereignty. The border is not only a network of points (airports, seaports, etc.) it is also enacted by situations (i.e. when on the national territory a policeman asks for the ID of a foreigner).

The border filters the flow of people and according to Lyon (2003) the central activities at the border are sorting, categorising and profiling. Bordering processes are not used to block the movement of people. The aim of bordering processes is to increase the mobility of the established (Elias and Scotson 1967), to sort the ‘desirable people’ and block the ‘undesirable’ persons. Some people can



1 move quickly but under surveillance while others must undergo stronger filtering  
2 controls. Bordering processes lead to the registration of travellers at a point in  
3 time increasingly before their journey. The objective is the registration of human  
4 mobility, not in order to curb it but to filter it, accelerating the speed of some and  
5 slowing down or stopping others.

6 This approach means focusing less on territory and more on mobility. The  
7 analysis of practices of mobility should allow for a better understanding of the  
8 banality of the border and border-crossing, even if this banality is not necessarily  
9 apparent everywhere and for everybody. The border is not primary, but globali-  
10 sation turns mobility into a primary cause resulting in a redefinition of the  
11 border. Therefore, what is pursued first of all is the improvement of the mobility  
12 of people. Border management follows only later. Thinking in terms of the  
13 *border-network* does not mean that we have entered a world without borders or  
14 states. Globalisation does not lead to the destruction of borders, quite the  
15 opposite. While the borders of states still exist, they move and change constantly  
16 in the process of debordering. Borders multiply in a more  world and actors  
17 reconfigure the borders by increasing *border-networks*  that are themselves  
18 moving and uncertain.

19 This conception of the border has at least two important empirical and theor-  
20 etical consequences for formulating public policy. The first is to no longer  
21 analyse the action of the state in terms of the territory, border and political order  
22 (Walker 1993; Bartelson 2001). If one recognises that power also proceeds  
23 through a network logic (Mann 1993), the political order is produced as much by  
24 political actors, as by administrative actors, private actors, non-governmental  
25 actors (NGOs, transnational communities), etc. Second, the politics of the border  
26 do not just function through the imposition of constraints, norms or discipline.  
27 They aim to improve freedom of movement of people. Security instruments are  
28 designed primarily to ensure maximum freedom of movement for the majority,  
29 and subsequently to control the minority groups that deviate from certain cri-  
30 teria, defined a priori as dangerous or suspicious. When the principle of mobility  
31 is placed in the centre, internal security and external security are no longer two  
32 distinctly separate domains. There is a necessary continuity which allows for  
33 monitoring everyone and controlling some. This is done using security technolo-  
34 gies delocalised through the set-up of an information network, administrative  
35 procedures, interlinked databases and electronic visas. In this perspective,  
36 security technologies are the result of the reframing of freedom and security  
37 (Bigo *et al.* 2010). The goal of the storage of information is to construct social  
38 categories of 'desirables', 'suspicious people' and 'undesirables' and to filter  
39 them before they cross the border. Practices defining 'desirables' and 'undesira-  
40 bles' function through the construction of risk indicators, particularly migratory  
41 risks (Rea 2009). However, the filtering and the blockage are never definitive or  
42 systematic. Instead, it disorganises the procedures of movement, rendering them  
43 more uncertain, more unpredictable, as is the case in other activities considered  
44 illegal (Becker 1962). The relocation of coercion involves not only surveillance  
45 instruments (smart tools, profiling, biometric identifiers and the accumulation of



information over the long-term allowing for the constant redefinition of suspicious groups), but also spaces where controls are carried out, in consulates for visas, airports, seaports, by airlines, in sum at the points that make up the border-network.

In the words of the International Organisation for Migration, border management aims to “facilitate bona fide travellers, providing a welcome and efficient gateway to the state” and at the same time to “provide a barrier and disincentive to entry for those seeking to circumvent migration laws”.<sup>1</sup> This policy goal is representative of the contradiction of the contemporary politics of mobility: to ensure a policy of fluid and fast movement while at the same time producing a policy of security and control. This is why border policy is as much a policy of securitisation as a policy of insecurity (Bigo *et al.* 2011).

### European policy of mobility and debordering processes in the Mediterranean

Based on this idea of the border, it is possible to analyse the European mobility policy with regards to the countries south of the Mediterranean, by paying particular attention to the security *dispositifs* (Foucault 2004) accelerating the mobility of *bona fide* travellers, on the one hand, and filtering and blocking persons suspected of circumventing immigration laws on the other. As noted above, every single person who has to do with mobility is placed under surveillance. However, these *dispositifs* are there to accelerate mobility for certain people, while filtering and blocking others. Practices of border crossing surveillance have to do with predictive risk management. This is particularly the case since the abolishment of the internal borders in the Schengen area and the increase of external borders control. All institutions charged with border control and all public and private agents involved in this task, in the Schengen area for example, must act establishing the ‘migratory risk’ of each individual wanting to cross the border. To this end, they dispose of a series of instruments that, on one side, allow them to organise the mobility of legitimate travellers (the *bona fide*) and on the other, to infringe the mobility of illegitimate travellers who are undesirable individuals because they represent the highest migratory risk.

Being a highly politicised matter, irregular migration has become an important illegalism against which governments mobilise a considerable amount of statutory, technical, human and financial means. The treatment, in both politics and the media, of the arrival of a great number of asylum seekers in Europe in 2015 has sufficiently illustrated this. The security *dispositifs* used to identify and punish those who violate immigration laws are varied and numerous. The new *dispositifs* to manage migration flows are becoming political instruments to manage the estimated risks of both irregular and regular immigration (Infantino and Rea 2012). In fact, if in discourse and in facts the avowed goals of the securitisation *dispositifs* are to fight against irregular immigration, they also aim at the irregularisation of the mobilities of those whom the European agencies consider not disposing of the legitimate grounds for mobility (Torpey 2000) with the





1 scope of limiting the desire of mobility of third-country nationals. The practices  
2 of blocking focus on certain spaces of the EU external borders (the Mediterrane-  
3 an, Greek-Turkish border and airports) and spread within Europe (barb-wired  
4 fences, etc.) during the year 2015 with the arrival of asylum seekers, mostly  
5 from Syria.

6 With the growth of globalisation, irregular migration has become a crime to  
7 which governments pay much attention, especially because it is a very politi-  
8 cised subject, and a great deal of human, technical and financial means are  
9 mobilised. If the ends of surveillance, to which individuals crossing the border  
10 are subjected, diverge, so does the magnitude of the mobilised security *disposi-*  
11 *tifs*. Thus, the security *dispositifs* used to identify those who violate immigration  
12 laws, and consequently, to punish them for doing so, are particularly manifold  
13 and numerous. They are akin to those encountered in the new penology (Feeley  
14 and Simon, 1992). The latter is the result of the passing from an individualised  
15 penalty to one targeting and controlling populations at risk. This type of policy  
16 is basically founded on both an economic and managerial legitimacy. It is pre-  
17 ferable to prevent rather than punish, to minimise risk than to ensure punitive  
18 justice. Analogously, we may compare the individual subjected to the penal  
19 administration to the one subjected to the border control administration. The new  
20 *dispositifs* managing migration flows thus become political instruments of the  
21 predictive risk management of regular/irregular immigration.

22 The security *dispositifs* that are used to ensure border control, for instance,  
23 between Europe and the countries south of the Mediterranean, are composed  
24 of four elements, which contribute to the formation of the *border-network*. The first  
25 surveillance tool defines, on one side, legitimate individuals, *bona fide* travellers,  
26 and on the other the groups at risk for security and migration reasons (Bigo and  
27 Guild 2005). The definition of countries subjected to the obligation of obtaining  
28 a type C visa (short stay) as a condition to enter the territory is a way of creating  
29 countries at risk where people live considered to be a risk (Infantino, in this  
30 volume). This is the reason why all the countries south of the Mediterranean are  
31 on the list of countries subject to a visa requirement to enter the European ter-  
32 ritory, while this is not so the other way round. Thus, citizens of the European  
33 Union may enter most of the Maghreb or Mashriq states without a visa. The  
34 same goes for Sub-Saharan African or Asian states. As to asylum, the European  
35 institutions establish lists of safe countries, which annihilate the right to asylum  
36 for their nationals. The beneficiaries of the right to family reunification are  
37 subject to massive restrictions. As to irregular immigration, the Mediterranean  
38 and the Atlantic Ocean of Africa have become zones under control. Beyond  
39 referring to the geographical origin, the construction of a target public also  
40 refers to the expected quality of aliens. The instrumental logic of immigration  
41 in Europe tends to reduce the legitimacy of travellers who do not contribute to  
42 the economic and financial activities of Europe (asylum seekers, family  
43 members) and to privilege the social and economic utility of foreigners con-  
44 sidered worthy (entrepreneurs, merchants, businessmen, political, cultural and  
45 artistic elites, etc.).

The *dispositifs* to control migration flows do not only operate on people who illegally entered the territory. They also have to act upon every person likely to become an irregular migrant. **Thence** are implemented preventive policies of remote control (Guiraudon 2002; Zolberg 2003) or police at distance (Bigo 1996). The technological apparatus of surveillance constitutes the second element of the security *dispositif*. Migration control constitutes an excellent laboratory for the technologisation of surveillance and for the transition from technological innovations experimented within the military domain to actions within the civil domain (Amoore and de Goede 2005). Technologies of surveillance are the proof of this separation of the border from the territory. Three main surveillance tools can be distinguished here. The first has to do with the accumulation of information on individuals and of the constant resort to biometry during the crossing of European borders on behalf of individuals coming from Africa and Asia. Plenty of information is stocked in data banks such as the Schengen Information System and EURODAC, aimed at people wanting to enter the Schengen area, asylum seekers and irregular aliens. These information systems are shared by numerous members of the EU. They constitute ways of tracking the paths of foreigners that can be used during expulsions or at entry on the European territory. Nonetheless, it would be erroneous to think that these data banks are only needed to block people. They are also used to accelerate the mobility of *bona fide* passengers, namely by accelerating their passage at the border. This is the case of the fast-track tools **destined** for VIPs at airports. An example is given by the use of the biometric identity control system PARAFES (Passage automatisé rapide aux frontières extérieures Schengen) installed at Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle airport. This system allows willing European citizens to reduce the time they spend at border controls when they enter Schengen. They pass through an electric portico where the optical band of their passport and eight of their ten fingerprints are scanned. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands use a system based on the scanning of the traveller's iris. The PREVIUM system is used at Schiphol airport (the Netherlands). Those who want to use this system have to pay for its privilege. The second *dispositif* is represented by the displacement of controls on people intending to cross external borders of the EU from the physical spaces of the border to the territories of third countries. This has been referred to as the process of externalisation (Guild 2003; Bigo and Guild 2005; Geddes 2005; Guiraudon and Lahav 2006) of the European border policy. The most striking example of this is the EU policy. Checks are performed at different points along the **border-network**: first at the consulates in the countries of departure and, subsequently, by the travel companies and at customs at air- and seaports. With the practices of remote control or the police at distance (Bigo 1996; Guiraudon 2002; Zolberg 2003), border control is disconnected from the crossing of the border. Since November 2011, the EU has added the Visa Information System to its stock of databases. Every individual applying for a visa to enter the EU for a short stay will have to provide his or her biometrical data in the form of a digitally readable facial image and ten fingerprints which are to be stored in the database and made available to border guards and law

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1 enforcement agencies across the 28 EU Member States. However these practices  
2 of remote control are completed by the control practices of border guards at the  
3 entrance of the destination country. As mentioned by Salter (2007: 59) “suspi-  
4 cion by a border guard, which is derived from their discretionary power of exam-  
5 ination, is enough to warrant further questioning, detention, and expulsion from  
6 the country”.

7 The always more sophisticated technological tools do not aim at controlling  
8 border crossing or the application for an entry document for the Schengen area.  
9 Rather, they aim at controlling the traveller’s movement on the spot of depar-  
10 ture. This is the third use of remote control technologies. In order to prevent  
11 irregular migrants coming from Morocco from reaching the Andalusian coasts,  
12 in 2002 Spain developed SIVE (Sistema Integrado de Vigilancia Exterior),  
13 which is an electronic surveillance system that polices the coasts using boats,  
14 infrared cameras, satellites, etc. This system has limited the arrival of irregular  
15 migrants using ‘pateras’ in Andalusia, yet caused immigrants to take more life-  
16 threatening risks, such as plastic boats and also choosing to travel longer and on  
17 more dangerous routes so as to avoid the military and electronic surveillances. In  
18 2011, EUROSUR (European Border Surveillance System) was launched to rein-  
19 force the management of the southern and eastern maritime borders of Europe  
20 using satellite images and sensors. The AMASS<sup>2</sup> (autonomous maritime surveil-  
21 lance system) project uses buoys equipped with infra-red cameras and hydro-  
22 phones in order to detect subaqueous sounds. When a suspicious vessel is  
23 detected, images are directly transmitted to a control centre on the shore. Com-  
24 pared to SIVE, AMASS seeks to improve the control of the European coasts  
25 through the early warning of suspicious vessels. Frontex plays a crucial role in  
26 the preventive fight against irregular immigration by trying to send back to the  
27 coasts whence the migration candidates came.

28 The third element consists of operating in the countries of departure and  
29 focusing on a target public. The *dispositifs* of immigration control shift to the  
30 very same place of emigration. Since 1999, EU Member States have decided to  
31 integrate measures relating to the fight against irregular immigration in the  
32 cooperation agreements. This policy is part of the European Neighbourhood  
33 Policy, which disposes of various instruments: visa policies, the signing of  
34 agreements for the readmission of irregular migrants, the strengthening of inter-  
35 vention capacities at land and sea borders, securing travel documents and train-  
36 ing of officials. This policy is akin to government at distance (Rose and Miller  
37 1992). Morocco has become a main actor within the European control of irregu-  
38 lar immigration. These remote controls consist of an externalisation of modes of  
39 control by inciting public authorities and police forces of the transit states, such  
40 as Morocco, to block and to deport migrants coming from central and western  
41 Africa. The policies of control and surveillance of external borders and the exter-  
42 nalisation of control, both contribute to the progressive widening of the Euro-  
43 pean Union’s borders and the creation of ‘buffer zones’ through the development  
44 of visa regimes, carrier sanctions, transnational cooperation, and international  
45 and bilateral agreements (Guiraudon and Lahav 2000). The Neighbourhood

Policy has been conceived as a means to construct a ‘ring of friends’ to avoid the creation of a new line of demarcation resulting from an EU enlargement. Like the border policy, the Neighbourhood Policy seems to be characterised by a strong asymmetry, in the sense that the outside of the EU border is more impermeable than the inside.

The fourth element relates to the acceleration of the processes of detention and expulsion of irregular migrants. Since 2002, controls in public and private spaces and in potential workplaces have multiplied. The same goes for detention of certain aliens aiming at either expulsion or intimidation. Lastly, the extension of detention in detention centres, including in the country of transit, the increase of expulsions and the European coordination of readmissions by charter flights, bear witness of the rationalisation of the removal procedures. The adoption of the ‘return’ directive in June 2008, constitutes a sort of harmonisation based on minimum standards, *in casu* long detention (up to 18 months), which is a removal measure accompanied by the prohibition to subsequently enter the territory and but a feeble protection against removal and expulsion.

The organisation of collective repatriations bears witness of the rationalisation of removal procedures (Migreurop 2012). These *dispositifs* can be complexified, taking into account the rearmouring of the physical frontier (Ritaine 2009) through the construction of walls in Europe in 2015 (Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, etc.), which block the migratory movements, disorganising their trajectory and which violate the right to access the European territory to file an asylum claim. Lastly, the people who drowned on their migratory route, as a result of the non-assistance and the policy of reflux (Jansen *et al.* 2015), must be added to the *dispositif*.

## Conclusion

Following Lyon ( ), who argued that the border is everywhere, the concept of **border-network** seeks to show that the border can both be solid (walls) and liquid (electronic controls) (Bigo 2014). Above that, this concept proposes not to separate the study of those who are considered legitimate border crossers from those suspected of violating immigration laws. This concept, which is based on social practices, also proposes to consider that all travellers are under surveillance – which very often is accepted for security reasons advanced by security agencies – while some are placed under a regime of control. Instead of thinking about the mobilities of the established and those of the outsiders as separate, this approach encourages to identify their continuities and ruptures. This way of thinking about the border also leads to prefer an approach that does not divide the public, but on the contrary, to see the connections that link the mobility of the established and the immobilisation of the outsiders. Within the Schengen Area, this approach allows to better understand that every interference imposed on the outsiders has the consequence of limiting the mobility of the established. Therefore there are no two distinct regimes of surveillance, but a continuum of surveillance, though control, which also implies recurring to violence, may only



1 be applied to the travellers whose legitimate ground of mobility is being denied.  
 2 This is done through the set-up of an information network, interlinked databases  
 3 and electronic visas. The goal of the storage of information is to construct cat-  
 4 egories of ‘desirables’ and “undesirables” and to filter them before they cross the  
 5 border. Nonetheless, there is a coercive and preventative logic at play (Bigo  
 6 2010). Practices defining ‘desirables’ and ‘undesirables’ function through the  
 7 construction of risk indicators, particularly migratory risks, based on previously  
 8 stored information about people to block those considered dangerous. Undesira-  
 9 ble aliens are not only irregular migrants. Filtration is never totally effective, no  
 10 matter how finely tuned the set of criteria. What is perhaps just as effective is the  
 11 building of fears and dangers through performative discourses construing insecur-  
 12 ity (Dillon 2006), defining target groups, ‘individuals or populations’.

13 Research often reports the coercive dimension of surveillance as apparent in  
 14 control operations at the external borders, like Frontex operations, or in confine-  
 15 ment operations, such as detention centres for foreigners or with the building of  
 16 walls and fences at the national border. For stopping migration flows govern-  
 17 ments build walls and fences like between the USA and Mexico, between Greece  
 18 and Turkey, around Ceuta and Melilla (Andreas and Snyder 2000) strengthening  
 19 the representation of the border as a line of demarcation to be defended. These  
 20 policies are sometimes considered as irrational (Massey 2005). However, the  
 21 effectiveness of these policies is not to block people but to reassure citizens of  
 22 immigration countries and the public disquiet about the uncontrolled irregular  
 23 migration. The walls and the fences are more symbolic politics (Guiraudon and  
 24 Joppke 2001). However, violence has increasingly become incorporated in invis-  
 25 ible actions, in administrative procedures, in the handling of information on  
 26 mobile individuals, in arbitrary filtering decisions, etc. These bureaucratic and  
 27 technological operations produce new social categories designating people  
 28 whose mobility must be facilitated (*bona fide*) and whose crossing at contact  
 29 points of the border network accelerated, and those subjected to filtering or even  
 30 blocking. These categories are constituted on the basis of a risk analysis result-  
 31 ing from statistical prediction of risks in terms of probability and profiling of  
 32 populations. The aim of this policy is not only to fight against irregular migra-  
 33 tion but to supply the irregularisation of mobility of some people in particular  
 34 those coming from Africa and the Middle East.

### 36 Notes

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 38 1 Mr William Lacy Swing, ‘Opening Remarks’, *International Conference on Immigra-*  
 39 *tion Inspection and Service*, Shanghai, 20 August 2012 ([www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/speeches/speech-listing/opening-remarks-international-co.html](http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/speeches/speech-listing/opening-remarks-international-co.html)).

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 41 2 [www.amass-project.eu/amassproject/content/index](http://www.amass-project.eu/amassproject/content/index).



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### 3 State-bound visa policies and Europeanised practices

#### Comparing EU visa policy implementation in Morocco

*Federica Infantino*

This contribution focuses on the European border viewed from its margins: from the perspective of the Western Mediterranean, specifically Morocco, the furthest western country of the area whose name, *al-Maghrib*, actually means ‘the west’ in Arabic. It does so by tackling the bureaucratic enactment of the European border that is achieved by implementing EU visa policy. The analysis follows the historical lines of understanding visa policy as a ‘remote control’ strategy (Zolberg 1998) that operates away from the border because it aims at preventing unwanted migrants from reaching the territory of the state. In so doing, remote control enables governments to “circumvent constraints in cost-effective ways” (Guiraudon 2003, 194). Among the wide-ranging state and non-state actors concerned with migration control, consulates and their officers, by delivering the Schengen visa, represent the state agencies that are supposed to stem migration as well as to promote travel. Migration control occurs in external spaces by activating a border at the very place would-be migrants/travellers seek to depart from. The Schengen visa thereby acts as a “border made of paper” (Bigo and Guild 2006). Bordering already occurs at consular windows in countries of departure (Infantino 2013). Hence I conceptualise visa policy as bordering policy and visa policy implementation as bordering practice.

One of the contemporary features of such an old remote control policy instrument is that it has now been ‘Europeanised’ (Guiraudon 2003). Yet, the Europeanisation of the visa policy has been critically questioned: Jileva (2003) points out cross-national differences concerning required documents and application processes between several Schengen states’ consular posts in Sofia. Bigo and Guild (2003) refute the uniformity of the Schengen visa and question the “struggles for homogenisation”. Guiraudon (2003, 196) noted “the development of common instruments need not imply that they are to be uniformly implemented ... ‘discretion’ in implementation is upheld as desirable”. The proposed analysis follows this line of thought and questions the Europeanisation of visa policy understood as the homogenisation of implementation practices. It sheds ethnographic light on EU migration and border control on the ground by focusing on the implementation of visa policy and using a comparative case study: the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy day-to-day bordering in Casablanca. This analysis highlights visa policy as context-oriented: the means of implementing

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1 control must be tailored to its specific context. It shows the historical roots of the  
2 bilateral relations as factors differentiating this context. It argues that visa policy  
3 on the ground remains state-bound. This analysis points out the permanency of  
4 state-bound logics governing visa policy on the ground. It asserts that Moroccan  
5 applicants learn cross-national differences and cope with shifting visa policies  
6 on the ground in the new context provided by the Schengen Agreement, namely  
7 the entitlement to a holder of a Schengen visa delivered by one state to travel  
8 throughout other states. Such applicants' practices are Europeanised because  
9 they adjust to the making of the European Union. By examining Europeanised  
10 applicant practices, the following analysis contributes to the sociological per-  
11 spective on Europeanisation studies (Guiraudon and Favell 2011), which is inter-  
12 ested in social and political practices that are induced by the making of the  
13 European Union.

14 This analysis results from in-depth (10 months) fieldwork research (inter-  
15 views and participant observations) in the consulates in Casablanca and inter-  
16 views at the European and national levels. The empirical part of the research was  
17 designed to permit the comparison by gathering the same type of data in the  
18 same fieldwork setting. The consulates in Casablanca have been selected because  
19 there are three consulates-general and because only France has visa issuing posts  
20 in other Moroccan cities. This chapter draws on several sources: interviews with  
21 two key policy-officers of the visa unit of the Directorate-General Home Affairs  
22 (European Commission); participant observations in the Belgian, French and  
23 Italian visa section and the private visa application centres; interviews with the  
24 officers appointed to take decisions on Schengen visa, consuls-general, visa  
25 application centre workers, and the research finally draws upon onsite observa-  
26 tion of decision-making. Long-time immersion has allowed for establishing a  
27 rapport with respondents based on trust. Informal fieldwork settings have been  
28 crucial for data collection. In order to assess the reliability of data, I returned to  
29 the same settings more than once. Hence, I could establish the work routines and  
30 the practices that were exceptional. In order to guarantee the identity protection  
31 of my respondents, the exact dates of interviews and of field journal excerpts are  
32 not specified. They were conducted over the last five years.

### 34 **One visa policy for one Europe?**

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36 In their pioneer study on the Schengen visa, Bigo and Guild (2003, 72) pointed  
37 out the role of common visa policy in performing one unified Europe: "It is only  
38 through a common visa policy and especially a uniform application by the con-  
39 sular authorities that we can finally find coherence and a certain unification of  
40 territory [my translation]." The Schengen short-stay regime is governed by self-  
41 executing Regulations.<sup>1</sup> With Directives and Council Decisions, Regulations are  
42 'hard law', meaning legally binding acts in their entirety. Regulations in par-  
43 ticular are directly applicable for all contracting parties. Nonetheless, common  
44 Regulations do not directly diminish cross-national differences with respect to  
45 the visa application process and the decision-making over applications. This is

54 *F. Infantino*

acknowledged in the core of European institutions. Policy-officer A of the visa unit (Directorate-General Home Affairs) declared indeed:

European consulates do not exist; the consulate is national. In the consulates, the training is national; the management is national ... In the end, there is no Schengen visa. It is a national visa that gives access to an area. The decision is national but recognised by the others; the system is based on mutual trust. We deliver [visas] on the basis of modern and common rules. Nevertheless, this is one of the rare domains where there is a true communitarisation.

(Author's translation from French)

Policy-officer A makes reference to the cross-national differences of the day-to-day implementation in national consulates although there are common rules. With the entry into force of the Community Code on Visas<sup>2</sup> (later referred to as the Visa Code) on April 2010, hard law regulates a central component of EU visa policy: the procedures and conditions for issuing visas. A mix of hard law and non-legally binding 'soft law' addresses the issue of diminishing cross-national differences in day-to-day implementation practices. Operational instructions are included in two supplementary soft law instruments: the *Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modification of issued visas* and the *Handbook for the organisation of visa sections and local Schengen cooperation*.<sup>3</sup> Handbooks do not create any obligation on states nor do they establish any new rights or obligations for the persons who might be concerned by them. Soft regulations penetrate domains such as the organisation of visa sections, of the visa application process, and decision-making that harder forms of regulations cannot penetrate since these domains lie at the core of states' sovereignty. Policy-officer B of the visa unit contended indeed:

In the local contexts our juridical power is weak because we cannot determine the details of how they should organise their consulate.

As Cini (2001, 194) has noted: "soft law can allow for regulation where no regulation would otherwise be possible". Yet, from the perspective of day-to-day implementation, the role of handbooks as a source for bureaucratic action remains to be established empirically. My fieldwork has revealed that the 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky 1980) who implement EU visa policy in the observed consulates do not even know that the handbooks exist: when questioned about these handbooks, not only the officers but also the consuls-general have not understood what I was referring to. In effect, '*training is national*'.

Diminishing cross-national differences especially in certain aspects of the visa application process is an issue where the image of unified Europe is at stake. The Schengen visa has become one of the most powerful symbols of united Europe. Nevertheless, it is still delivered by national consulates that follow national procedures with respect to delays, supporting documents, etc. Fostering

1 homogenisation is an effort ‘*for the image of such common policy*’, as phrased  
2 by policy-officer B. While uniform application of EU visa policy fosters the  
3 image of unified Europe abroad, EU visa policy-making is characterised by com-  
4 peting objectives: reducing and authorising discretion. Regulations are ambigu-  
5 ous, vague, as they fail to define the ways in which they should be enforced  
6 whereas details of actual implementation are included in softer forms. Neither  
7 hard law nor soft law cover a particular aspect of EU visa policy: the travel pur-  
8 poses for which one Schengen visa can be applied. Pursuant Art. 2 of the Visa  
9 Code, “‘visa’ means an authorisation issued by a Member State with a view to:  
10 (a) transit through or an intended stay in the territory of the Member States of a  
11 duration of no more than three months ...” and “‘uniform visa’ means a visa  
12 valid for the entire territory of the Member States”. A Schengen visa is the  
13 common label attached to an entry permit authorising the stay in the Schengen  
14 area up to three months whatever the purpose of the stay. Travel purposes  
15 represent in bureaucratic terms the categories of foreign travellers that are legiti-  
16 mised by the state of destination to cross its borders. Within the Schengen frame-  
17 work, travel purposes of the Schengen visa represent the legitimate reasons to  
18 travel to and circulate within ‘Schengenland’. Which travel purposes, thus which  
19 categories of travellers the Schengen visa should authorise, is not imposed  
20 through binding provisions but suggested in texts not pertaining to hard law. A  
21 definition of the uniform Schengen visa that takes into account the travel pur-  
22 poses it should cover can be inferred from other texts, which I present hereafter.

23 First, the *Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modifica-*  
24 *tion of issued visas* elaborated by the Commission indirectly defines the Schen-  
25 gen visa when it addresses the issue of which supporting documents should  
26 provide evidence to assess the purpose of the intended journey (par. 6.2.1). Sup-  
27 porting documents are relative to purposes. The purposes taken into account are:  
28 business (including specific categories of lorry drivers and seafarers), study or  
29 other types of training, tourism or private reasons, political, scientific, cultural,  
30 sports or religious events, members of official delegations participating in speci-  
31 fied events, and medical reasons.

32 Second, the *Interinstitutional files* relative to agreements on short-stay visa  
33 waiver. Policy-officer A points this document as a source:

34  
35 You should look at the Agreement between the European Union and the  
36 Federative Republic of Brazil on short-stay visa waiver to figure out which  
37 travel purposes are covered and which excluded.  
38

39 In effect, the *Interinstitutional file* relating to the agreement (not the agreement  
40 itself<sup>4</sup>) specifies the travel purposes for which Brazilian nationals are allowed to  
41 enter without a visa:

42  
43 touristic activities, visiting relatives, prospection of commercial opportun-  
44 ities, attending meetings, signing contracts and financial, management and  
45 administrative activities, attending meetings, conferences, seminars ..., and

participation in sports competitions and artistic contests ..., provided that the participants do not receive any remuneration from respective Brazilian/Union sources.

The travel purposes mentioned in the *Interinstitutional file* appear as the truly Schengen travel purposes, as policy-officer A asserted. Except for private and medical reasons, these travel purposes represent the translation, in bureaucratic categories, of the sectors associated with economic growth in Europe: tourism, business and knowledge economy. The legitimate travellers to Schengen's Europe are mostly those contributing to its economy.

A close look at the travel purposes that are used in consulates reveals that these latter are much more differentiated. The travel purposes that are used by the national administration in a specific local context are dependent on factors such as historical ties, socio-economic links and diplomatic constraints. Such factors are state-bound. The next section focuses on this.

### Schengen visas

Shifting the analysis from the EU legislative policy-making to the street-level policy-making in local contexts allows for highlighting visa policies as state-bound. Belgium, France and Italy implement EU visa policy in the same third country, Morocco. However, the travel purposes for which a Schengen visa can be applied diverge.

The website of the consulate of Belgium in Casablanca gives the following travel purposes:

Court hearings, business, cohabitation with a third-country national permanently resident in Belgium, cohabitation with a Belgian national or European Economic Area national, marriage in Belgium, athletic and cultural events, medical treatment, trainee tourism, friend visit, family visit.<sup>5</sup>

Court hearing is a local travel purpose. We find it in Morocco because those Moroccans who have been denied Belgian citizenship can appeal and thus be convened to the court in Brussels. This is not specific to Morocco: by checking on the websites of Belgian consulates in several countries we will often find specific travel purposes that we do not find elsewhere. For instance, at the Belgian consulate in Yaoundé, under the travel purpose 'commercial', some specifications concerning used cars dealers are provided.<sup>6</sup> Such specifications respond to local circumstances and specific trade links between Belgium and Cameroon that are not found in other consulates and that have not been cancelled by Belgium's participation in the Schengen Agreement.

For the case of France, travel purposes are much more detailed and vary greatly from one foreign country to the other. In Senegal, there exists a type of Schengen visa specifically for 'artists' whose supporting documents vary according to the specific purpose of the intended journey: remunerated service, volunteer service or the recording of an album. Another specific type of visa exists for

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1 “journalists” and for “private employees of a foreign or French national accom-  
2 panying their employer”.<sup>7</sup> In Morocco, the category of ‘war veterans’ exists  
3 namely for those Moroccans who took part in the Second World War as soldiers  
4 of the French army. French categories for travel purposes are much more  
5 detailed reflecting the deep and variegated links rooted in its colonial past. In  
6 addition, supporting documents relative to specific types of visas such as ‘family  
7 visit visa’ vary according to the status of the applicant vis-à-vis France (relative  
8 in the ascendary line of a French citizen, spouse of French citizen, family  
9 member of European Union or European Economic Area national).

10 Within the three cases presented in this analysis, the travel purposes for Italy  
11 are the most standardised. In effect, the websites of each consular post are linked  
12 to the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where a generic list of support-  
13 ing documents according to specific travel purposes is provided. A Schengen  
14 visa is delivered for the following travel purposes in each third country: busi-  
15 ness, medical treatment, athletic competition, invitation, independent job,  
16 dependent job, mission, religious reasons, study, transport and tourism.

17 Fieldwork in the visa section highlights that the local differentiation of travel  
18 purposes occurs in policy implementation. Work routines in the visa section con-  
19 stitute visa policy on the ground by giving operational and local meaning to  
20 travel purposes. Although travel purposes formally exist, they are not operational  
21 in every third country. The following fieldwork excerpt reveals that, in Morocco,  
22 this is the case for the travel purpose ‘independent job’, which may be a Schen-  
23 gen visa provided that the work activity is carried out up to three months.

24 Officer I1 was processing an application for an independent job and he  
25 stated, “*Applications for independent jobs are always rejected in Morocco.*”  
26 He asked me to study the part of the law concerning such visas<sup>8</sup> and I imme-  
27 diately reacted as follows: *But you just said that visas for independent jobs*  
28 *are always rejected in Morocco?* He answers: *Yes, but we must provide a*  
29 *motivation of some sort!*

30 Officer I1 has learned this work routine from the Consul.

31 (Field journal excerpt)

32  
33 Similarly, the travel purpose ‘invitation’ exists but it is not in use in Morocco.  
34 Pursuant an interdepartmental decree that regulates the short-stay visa for travel  
35 purposes,<sup>9</sup> a visa for ‘invitation’ is delivered on the basis of an invitation  
36 received from state or non-state institutions, governmental or non-governmental  
37 organisations for political, scientific or cultural events. Bureaucratic action gives  
38 local meaning to these travel purposes. In Morocco, the travel purpose ‘invita-  
39 tion’ is not used for researchers who travel to attend conferences. The same jus-  
40 tification explains the exclusion of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)  
41 employees from the ‘invitation’ visa type in Morocco. Officers perceive such a  
42 travel purpose as illicit in the context of Morocco and a means to migrate to Italy  
43 rather than to travel. “To deliver a visa for invitation, the inviting institution  
44 must be very prestigious”, Officer I2 has stated.  
45



On a scale positioning Schengen states according to the degree of variability of their travel purposes, from the more standardised to the more variable, Italy and France stand at opposite ends. Nevertheless, even in the more apparently rigid bureaucratic categories, work routines shape the local visa policy by establishing local travel purposes. Understanding the visa policy on the ground entails determining local travel purposes. Visa policy is context oriented: local travel purposes always respond to local circumstances. In the light of shifting travel purposes, the length of stay as the basis of the legal definition of the Schengen visa appears as the sole criterion that catches all Schengen states' travel purposes. However, the plurality of travel purposes obscured by a three-month visa is not taken into account in its name. Schengen *visas* represent the term reflecting such plurality. Box 3.1 shows the Schengen visas and displays the travel purposes for delivered visas at the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca over two years.

As Bigo and Guild (2003: 7) have noted: “to speak of a uniform visa is an abuse of language [my translation]”. These scholars have pointed out that legally speaking the visa is not uniform because it does not give a right to entry to the Schengen area: entry depends on the discretionary powers of national border guards. A traveller holding a visa delivered by one Schengen state and crossing the Schengen border of another Schengen state can be denied access. In addition, the Schengen visa is not uniform because more than one type of Schengen visa exists – airport transit visa, multiple entry visa, single entry visa, collective visa, transit visa (abolished in 2010). Drawing on applicants' accounts of the

**Box 3.1 Belgium, France and Italy travel purposes for delivered Uniform Schengen Visa in Casablanca (2009–2010)**

**Belgium:** commercial (with invitation) – commercial event, trade fair – conference, colloquium – cultural, artistic event – family visit – humanitarian (probably VTL) – living together – medical treatment – not defined – official, political – private invitation – professional – religious activity – research – return annex 35 – return CIRE/CI/lost expired <3 months – return CIRE/CI/lost expired >3 months – return sojourn not finalised – sporting event – tourism – trainee – visa for cohabitation – visa with a view to marriage.

**France:** family settlement (spouse of French national) (family member of EU/EEE nationals) – studies (privately, not in public institutions) – marriage with a French national (without settlement in France) – professional (paid employment/general framework) – professional (scientific activity) – medical reason – visit (familial, personal or touristic) – return to France – professional (artistic or cultural activity) – professional internships.

**Italy:** Business – medical treatment – sport competition – invitation – dependent job – mission – study – transport – tourism.

Source: the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca.

1 application process and on documents required by Schengen states' consular  
2 posts in a same foreign country, Jileva (2003) and Guiraudon (2003) have high-  
3 lighted the cross-national differences in day-to-day Schengen visa issuance. In  
4 sum, the uniformity of the Schengen visa has been criticised formally and sub-  
5 stantially. However, those analyses overlooked the policy legacies (Brubaker  
6 1992) and the path dependence (Pierson 2000). EU visa policy does not replace  
7 the old national ones: sub-categories of travel purposes persist and reveal the  
8 history of bilateral relations, contemporary foreign affairs concerns and interests,  
9 specific socio-economic links, state-bound categorisations of legitimate travel-  
10 lers. In Casablanca, when applicants face the visa application process, they do  
11 not face a European common policy: instead, they face national policies and  
12 national bureaucratic procedures. The following section will dig further into  
13 other facets demonstrating state-bound visa policies.

### 14 **State-bound bordering policies in Morocco**

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16  
17 By delivering visas, consulates in countries of departures achieve the filtering  
18 work of borders. Because they materialise state sovereignty away from the edges  
19 of the territory, consulates can be therefore characterised as 'borders on site'  
20 (Infantino 2013). The materialisation of borders is observable in the ways in which  
21 the areas surrounding consular premises are modified by this presence. The activa-  
22 tion of a border paves the way for the development of strategies to circumvent it.  
23 The areas surrounding the consulate of France, Italy and Belgium are character-  
24 ised by the development of the 'migration industry of facilitation', which  
25 Hernandez-Léon (2005) has defined as "a matrix of economic activities which  
26 creates opportunities or facilitate passages". Economic activities are variegated:  
27 photocopies shops, insurance shops, photograph shops, translation shops, all sorts  
28 of paying services which 'visa boys' provide to visa applicants, from filling in the  
29 form to giving information or pieces of advice. These economic activities are  
30 typical in the areas surrounding consulates that deliver in-demand visas. Also  
31 Zampagni (2016) has observed the development of those activities for the case of  
32 the consulate of Italy in Dakar. The areas surrounding consulate premises can be  
33 therefore characterised as borderlands, which is a notion that, according to the pio-  
34 neering work of geographers Rumley and Minghi (1991, 3), "has come to reflect  
35 that sphere of activity which is directly affected by the existence of a border".

36 The borders on site that are subjects of this analysis filter would-be travellers  
37 differently. Table 3.1 compares the rates of rejected Schengen visa (C visa)  
38 applications at the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca over  
39 two years.

40 Table 3.1 shows the shifting output of bordering policies. Cross-national dif-  
41 ferences in rates of rejected Schengen visas are significant. France displays the  
42 lowest refusal rate. The overview of Schengen visa statistics elaborated by the  
43 Visa Policy Unit<sup>10</sup> always presents the average of refusal rates. In Morocco, this  
44 was 12 per cent in 2011. Such refusal statistics based on the average conceal  
45 the highly differentiated filtering action of not-so-uniform borders on site. The

Table 3.1 2009 and 2010 refusal rates of C visa and total refusal rates

	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Italy</i>
2009 visa C refusal rate (%)	34	9	26
2010 visa C refusal rate (%)	39	7.5	28.5

Source: the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca.

distinct history of migratory movements linking Morocco to Belgium, France and Italy affects the contemporary characteristics of migration/mobility flows. Contemporary migration/mobility flows from Morocco to each of these countries are distinct from one another not just in terms of travel purposes but also with respect to volume. Table 3.2 compares the number of Schengen visas applied for in each consulate over two years:

France is the country that handles the largest number of applications. Social links between France and Morocco are the most developed. Belgium does not handle a large number of applications but presents the highest rate of refusal. France presents the opposite situation. It is interesting to note the percentage of Schengen short-stay visas applied for in terms of the total amount of visas applied for (long and short stay): in 2009, 82 per cent for France, 68 per cent for Belgium, 23 per cent for Italy; in 2010, 83 percent for France, 70 per cent for Belgium, 29 per cent for Italy.<sup>11</sup> For the cases of France and Belgium, the high percentage of short-stay visas among all visa types is explained by the longer history of migratory movements between Morocco and those two countries. For the case of Italy, the lower percentage is due to more recent migration from Morocco to Italy where settlement is stronger. It could be argued that the introduction of visa requirements to Moroccan nationals have encouraged logics of settlement as pointed out by Massey (1999) referring to Mexican migration to the United States.

My fieldwork has revealed that the ways in which applicants use bureaucratic categories blur the distinction between short stay and long stay. The high percentage of long-stay visas among all visas applied for is due to family reunification

Table 3.2 Total number of C visas applied for to the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca (2009–2010)

	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Italy</i>
C visas applied for (2009)	13,530 (7,830 delivered + 4,586 rejected + 149 in progress)	55,965 (50,980 delivered + 4,985 rejected)	7,843 (5,658 delivered + 2,052 rejected)
C visas applied for (2010)	12,375 (7,384 delivered + 4,868 rejected + 158 in progress)	57,298 (53,350 delivered + 4,054 rejected)	8,022 (5,743 delivered + 2,279 rejected)

Source: the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca.

1 and work visas.<sup>12</sup> Family reunification visas are mostly applications of parents  
2 joining their children.<sup>13</sup> Parents apply for migration visas in order to travel more  
3 easily. The Schengen visa is under permanent suspicion: when processing a  
4 short-stay application, an officer's concern is to identify the 'real' objective of  
5 the intended journey beyond supporting documents. Thus, they are concerned  
6 with identifying whether a short stay might be transformed into an irregular long  
7 stay as well as a regular long stay. By observing Schengen visa processing prac-  
8 tices, the practical meaning of the migratory risk emerges: not just the risk of  
9 overstaying on an irregular status but also the risk of regular settlement (Infan-  
10 tino 2014). Since short-stay visas are under permanent suspicion of being trans-  
11 formed into regular or irregular settlement, a long-stay visa may be used to travel  
12 and not to migrate. Locally employed thus permanent staff of the consulate of  
13 Italy's visa section are perfectly aware of such a use of long-stay visas. As a  
14 result, the number of visas delivered for family reunification does not measure  
15 just parents living in Italy but also parents visiting their relatives. A portion of  
16 the number of visas issued for family reunification can be considered as the  
17 measurement of mobility rather than the measurement of migration. Interviews  
18 with visa officers at the consulate of Belgium have revealed that parents used  
19 family reunification visas to simply visit their relatives in Belgium before the  
20 entry into force of the new law on family reunification (September 2011), which  
21 limits family reunification for parents.

22 Fieldwork has highlighted another important finding that questions the reli-  
23 ability of statistics: the low percentage of refusals of the French consulate results  
24 from a trick. Conversations with one high-ranking civil servant and the consul-  
25 general of France have revealed:

26  
27 I: You have a very low refusal rate.

28 R: Yes, but because we count some applications as requiring additional  
29 documentation.

30  
31 The consul-general of France adds:

32  
33 If I refuse the visa applications that are in standby because they require  
34 additional documentation, the refusal rate would probably be 30 per cent.

35  
36 The consulate of France uses the '*complement de dossier*', a form where addi-  
37 tional documentation is requested. The additional documentation form works as  
38 follows: when processing an application, the officer can decide to avoid a deci-  
39 sion and return the passport with an attached form where the officer ticks the  
40 supplementary documents the applicant must provide. The following excerpt of  
41 my field journal concerning the consulate of France shows the use of the addi-  
42 tional documentation form that allows for avoiding outright refusal:

43  
44 Officer F1 is examining a visa application for family visit. The applicant is  
45 a mother visiting her son. Her administrative category is non-dependent

relative in the ascendary line of French citizen. The officer states: “*This is a difficult case because she is a widow, she has no job, and this is her first visa application.*” The officer would like to refuse the visa but in the applicant’s passport there is one Schengen visa delivered by the consular post of Germany. Officer F1 decides to fill one additional documentation form. I look surprised and the officer explains to me: “*The application will not be completed because she doesn’t understand French. I can’t refuse her outright because she already had a Schengen visa.*”

(Field journal excerpt)

Such a use of the additional documentation form enables the consulate to avoid outright refusal while limiting access to visas. Avoiding outright refusals reveals state-bound diplomatic concerns specific to France in Morocco. The low refusal rate of the French consulate in Casablanca has to be nuanced, even though it is impossible to quantify such nuance. Deceptive statistics reveal the French consulate’s concern to not manifestly refuse visas and to not provide the image of a ‘closed’ consulate. In the light of this, the additional documentation form can be understood as an implementation trick (Dubois 2010); it allows for achieving policy goals by administrative means.

The above sections have shown some elements that account for state-bound bordering policies in Morocco. How do would-be travellers use cross-national differences to cross the Schengen border? What are the factors that account for the choice of a consulate rather than the other one? The next section brings insights on factors determining Moroccan applicants’ strategic choices.

### **Coping with Schengen’s Europe**

Several factors explain applicants so-called ‘visa shopping’ – a practice carried out by applicants when they choose the consulate not according to their destination but according to their perception of which consulate provides the best chance of success. The expression visa shopping originates from the beginning of the Schengen visa policy, before the introduction of the euro as the single European currency, when applicants could choose the consulate according to the more advantageous currency exchange rates. The accounts of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ senior civil servants recall that visa shopping was practised already at the time of Benelux, when applicants chose the Belgian or the Dutch window according to the most convenient exchange rate displayed above their respective windows. This was precisely the case of the Benelux visa office located in Rabat shared by Belgians and Dutch.<sup>14</sup>

Nowadays, visa shopping is not linked to differences in exchange rates. Applicants learn cross-national differences in terms of visa policy on the ground (travel purposes, application processes, etc.) in order to obtain a Schengen visa and then reach their destination. I refer to such practices not in a normative or moral conceptualisation but rather underscoring a sociological approach to the study of Europeanisation (Guiraudon and Favell 2011): therefore I term these



1 practices ‘coping with Schengen’s Europe’. Such a definition emphasises the  
2 interdependence between state and applicant practices in the new Schengen  
3 context, which is characterised by the fact that a visa issued by one state author-  
4 ises entry and circulation in an area made of more than one state in which inter-  
5 state frontiers have been lifted. My fieldwork has shed light on some factors  
6 underlining the strategic choice of a consulate, which I discuss hereafter.

7 Distinct travel purposes are one factor encouraging strategic choices. The  
8 case of Italy is particularly interesting in this respect since the visa for family  
9 visit does not exist. The Italian bureaucratic management of identities (Herzfeld  
10 1992) does not consider the identity of a relative willing to visit a member of  
11 his/her family. The typology of tourism visas includes the invitation from an  
12 Italian national or a non-Italian national permanent resident in Italy but on tour-  
13 istic motivations. A paradox unfolds when the lack of a family visit category is  
14 mobilised to justify the decision-making, as Officer I1 has done. When ques-  
15 tioned about how to examine Schengen visa applications, Officer I1 stated:  
16

17       These persons are not tourists like you or me. These persons are visiting  
18 their family.

19  
20 Applicants adjust the objective of their journey in order to fit bureaucratic cat-  
21 egories. They apply for tourism visas although they are visiting relatives. The  
22 paradox emerges when Officer I1 considers those applicants to be fraudulent –  
23 they pretend to be tourists to obtain a visa. By neglecting the interdependence  
24 between state categories and applicants’ practices, Officer I1 considers this situ-  
25 ation externally driven. Officer I2 explained how to cope with such a paradoxical  
26 situation:  
27

28       Sometimes, I think what I do for a living is cruel. For example, when I have  
29 to reject visas to mothers willing to visit their children. But, I have to respect  
30 the law, if they don’t meet the requirements, what can I do? I know that the  
31 instruction given by the former head of the visa section was to deliver visas  
32 to mothers because if they have other children in Morocco they will never  
33 obtain a family reunification visa<sup>15</sup> and if we don’t give them a tourist visa,  
34 they will never visit their children.  
35

36 Observations and interviews in the visa section reveal that the ‘*requirements*’  
37 consist mainly of economic resources. Officer I2’s account also reveals that the  
38 consular staff are aware of applicants’ practices of asking for a family reunifica-  
39 tion visa in order to easily travel back and forth from Morocco to Italy. Although  
40 providing two different responses, Officer I1 and Officer I2 are coping with the  
41 paradox between the social realities of family visits that they face daily while  
42 processing tourist visa applications and the lack of an appropriate bureaucratic  
43 category. Bureaucratic action is called upon to practically resolve such a situ-  
44 ation. The story of Amine’s mother highlights a strategy devised to circumvent  
45 the Italian border by choosing the consulate of France:

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Amine was taking me home. We were chatting in the car. Amine explains to me that her mother travels to Italy to visit his brother who lives and works in Italy. Amine's mother has never been issued an 'Italian' Schengen visa. Amine told me she used to apply at the consulate of France: "She used to pass through France, because anyway it's Schengen". She used to apply for a family visit visa because she has a sister in France.

(Field journal excerpt)

Amine's mother anticipates she would obtain the visa at the French consulate because she thinks her characteristics would fit the French visa policy but not that of Italy. In effect, her strategy is successful. This case suggests that the success of applicants' strategies aimed at coping with Schengen and at crossing the Schengen border rests on the capacity of mobilising networks in more than one Schengen state, and on the knowledge about Schengen states' visa policy on the ground. Also, the account of the visa application process of Souphiane reveals applicants' awareness of shifting national visa policies and the extent to which this kind of knowledge is crucial to be successful.

Souphiane, a drama teacher working for an Italian NGO in Rabat, is invited to Italy to attend one meeting gathering social workers from Africa and Latin America who are partners of the Italian NGO in several international cooperation projects. He lets one of the Italian employees be in charge of the application process. This is not a touristic journey but a job-related invitation. He has an official motivation to travel, an Italian NGO is inviting him, he is sure he will obtain the visa. However, his visa is refused. He immediately states:

We made a mistake. I know what we should have done. I should have applied at the French consulate and then go to Italy, France wouldn't deny me the visa, I have studied drama in France and I decided to come back to work in Morocco.

(Field journal excerpt)

The above-mentioned accounts refer to applicants' avoidance mechanisms (Becker 1963) aimed at circumventing one national border by passing through another Schengen consular post. In such cases, applicants anticipate French visa policy as the one that will enable them to cross the Schengen border. Therefore, avoiding a rejected visa application is one deciding factor for applicants who choose the French consulate rather than the consulate of Italy.

The management of the visa application process represents another factor encouraging application to the French consulate rather than the Italian consulate, in particular for those Moroccans who do not accept to be treated as "huddled masses" (Guiraudon 2003) pushing at the gates of Schengen's Europe. By delivering visas, new social categories are constructed at the border abroad: the 'good' Moroccans entitled to be mobile, and the 'bad' ones who are immobile and locked in their country of origin. As a result, Moroccans with several visas in their passports identify themselves as legitimate travellers precisely because

1 they embody the ‘good’ Moroccans. The quality of the visa applicants’ treatment  
2 displayed at the French consulate makes the legitimate travellers prefer it even  
3 though their travel destination is Italy. ‘Good’ Moroccans entitled to be mobile  
4 choose the consulate offering the visa application process with the fewest burdens  
5 for them. Under certain conditions, visa shopping is a practice carried out by  
6 elites. The following accounts shed light on these elite applicants carrying out  
7 visa shopping. I will first focus on applicants’ treatment as a factor encouraging  
8 the choice of the consulate of France even though their travel destination is Italy:  
9

10 A journalist applied for a business visa in order to attend a meeting in Rome.  
11 He has many Schengen visas in his passport mostly issued by France. He  
12 doesn’t show up at the consulate for the scheduled appointment to lodge the  
13 application. The consulate schedules another appointment. The day of the  
14 second appointment, I was at the window next to one of the window clerks.  
15 The security agent announces the arrival of the journalist. The window clerk  
16 finds out that he is late: it’s 12 p.m. and he was supposed to arrive at 10 a.m.  
17 The window-clerk rejects his application. In his judgment, the journalist was  
18 lucky because they have already granted him a second appointment; window  
19 clerks don’t like applicants displaying this kind of attitude. He thinks he  
20 behaves with disrespect. Facing this kind of attitude, the journalist with-  
21 draws his application. He proudly affirms he will apply at the consulate of  
22 France.

23 (Field journal excerpt)

24 This applicant is used to the reception style of the French consulate where recep-  
25 tion is different according to an applicant’s prestige. At the Italian consulate  
26 there is no established procedure for special applicants, only ad hoc measures  
27 carried out when somebody at the top of the hierarchy decides to do so, which  
28 was not the case for this journalist. The Italian consulate is less popular because  
29 of its poor reputation concerning applicants’ treatment and the management of  
30 the visa application process. One honorary consul of Italy, a Moroccan national,  
31 criticises the reception style at the consulate of Italy. During a party, I witnessed  
32 a conversation between this honorary consul and two officers. The honorary  
33 consul blames the management of the consulate of Italy precisely because that  
34 consulate does not differentiate visa application processes according to appli-  
35 cants unlike the consulate of France. The honorary consul states indeed:  
36  
37

38 You cannot let the people travelling to Italy to spend their money stay in the  
39 line with immigrants. At the consulate of France if they know you, you  
40 make a telephone call and they let you in!

41 (Field journal excerpt)

42  
43 The following examples focus on the length of the visa application processes as  
44 a factor leading elite applicants to choose the consulate of Belgium rather than  
45 the consulate of France:

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The consul-general of Belgium explains that since the consulate of France schedules appointments to lodge applications, many applicants prefer the consulate of Belgium especially on the verge of the summer. He says he doesn't like to do the job for the French consulate but, at the same time, he admits he issued a visa to a *bona fide* applicant who called him on the phone because this applicant urgently needed a visa to go to France. The consul-general says: "for me there is no problem to issue the visa, it's a '*bona fide*' applicant".

(Field journal excerpt)

Visabel<sup>16</sup> employees points out the visa application process length and burdensomeness as a factor encouraging visa shopping. Visabel manages the visa application process and substitutes the consulate for carrying out daily tasks, particularly those including face-to-face interactions with applicants. Thus, Visabel employees are trained by the consular staff and have direct interaction with consulates and applicants. As a result, they develop a deep knowledge and understanding of visa policy on the ground. A Visabel employee told me:

A tourist visa applicant with a hotel reservation [*visa touriste avec resa* in the administrative language] never applies at the consulate of Belgium, the visa application process takes too much time at the consulate of Belgium and requires too many documents.

(Field journal excerpt)

According to this employee, a 'real' tourist spending money in Belgium prefers the consulate where the application process entails fewer requirements. Therefore, the French consulate where passports are returned after two days may be preferable to the Belgian consulate, locally well known for its delay. But on the verge of the summer period, the consulate of Belgium is preferred because applications can be lodged without scheduling any appointment.

In this section we have seen that cross-national differences in visa policies on the ground and cross-national differences in managing the visa application process are factors encouraging the choice of a consulate although this is not the consulate of the state of destination. In this comparative case study, France emerges as the border on site that is perceived as the most likely to deliver visas. The strategic choice of consulates is also practised by elite applicants who choose the consulate that ensure fewer burdens. In sum, would-be Moroccan travellers learn consulates' work routines. Such learning processes enable applicants to cope with Schengen's Europe. In doing so, Moroccan applicants' practices adjust to the making of the European Union.

## Conclusion

The comparative analysis of day-to-day EU bordering practices in Morocco shows that despite hard law regulating EU visa policy, cross-national differences

1 persist. This analysis points to state-bound logics that account for those differ-  
 2 ences. It insists on policy legacies and path dependence to explain the persist-  
 3 ency of state-bound logics. By building on the cases of Belgium, France and  
 4 Italy, this chapter has shown the relevance of the bilateral relations, historical  
 5 past, contemporary foreign affairs concerns as factors differentiating visa policy  
 6 on the ground. Applicants learn the differences in visa policies on the ground  
 7 and strategically use those differences. From a methodological perspective, this  
 8 analysis insists on adopting a ‘street-level view’ for the study of policies  
 9 (Brodkin 2011). The ‘street-level view’ coupled with the researcher’s immersion  
 10 in those social and political worlds have illuminated factors of differentiation  
 11 that remained obscure. This analysis has presented empirical data on visa  
 12 shopping that challenges the institutional definition that presents such practices  
 13 as attempts to find the easiest gate to pass through. Fieldwork exposes visa  
 14 shopping as an elite practice as well, and cross-national differences that encour-  
 15 age such practices. Such differences are precisely at the origin of the practices  
 16 that I term as ‘coping with Schengen’s Europe’. This notion stresses the inter-  
 17 dependence between state and applicant practices in the new Schengen context.  
 18 This comparative case study has empirically criticised the notion that Euro-  
 19 peanisation of visa policy entails the homogenisation of Schengen gates and  
 20 instead presented Europeanised applicants’ practices like those of coping with  
 21 Schengen.

## Notes

- 1 Council Regulation (EC) No. 539/2001 of 15 March 2001 (OJ L 81/1 of 21 March 2001); Council Regulation (EC) No. 1683/95 of 29 May 1995 laying down a uniform format for visa (OJ L 164/2 of 14 July 1995); Regulation (EC) No. 562/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 establishing a Community Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code, OJ L 105 of 13 April 2006); Regulation (EC) No. 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 243/1 of 15 September 2009).
- 2 Regulation (EC) No. 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 243/1 of 15 September 2009).
- 3 Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modification of issued visas. Commission Decision, 19 March 2010, C (2010) 1620 final. Commission Decision of 11 June 2010 establishing the ‘Handbook for the organisation of visa sections and local Schengen cooperation’. C(2010)3667 final.
- 4 AGREEMENT between the European Union and the Federative Republic of Brazil on short-stay visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, service or official passports (OJ L 66/2 of 12 March 2011).
- 5 [www.diplomatie.be/casablanca/default.asp?id=99&mnu=99](http://www.diplomatie.be/casablanca/default.asp?id=99&mnu=99). Accessed on 10 July 2014.
- 6 [http://countries.diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/cameroun/venir\\_en\\_belgique/visa\\_pour\\_belgique/](http://countries.diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/cameroun/venir_en_belgique/visa_pour_belgique/). Accessed on 10 October 2012.
- 7 [www.ambafrance-sn.org/Visas-court-sejour-VCS](http://www.ambafrance-sn.org/Visas-court-sejour-VCS). Accessed on 10 October 2012.
- 8 As a former student of an Italian university, I participated in a three-month traineeship in the visa section in Casablanca. Everyone was aware of the subject of my PhD and the research interest explaining my application for the traineeship.



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- 9 Decreto interministeriale n. 850 dell'11 maggio 2011. [www.esteri.it/mae/normative/Normativa\\_Consolare/Visti/Decreto\\_Interministeriale\\_850\\_11-5-2011.pdf](http://www.esteri.it/mae/normative/Normativa_Consolare/Visti/Decreto_Interministeriale_850_11-5-2011.pdf). Accessed on 13 December 2016. 1  
2  
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- 10 European Commission Directorate-General Home Affairs, Directorate B: Immigration and asylum, Unit B.3: Visa Policy: Overview of Schengen Visa Statistics 2009–2011. 4
- 11 Source: the consulates of Belgium, France and Italy in Casablanca. 5
- 12 Source: the consulate of Italy in Casablanca. 6
- 13 The *Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero (Dlgs 286/1998)* allows the family reunification for parents under the conditions that they do not have other children taking care of them. In Morocco, parents are entitled to family reunification visas provided that they can prove that they do not have other children in Morocco. 7  
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- 14 Interview with a Belgian officer who has worked for the *visa Benelux* office. 11
- 15 Parents of third-country national permanent residents in Italy are entitled to family reunification provided that they prove they do not have another son or daughter in their country of origin. 12  
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- 16 Visabel is the name of the private visa application centre run by the Indian multinational VFSGlobal, world leader in the sector of providing visa services, which cooperates with the consulate of Belgium in Casablanca. 15  
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**Part II**

**Migration control and the  
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## 4 Migration in the Euro-Mediterranean area

### Lampedusa and beyond

*Elif Cetin*

#### Introduction

In line with the growing socio-economic and political significance of immigration, Europe has seen a wide range of policy measures aiming at either halting migrants from reaching Europe or deterring them from settling in their preferred countries of destination (Gibney 2004).

One of the implications of these policy efforts has been to turn the Mediterranean into a highly militarised zone. Yet the collapse of the political structures of several North African countries in early 2011 was a huge blow for bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms, while at the same time putting the European border regime under a serious test. In particular, immigrant arrivals to Europe through Lampedusa, an Italian island which is one of the closest points in Europe to the African mainland, triggered a range of public and political discussions in Italy and also in the wider European context concerning how the inflows triggered by the Arab Spring should be responded.

Against this background, which starkly revealed the symbolic power that immigration possesses in the Italian and European domestic arenas, the chapter analyses the dynamics that influence the interconnected processes of the politics and the policies of immigration control. It argues the events of the Arab Spring have demonstrated that the EU is not fully equipped to establish an area of dialogue, peace, stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean despite setting the achievement of these goals as its policy priorities concerning the Euro-Mediterranean area. In particular, the chapter examines how the social construction of immigration as a source of risk and threat in Europe conditioned the national and the supranational responses to immigrant and asylum-seeker arrivals generated by the Arab Spring within the Western Mediterranean. It investigates how Italy's decision to issue temporary residence permits for humanitarian protection to undocumented immigrants who arrived from Tunisia to Italy before 5 April 2011 led to a diplomatic row with France, where many of the Tunisian migrants in Italy hoped to go as their next destination to find jobs and to reunite with their relatives or friends, while also causing some other EU Member States, such as France, the United Kingdom and Spain, to express their concerns and worries.

Even though the European governments, in an attempt to address public feelings of insecurity about immigration, seek to project themselves as able “to plan, regulate and even control international migration” (Geddes 2006: 158), the objectives and outcomes of their immigration and border control policies do not always overlap. The unpredictable nature of migration pressures together with the existence of various international constraints and the involvement of actors at different levels with different immigration interests render their policy practices dramatically at odds with their political discourses. While the former Italian coalition government (2008–2011) composed of the centre-right People of Freedom (PdL) and the xenophobic Northern League (LN) parties ended up practising immigration policies that openly contradicted with the discourse and the legislation it developed, the Franco-Italian affair with respect to the Schengen regime raised doubts about two of the EU’s founding members’ loyalty to one of the fundamental EU rights and freedoms, namely the freedom of movement.

The chapter, first of all, presents the evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean border control regime prior to the outbreak of the social and political upheaval in some of the Middle Eastern and North African countries. Afterwards, it provides an overview of how the Arab Spring turned into a major international crisis by reflecting on its influences on migration within the Western Mediterranean and to Italy in particular. Then it moves on to examine how Italy, facing most visibly with the challenges of migratory flows in Europe following the crises in Tunisia and Libya, responded towards migrant arrivals. The fourth part looks at the developments within the wider European context following Italy’s announcement to issue temporary residence permits. The conclusion assesses the implications of the politics of emergency for the Euro-Mediterranean border control regime.

### **The evolution of the Euro-Mediterranean border control regime**

Borders have been trademarks of modern nation-states defining the area within which sovereign state authority and jurisdiction exist. For many countries in Europe, a powerful source of challenge to what their borders signified came with the end of the Cold War era. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to remarkable geo-political changes which eventually triggered great surges of refugees and asylum-seekers, many of whom sought shelter in Europe. The remarkable increase in the numbers of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants diversified both “countries of origin of international migrants and the numbers of European countries affected by international migration” (Geddes 2006: 17). Unlike settler societies, such as Australia and the United States, European countries had the tendency to approach international migration “rather nervously as challenging their territorial, organisational and conceptual boundaries; to their ways of thinking about themselves and other” (ibid.: 4). With the significant increase and widening of both the scale and the national origins of migrants, since the second half of the 1980s, European states’ sense of insecurity regarding the arrivals’ potential implications for their stability and welfare systems grew,

1 especially in the Western part of the continent. The “spatial turn” that European  
2 countries faced with “the emergence of new borders and spaces” in the post-  
3 Cold War period (Rumford 2006: 130), “has been paralleled by a transnationali-  
4 zation of threats that diverges from the traditional security conception of the  
5 Cold War” (Wolff 2008: 253). The result was the development of a new under-  
6 standing and framing of security concept which blurred the conceptual lines dis-  
7 tinguishing internal and external sources of threat (Anderson and Bort 2001: 23).  
8 Within such a frame migration also came to be viewed through a security lens  
9 which led it to be perceived as “a potential threat to the security and the well-  
10 being of the industrialised states of the West” (Doty 1998: 71).

11 As international migration turned into a fiercely debated issue within the  
12 frame of domestic politics in Europe, efforts to control it also increased. The  
13 Mediterranean was one of the regions of priority concern for the European  
14 powers as a considerable proportion of third country migration to the EU was  
15 originating from the area (European Commission 1995). Even though the  
16 southern Mediterranean together with the Middle East had already been areas of  
17 policy interest for Europe’s states since the early 1970s and had been the target  
18 of these states’ co-ordinated policy efforts, it was only in the 1990s that such  
19 efforts were translated into an overarching policy framework with the launch of  
20 the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the European Neighbourhood  
21 Policy (ENP).

22 The EMP was launched in Barcelona in 1995 amidst the worries in the EU  
23 that the Mediterranean became an area of risk in various ways, such as the “pro-  
24 liferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the region’s various con-  
25 flicts and tensions, and the huge disparity in economic and social development  
26 between the South and the North” (Pereira 2006: 146).<sup>1</sup> With the EMP, the  
27 Union sought to strengthen its Mediterranean policy by establishing a common  
28 area of peace, stability and prosperity. Therefore, migration was not referred to  
29 in any significant way in the initial 1995 Declaration of the Barcelona process.  
30 Instead, addressing economic disparity between different shores of the Mediter-  
31 ranean, which had been identified in the 1994 Commission Communication as  
32 the most significant factor triggering migration from the broader Mediterranean  
33 area to the EU, weighed more in the EMP agenda. In that sense, the EMP was  
34 the first concrete effort of the EU to integrate an active migration policy into its  
35 general development policies and external economic relations.

36 Within the framework set by the EMP, bilateral agreements were signed  
37 between the EU Member States and the Mediterranean partners involving Algeria,  
38 Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia. While the Euro-Mediterranean  
39 Association Agreements included specific provisions for each of the partners,  
40 their essential aspects were common which sought to achieve a three-pronged  
41 strategy involving the promotion of “regular dialogue on political and security  
42 matters”, “economic, trade and financial cooperation” and cooperation on social,  
43 cultural and educational matters (EUROPA 2011a).

44 The economic gap between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean was  
45 indeed a factor of attraction for some of those who sought to arrive in Europe.

The gradual eradication of legal routes of entry for low-skilled immigrants from the non-EEA countries since the 1970s created pressures as some economic migrants sought to have access to the job market either as asylum claimants, ‘illegal’ entrants or short stay visa overstayers. Even though unauthorised border crossings are not specific to Mediterranean migratory movements and exist also as part of migration flows taking place in other parts of the World, they have turned into a particularly pressing issue in the EMP scheme.

The period during which migration turned into a more pronounced matter in the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation, coincides with the growing salience of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) issues at the EU-level. Since the 1997 European Council meeting in Amsterdam, “the fight against illegal migration and the formation of a European return policy” (Papagianni 2006: 41) developed as the EU’s primary concerns regarding the management of its external borders. The EU Member States recognised that such policy priorities could not be realised without co-operating with third countries. Hence, it was necessary to encapsulate the JHA matters fully into the EU external policy so that the area of freedom, security and justice could be carried out in an integrated and consistent way. As a result, in the post-Tampere period, during which the EU’s JHA agenda expanded, the EU’s efforts to integrate its Mediterranean partners into the JHA collaborations intensified.

In June 2000, the EU adopted the *Common Strategy on the Mediterranean* in Santa Maria da Feira which reflected its commitment to review and reinvigorate the Barcelona Process (Whitman 2001). In September 2000, in line with the EU’s *Common Strategy on the Mediterranean*, the Commission issued a communication which formed “one stage in the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership” (European Commission 2000). The Commission communication proposed enhanced co-operation between the EU and the Mediterranean Partners on issues concerning asylum, refugees, human trafficking, immigration, social inclusion of migrants and organised crime (ibid.). Furthermore, it established the foundation of the EU position during the Marseilles Conference that brought the Euro-Mediterranean foreign ministers together in November 2000. During the Marseilles Conference, the ministers called on senior officials to deepen their work in areas concerning terrorism and migration. These efforts eventually turned the JHA into ‘one of the main domains of activities of the EMP’ (Bicchi 2002: 8) and also paved the way for a regional JHA programme.

While migration became a central policy issue and a strategic priority for different countries participating in the EMP, their specific policy priorities differed. As the key issues at stake involved “the movement of people, the integration of immigrants and co-development”, receiving countries dominantly sought to keep “unwanted” migration out by emphasising “joint responsibility, control of flows and curbing illegal immigration” and source countries prioritised “co-development and the feasibility of the partnership project” (Aubarell and Aragall 2005: 12). As a result, over time, the strength of the multilateralism aspect of the EMP weakened and instead bilateral co-operation gained priority.



1 The ENP was another important policy instrument developed by the EU  
2 which had implications for co-operation among the Euro-Mediterranean  
3 countries regarding migration control and management. The ENP framework  
4 was set with the policy documents adopted in March 2003, *Wider Europe-  
5 Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern  
6 Neighbours*, and in May 2004, *European Neighbourhood Policy-Strategy Paper*,  
7 to enhance cross-border cooperation with the countries neighbouring the EU on  
8 a number of issues of common interest. Unlike the EMP, which had a multi-  
9 lateral focus, the ENP was built upon bilateralism and brought an ad hoc  
10 approach to collaborative efforts on migration management. In the current form  
11 of the ENP, each of the participating countries should adhere to the specified key  
12 policy priorities and, yet, the EU also differentiates between them. The political  
13 and economic conditions of each partner are taken into account together with  
14 their institutional and legal framework in order to better identify their needs to  
15 provide them stronger co-operation incentives which is vital for such a frame-  
16 work to have any real effectiveness. The crux of the ENP involves exchanges of  
17 information for more effective border management, readmission agreements and  
18 curtailment of irregular immigration.

19 While the ENP was aimed at fostering relations between the EU Member  
20 States and their neighbours both in the south and the east of the EU, the *Barce-  
21 lona Process: Union for the Mediterranean* (UfM), initiated in 2008 and built  
22 upon the institutional context set by the EMP and the ENP, sought to reinvigor-  
23 ate the Barcelona Process and enhance multilateral cooperation between the EU  
24 Member States and their Southern Mediterranean partners. During the formation  
25 of the UfM, France played a key role as the idea for setting up such a policy  
26 institution first arose from a call that French President Nicolas Sarkozy made in  
27 2007 during the French presidential election campaign (Gillespie 2008: 277).  
28 The UfM involved elements of both “change” and “continuity” (Bicchi 2011: 4).  
29 The institutional context set by the EMP and the ENP laid the ground from  
30 which the UfM emerged, hence, the UfM frame developed on the basis of a set  
31 of well-established “practices and roles” (ibid.). The EU Member States and the  
32 Partners involved in the UfM remained committed to the 1995 Barcelona Decla-  
33 ration’s key objectives of achieving ‘peace, stability and security’ and also to the  
34 *acquis* of the Barcelona Process. In addition, the Heads of State and Government  
35 also agreed to “launch and/or to reinforce a number of key initiatives” concern-  
36 ing ‘De-pollution of the Mediterranean’, ‘Maritime and Land Highways’, ‘Civil  
37 Protection’, ‘Alternative Energies: Mediterranean Solar Plan’, ‘Higher Educa-  
38 tion and Research’, ‘Euro-Mediterranean University and the Mediterranean  
39 Business Development Initiative’ (Council of the European Union 2008: 3).

40 The EU and the Member States have also started to increasingly rely on out-  
41 sourcing their immigration control policies through the use of information tech-  
42 nologies in co-operation with the partnering countries in the Mediterranean.  
43 While the use of new border security measures is giving a new meaning to the  
44 borders of Europe by transforming static physical frontiers, the potential human  
45 rights implications and also the social costs of the use of such means are



debatable. Technologised and militarised means of external border controls by the EU Member States aim to prevent the arrival of the ‘risky’ subjects to traditional border crossings (Vaughan-Williams 2009: 19). Yet, the use of risk profiling methods, for instance, is quite questionable and the criteria used to identify who should be considered ‘risky’ and who should be welcomed in as ‘profitable’ and ‘trustable’ is far from being clear. Even though there might be a certain need to keep things in ‘secret’ in order to ensure the successful operation of the such technology-based surveillance schemes, the categorisations of ‘risky’ and ‘trusted’ travellers have also the worrying potential of exacerbating prejudices based on “mere suspicion alone” (Vaughan-Williams 2010: 1076) towards particular national, ethnic and religious groups.

### **Arab Spring and its influences on migration within the Western Mediterranean**

A number of views have been expressed by politicians and commentators on the possible causes of the uprisings in some of the North African and Middle Eastern countries. The most commonly referred explanatory factors involved demographic surplus at working age, which is also sometimes referred to as ‘youth bulge’ (Fargues 2011), the role of the social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, the frustration caused by high unemployment rates and low-paid jobs and corrupt governments. The death of a 26-year-old Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 while protesting his treatment by government authorities unintentionally triggered a revolution which changed the political regime in his country. Within weeks following the incident in Tunisia, several Arab countries were also affected by revolts, such as Egypt, Bahrain, Syria and Yemen, and demonstrations, such as Algeria, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. It is not possible to point out a single individual, group or event as the sole cause of political turmoil in the region and further research is indispensable to figure out the details of particular processes that led to varied forms of unrest in different countries.

From a migration point of view, the revolts triggered displacement and an intense wave of emigration from some of the Mediterranean Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria. Yet, most of the migrants from these countries did not pose much of a direct challenge to Europe as they fled to neighbouring countries. Statistical figures as of 1 January 2012 reveal that pre-Arab Spring legal migration patterns to Europe from its Mediterranean neighbourhood continued to exist (Fargues and Fandrich 2012). The numbers of migrant arrivals from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria to Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK increased from 67,214 in 2010 to 90,839 in 2011 (*ibid.*: 3).<sup>2</sup> Yet taking into account the annual increase in total migrant stocks in these European countries in 2009 was 111,738, it is not possible to refer to a significant break in 2011 (*ibid.*).

Regarding irregular migration to Europe, during the period of January–September 2011, 42,807 persons were recorded as entering Italy illegally

1 through the sea routes which was a record increase when compared with fewer  
2 than 10,000 of such arrivals in 2009 and 5,000 in 2010 (ibid.: 4). The illegal  
3 entries to Italy increased in parallel with their decrease in some other European  
4 countries, such as Spain and Malta, which are also among the most commonly  
5 used destination points for irregular migrants (ibid.). Nonetheless, the combined  
6 figures of illegal migrant entries to these three European countries does not  
7 indicate a particular new surge of irregular border crossings as greater numbers  
8 of unauthorised migration took place in 1999, 2006 and 2008 than in 2011  
9 (ibid.).<sup>3</sup>

10 While Tunisia and Libya were used as the main points of departure for boats  
11 smuggling irregular migrants, the majority of unauthorised migrant entries to  
12 Europe sourced from Tunisia. In the first three months of 2011 some 25,000  
13 irregular migrants originating from the country landed on Lampedusa (Fargues  
14 2011). Tunisia's geographical proximity to Europe was an important factor for  
15 the arrivals originating from the country, as many were misled by the impression  
16 that Italian shores were easily reachable. Yet, even before the outbreak of the  
17 revolt, emigration had already been considered as a viable option by a consider-  
18 able proportion of Tunisians in order to have a better future.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, with the  
19 outbreak of the revolution in Libya in February 2011, a vast majority of the  
20 immigrants in the country, who were from Egypt, Tunisia and sub-Saharan  
21 Africa, started to arrive in Tunisia and Egypt (ibid.: 5) which added up to the  
22 already existing push factors in Tunisia.

23 At the end of 2011, the total number of unauthorised entries to Italy reached  
24 29,685 revealing that most of the arrivals from Tunisia took place in the absence  
25 of border controls (Fargues and Fandrich 2012: 4). As noted by Fargues and  
26 Fandrich (2012), together with Tunisians there were also many non-Tunisians  
27 smuggled into Italy in 2011 most of whom were sub-Saharan Africans. Hence,  
28 in the absence of an organised police force and border checks in Tunisia, the  
29 uprisings led to a rerouting of the existing flows of irregular migration but did  
30 not generate new ones (ibid.).

31 Moreover, the first refugee crisis that occurred in the Southern Mediterranean  
32 following the outbreak of the revolt in Libya in February 2011 was not translated  
33 into increased numbers of asylum-seekers in Europe. Most of the people fleeing  
34 Libya sought shelter in the neighbouring African countries. Due to unfavourable  
35 weather conditions, crossing the highly securitised and militarised Mediterra-  
36 nean turned into an even greater challenge for those who tried the sea route to  
37 arrive to Europe and many lost their lives.

38 Likewise, the second major refugee crisis triggered by the revolt and the sub-  
39 sequent civil war in Syria in the summer of 2011 was not automatically trans-  
40 lated into a major refugee inflow to any of the EU Member States. Tens of  
41 thousands of displaced Syrians fled to the neighbouring Jordan, Turkey,  
42 Lebanon, and, to a more limited extent, Iraq (Fargues and Fandrich 2012: 11).  
43 Yet, the Commission took a cautious stance in a communication it issued in May  
44 2012 and stated that "the situation in Syria may prompt a future migration flow  
45 into the neighbouring countries, and also into the European Union". As the years

of conflict in the country increased both the death toll and numbers of asylum-seekers fleeing the country, the EU has taken an increased share of Syrian refugee population (Fargues 2014). Nevertheless, the EU response to the Syrian refugee crisis was a rather limited one as it “did not open the door to refugees in proportion to their flight from Syria and its share of the overall refugee flows fell from 29.4 percent in 2011 to 4.1 percent in 2012, to a measly 2.3 percent in 2013” (ibid.).

While the Arab Spring revolts did not generate a new surge of either regular or irregular migration to Europe, the numbers of arrivals to Italy during the first months of 2011 were extraordinary. Italy, like many other frontline EU Mediterranean countries, has long been experiencing arrivals from the sea and has been participating in both supra-national and bilateral arrangements in order to enhance its control over refugee and migrant arrivals by setting “a new model of contrast on the high seas” as expressed by the Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni (Marchetti 2010: 160).

The bilateral agreements Italy had signed with countries of origin and transit of migrants before the revolts delivered questionable results and had been subject to both domestic and international criticism due to the poor human rights records of these countries. Nonetheless, political authorities prioritised sending the so-called clandestine immigrant back to “where he came from without going deeply into who he is and why he came here [Italy]” (Maroni 2009, quoted in Custodero 2009) and human rights implications of expulsions are not considered thoroughly. In addition, among Italian politicians there was no widespread consensus on the genuineness of the factors that motivate migrants to leave their countries of origin at the first place. Such doubts also weakened concerns among policy-makers about human rights of those who entered Italy illegally. For instance, in order to facilitate the readmission of irregular migrants, in addition to traditional means, the use of “ad hoc charters, where entire groups of migrants are loaded up for rapid expulsion from Italian territory” (Marchetti 2010: 168) became a common practice.

It is particularly ironic that despite all the emphasis left-wing parties in Italy put on the protection of immigrants’ human rights and liberties, the first bilateral agreements setting the collaboration framework with Libya and Egypt, countries with dubious human rights records, were signed in 2007 during the centre-left Union coalition led by Romano Prodi.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, while the number of arrivals to Lampedusa was fairly large taking into account the island had had around 4500 inhabitants before the influx, the collapse of the bilateral framework Italy so dedicatedly established by turning a blind eye to the systematic breach of human rights within such a system, also stirred deep concerns among Italian politicians. The details of the solution Italy sought and the reaction of the EU and the other Member States are discussed in the subsequent sections.

## Italy's response towards migrant arrivals following the crises in Tunisia and Libya

### *Politics of immigration control in Italy*

Italy was one of the so-called new countries of immigration that was caught unprepared by the increased migratory inflows during the 1990s. Even though it became an immigrant-receiving country during the mid-1970s (Martiniello 1992; Papademetriou and Hamilton 1996; Zincone and Caponio 2005), its lax border controls and underdeveloped asylum system remained untouched in the absence of any political initiative. The migration challenges created by new immigrant and asylum-seeker arrivals in the aftermath of the Cold War era, pushed Italy to dramatically redefine its immigration control system. The appearance of the migration challenge also overlapped with the rise of the right-wing politics in the country. Some of the rising parties of the Right did not hesitate to play upon the immigration card to divert public attention from the political turmoil of the 1990s. The right-wing political parties that emerged as new forces in the Italian political landscape in the early 1990s following the *Tangentopoli* crisis, namely Go Italy! (FI), the Northern League (LN) and the National Alliance (AN), played an important role in terms of defining the general frame of immigration approaches in Italy.<sup>6</sup> In the face of increased pressures to guarantee citizens' security, scape-goating immigrants and promising tougher immigration control measures became an electoral strategy, more prominently deployed by right-wing parties than left-wing ones (Zincone 1998; Perlmutter 2002; Finotelli and Sciortino 2009). In particular, the illiberal and the exclusionary immigration rhetoric of the LN and the AN has been influential in establishing anti-immigrant positions as a profitable electoral strategy.

Comparable to the situation in other Mediterranean countries, undocumented entries turned into common practices, especially with the introduction of tougher border control measures. Undocumented entries which result due to the lack of an active migrant labour recruitment channel, poor internal controls and the existence of an extended shadow economy have turned into a major source of anxiety among public and political circles (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009: 127). The undocumented entries through sea routes, usually from Africa, have been at the centre of public and political debates due to their dramatic visibility, even though they constitute only a very limited share of undocumented entries in Italy as many take land routes where Italian-Slovenian and Italian-French borders constitute the most commonly used entry channels for undocumented migrants arriving in Italy.

### *Arrivals to Lampedusa and the escalation of a 'crisis'*

In the face of the already existing public and political sensitivities on immigration and in particular on clandestine arrivals, the numbers of displaced persons in the Southern Mediterranean caused heightened feelings of insecurity in Italy.



The waves of immigrant and asylum-seeker inflows generated by the social and political uprisings in several Middle Eastern and North African countries in 2011 led to heightened public and political attention on undocumented migration. Adopting a highly alarmist rhetoric, in March 2011, the Foreign Minister Franco Frattini talked of 200,000–300,000 arrivals, creating a future that was “impossible to imagine” and expressed his fears of “an exodus of Biblical proportions” (*Economist* 2011). The same panic echoed through the words of the Interior Minister, Roberto Maroni, who stated that migration influx from North Africa would bring Italy “to its knees” (*ibid.*). Likewise, Muammar Gaddafi, who had been regarded as a responsible partner by both Italian politicians and policy elites in the wider European context for policing migration, also warned that if he fell Europe would be “invaded” by “thousands of people from Libya” (BBC News 2011).

Even though Italy concluded bilateral readmission agreements with the regimes in Tunisia in April in 2011 and Libya in June 2011 after the revolutions to counter unauthorised immigration and facilitate repatriation of migrants arriving in its territories, the unstable conditions in these countries led to some 43,000 arrivals from the region between mid-January and late-June 2011 (UNHCR 2011).

The sudden increase in the numbers of arrivals in Lampedusa was wholly unexpected and the policy to respond to it was not in place. Faced with fierce public reactions and EU criticism concerning the failures in handling the situation (Kington 2011), Italian decision-makers started to seek the help of other major EU countries, such as France, Germany and Britain. The Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi asked the European Council President, Herman van Rompuy, to call for an extra-ordinary meeting of the Heads of the States by stating that “Europe was facing an emergency” (Berlusconi 2011, quoted in Agneli 2011a). The Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Franco Frattini, stated that the “immigration knot belongs to Europe and it is not national” (Frattini 2011, quoted in TGCOM24 2011). In a similar attempt to achieve a stronger EU-level involvement, the Interior Minister Maroni, in his letter to the European Commission, requested 100 million euro to be used by Italy in its efforts to cope with the ‘emergency’, and a new and more active role for Frontex (*Deutsche Welle* 2011), the EU agency set up to foster and co-ordinate co-operation among Member States in the field of border security. Moreover, Maroni also called for an integrated European asylum system to be in effect from 2012 onwards (Agneli 2011a). Yet, Italy did not receive the support it asked for. Maroni furiously criticised the EU for “keeping quiet” and “once again leaving Italy on its own to handle a dramatic humanitarian emergency” (Maroni 2011, quoted in Agneli 2011b).

In return for what was interpreted as the EU’s betrayal on the Italian side, Berlusconi announced in April 2011 Italy’s decision to issue 20,000 temporary stay permits for the migrants who arrived during the January–April 2011 period (prior to 5 April 2011) which would be valid for six months and would enable these migrants to move within the Schengen zone (Le Nir 2011). The decision was not quite in parallel with the position of the Italian government’s political



1 majority which favoured a securitised approach on immigration and being tough  
2 against undocumented entries. The unexpected policy decision aimed at encour-  
3 aging immigrants to leave Italy and also to bring the management of the North  
4 African immigration into an EU-level burden-sharing mechanism.

5 The so-called Lampedusa crisis was unpredictable because the developments  
6 in North Africa could not be foreseen. Yet, following the collapse of the political  
7 regimes in Tunisia and Libya, it was evident that there would be new arrivals of  
8 immigrants and asylum-claimants from the area as the authorities that had once  
9 signed bilateral agreements with Italy to co-ordinate the management of undocu-  
10 mented migration became officially non-existent. The ‘crisis’ revealed once  
11 again that Italy lacked both the political determination and organisational capa-  
12 city to deal with emergency situations. The PdL-LN coalition government,  
13 despite all its election campaign rhetoric which presented immigration and  
14 asylum issues as creating ‘public security risks’ and ‘emergencies’, ended up  
15 putting the security-oriented policy frame aside and issued temporary residence  
16 permits for humanitarian protection.

### 18 **The solidarity test: developments within the wider European** 19 **context following Italy’s announcement to issue temporary** 20 **residence permits**

21  
22 From the outset, contrary to Italy’s preferences, at the EU-level there was an  
23 unwillingness to frame Lampedusa in emergency terms, and Member States  
24 offered “to provide further human and technical resources to Frontex” (EU  
25 Council 2011: 4) without showing any enthusiasm to activate any burden-sharing  
26 mechanism to “distribute incoming migrants across the whole of Europe”  
27 (Campos 2011: 14).

28 On 15 February 2011, Italy formally requested Frontex’s “assistance in  
29 strengthening the surveillance of the EU’s external borders in the form of a Joint  
30 Operation” (Frontex 2011a) to which Frontex responded by bringing forward  
31 “the joint operation in the central Mediterranean EPN Hermes Extension 2011”  
32 to 20 February 2011, which was originally planned to take place in June 2011  
33 (Nascimbene and Di Pascale 2011: 344). Frontex mission ‘Hermes’ was  
34 deployed to “assist the Italian authorities in managing the inflow of migrants  
35 from North Africa, particularly arrivals from Tunisia, on the island of  
36 Lampedusa” and it was part of the European Commission efforts to manage the  
37 migratory inflows to Europe from Tunisia in the imminent aftermath of the  
38 turmoil that took place in North Africa (EUROPA 2011b).

39 Yet, there are a number of unclear points concerning the exact scope and the  
40 conduct of scanning and surveillance activities. For instance, concerning the task  
41 of “detecting and preventing illegitimate border crossings to the Pelagic Islands,  
42 Sicily and the Italian mainland”, it is not clear whether the resources committed  
43 by some of the EU Member States next to Italian vessels and crew were  
44 deployed at all (Frontex 2011b). The Frontex spokesperson, Michal Parzyszek,  
45 noted that “in terms of operational assets, Italy has really well-equipped

services” and underlined that the Frontex contribution is more on risk analysis to help it to have “a better idea of what is going on, and what can happen” (*Novinite Insider* 2011). As the very nature of the process of information gathering used for risk analysis is secret, the utilised sources together with the methods of information gathering are not clear. Likewise, the information on how the identification and screening of arrived migrants is carried out is not available.

The effectiveness of the operation in terms of enhancing Italy’s ability to respond to a ‘crisis’ at its borders is questionable. The Italian Minister of the Interior, Maroni, was unhappy with the limited way of working of Frontex and asked for a new and more active role for the agency (Agneli 2011a) and even went as far as to question the value of Italy’s EU membership (Camiller 2011). Furthermore, despite receiving Frontex support for border surveillance which involved the use of the surveillance and intelligence technologies to halt the undocumented arrivals to Lampedusa, Italy could not avoid Lampedusa being the main point of entry for unwanted immigrants and asylum-seekers from North Africa.

Italy’s move of granting temporary residence permits to irregular migrants constituted the turning point for the EU and the Member States more fiercely reflected their discontent of Italy’s push for the burden-sharing by activating European temporary protection. The European Commissioner for Home Affairs (2010–2014), Cecilia Malmström, stated

we cannot see a mass influx of migrants to Europe even though some of our member states are under severe pressure. The temporary mechanism is one tool that could be used in the future, if necessary, but we have not yet reached that situation.

(Malmström 2011)

Likewise, the Spanish Minister of the Interior Alfredo Rubalcaba also argued that activating the European temporary protection for arrivals from Tunisia would not be a good idea and added that “immigrants who arrived in Italy are illegal and must return to Tunisia” (Rubalcaba 2011, quoted in Zatterin 2011). The UK Minister of Home Affairs, Theresa May, said: “I have made absolutely clear to my counterparts in Europe that we will not agree to so-called ‘burden sharing’” and also added that “Britain will not be accepting large numbers of North African migrants” (May 2011, quoted in *Expatica* 2011). May’s statement was supported by Nick Clegg, the then Deputy Prime Minister of the UK and the leader of the Liberal Democrats, who did not favour opening Britain’s borders either and said that “Italy should be offered practical assistance in helping those refugees and migrants who manage to complete the dangerous journey from Libya across the Mediterranean” (Clegg 2011, quoted in Travis 2011).

The strongest reaction to the decree passed by Italy came from France, and the French Minister of the Interior in a circular adopted on 6 April which was addressed to prefects, indicated that “residence permits and temporary permits issued by other states to citizens of third countries” were “not admissible, or eligible, unless they had been previously notified to the European Commission by

1 the issuing Member State” (Nascimbene and Di Pascale 2011: 353–354). Refer-  
2 ence was also made to the Chambery bilateral readmission agreements signed  
3 between the two countries in 1997, which allow Italy and France to request each  
4 other to take back irregular immigrants when it could be materially proven that  
5 immigrants “transited through the other country” (Campesi 2011: 15; Nascim-  
6 bene and Di Pascale 2011: 354).

7 As an extension of its reaction to Italy’s decision, France also halted train ser-  
8 vices from the border regions and instead pushed irregular arrivals over Italy  
9 back to Ventimiglia, a town located on the Italian side of the French-Italian  
10 border (Vincent 2011). The tensions between France and Italy triggered a bilat-  
11 eral summit in Rome in 26 April 2011 whose conclusions fuelled debates at the  
12 EU-level concerning the future of the Schengen regime as the policy-makers  
13 from these two countries started calling for variations in the interpretation of the  
14 treaty under exceptional circumstances (Hooper and Traynor 2011; Squares  
15 2011). In a statement the Commission noted that, “although initiatives taken by  
16 Italy and France were compatible with EU law from a formal point of view”  
17 they did not fall in line with “the spirit of the Schengen rules” (EUROPA  
18 2011c). In the joint letter sent to the Presidents of the European Council and  
19 Commission, President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Berlusconi also called for a  
20 reform of the Schengen Treaty and also “asked them to examine the possibility  
21 of restoring internal borders checks in case of exceptional difficulties in the man-  
22 agement of external borders” (ibid.). The European Commission President, José  
23 Manuel Barroso, responded by suggesting that “the re-instatement of European  
24 border controls to tackle a wave of immigration from northern Africa is a ‘pos-  
25 sibility’”, which runs the risk of making the Schengen regime obsolete by  
26 putting an end to the dream of creating a borderless Europe (Barroso 2011,  
27 quoted in Willis 2011).

28 As stated in a comment published in the *Corriere della Sera*, the evolving  
29 tension between Italy and France owed much to the pressures of the anti-  
30 immigrant parties over the other segments of the political right (Venturini 2011).  
31 The Franco-Italian affair also revealed the shortcomings of the EU-level efforts  
32 to develop co-ordinated policy initiatives in the field of immigration and border  
33 controls. The migration dispute between the French and Italian governments  
34 indicated the EU Member States’ neglect of the European principles of “solid-  
35 arity, loyal cooperation and fundamental rights” (Carrera *et al.* 2011) due to the  
36 rising populism in their domestic policy contexts. In April 2012, Cecilia Malm-  
37 ström addressed the point by stating that:

38  
39 no European State took any serious initiative to provide shelter on its own  
40 soil to those in need of international protection... Instead of solidarity  
41 among Member States, France and Italy quarrelled about possible risks for  
42 their internal security, with France even reinforcing controls at the internal  
43 border with Italy. So, instead of reaching out and protecting, the EU  
44 Member States were inward-looking and security oriented.

45 (EUROPA 2012)

**Concluding remarks**

The so-called Arab Spring acted as a litmus paper testing the strength of the solidarity of the EU-level migration management. Even though the lion's share of immigrant and asylum-seeker flows generated by the Arab Spring has been absorbed by the neighbouring countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, the reaction coming from the Northern shore of the region was alarmist and approached arrivals of immigrants and asylum-seekers as an emergency situation. While the number of arrivals to the Italian island Lampedusa was "out of the ordinary" (Nascimbene and Di Pascale 2011: 359), they were not that significant taking into account the complete size of Italy and even minimal when the size of the Schengen zone is considered. Hence, the arrivals from Tunisia offered another occasion to observe the supremacy of a securitised approach towards migration in Europe at a number of different levels.

On the side of the centre-right PdL–LN Italian government, which was one of the key actors of the crisis developed around Lampedusa, the push towards securitised border controls developed as a result of Silvio Berlusconi's increased dependence on the support of the xenophobic LN to ensure his coalition government's continuation. Thus, while the initial reaction towards mass arrivals was to confine them to the small island of Lampedusa thereby avoiding their presence in the broader Italian territory, due to the delays and uncertainties involved in the process that would define whether the migrants would be treated as 'deserving' asylum-seekers or illegal immigrants, the situation reached unsustainable levels. The improvised 'camps' and 'installations' in Lampedusa lacked the necessary capacity and facilities to keep migrants detained, and soon problems in the form of constant unrests inside these facilities and escapes from them turned into common practices by forcing the government to activate the temporary protection rule by "the art. 20 of Italian Immigration Law" and provide temporary residence permit for humanitarian reasons (Campesi 2011).

The EU and the Member States refused Italy's call for a burden-sharing mechanism and instead offered to provide further humanitarian, technical and financial assistance to Italy to 'help' it manage the arrivals in its territory. Italy's granting of temporary residence permit to some of the arrivals from Tunisia was a breaking point that reaffirmed the securitarian attitude of the European partners (Campesi 2011), as depicted most vividly by the Franco-Italian affair.

Not much has changed since the events of 2011. The tragedy that happened in October 2013, when 366 migrants drowned in a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa, once again put the Italian island on the front pages. In response, Italy set up a rescue operation programme under the name *Mare Nostrum*, 'our sea', aiming "to control the flow of migrants who try to enter Europe by boat, and to assist vessels in distress" (Povoledo 2014). While *Mare Nostrum* helped to save more than 100,000 lives in 421 operations during its one-year lifetime, it was far from being a long-term solution as its main functions were limited to

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1 search and rescue missions (Motta 2014). Apart from this, both the Italian gov-  
2 ernment and its European partners approached it as a burden. Its monthly cost  
3 for Italy was 9 million euro, an amount which was not welcomed by a state suf-  
4 fering from recession, which led Italian officials to call for increased EU burden-  
5 sharing (ibid.). The former interior minister of the Letta cabinet, Angelino  
6 Alfano, was among those who were most vocal about enhanced EU-level contri-  
7 bution. He demanded the EU put its flag on *Mare Nostrum* and argued that Italy  
8 would otherwise “let migrants with right of asylum leave for other countries”  
9 (O’Leary 2014). Yet, some of the EU Member States were concerned that the  
10 search and rescue operations created an unintentional pull factor for migrants  
11 trying to reach Europe. The UK, for example, declared that it would not be sup-  
12 porting any future search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. The UK  
13 Foreign Office Minister Baroness Anelay argued that such missions could act as  
14 an unintended pull factor, encouraging “more people to attempt to make the  
15 dangerous sea crossing to enter Europe” (BBC News 2014). As *Mare Nostrum*  
16 operations were stopped, on 7 October 2014, the EU Commissioner Cecilia  
17 Malmström issued a statement announcing that “Italy and the EU Agency  
18 Frontex are making good progress in preparing the joint operation Triton, coord-  
19 inated by Frontex” which “cannot and will not replace *Mare Nostrum*” and “will  
20 not affect the responsibilities of Member States in controlling their part of the  
21 EU’s external borders, and their obligations to the search and rescue of people in  
22 need” (Malmström 2014).

23 While the old Brussels’ policy priority to secure European borders against  
24 further migration from the Mediterranean remains intact (Fargues and Fandrich  
25 2012), the crisis in the Mediterranean continues to deepen resulting in increased  
26 number of lives lost at sea. In the absence of any search and rescue missions, for  
27 instance, another massive tragedy occurred in April 2015 where as many as 800  
28 men, women and children lost their lives in a shipwreck off the Italian coast  
29 (UNHCR 2015). Even though the official aims of policy frameworks such as the  
30 EMP (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) and the ENP (European Neighbourhood  
31 Policy) were to create an area of dialogue, peace, stability and prosperity in the  
32 Mediterranean, the friction between the Italian government and its European  
33 partners remains.

34 Alas, without enhanced forms of co-operation, both the EU institutions and  
35 the Member States seem unable to cope with the ongoing Mediterranean crisis.  
36 Setting up an intra-EU relocation scheme based on a system of quotas, which  
37 would more equitably distribute refugees and asylum-seekers across 28 coun-  
38 tries, would ease part of the pressure on Italy. Yet, in the absence of commonly  
39 shared policy priorities and clearly defined EU immigration policy agenda, it  
40 is not very likely for such a scheme to emerge soon and function efficiently.  
41 Furthermore, the fact that immigration is a highly politicised and incendiary  
42 topic across the EU makes managing migratory arrivals a difficult task for the  
43 policy-makers in Brussels. In order for real change to happen, European politi-  
44 cians should resist the temptation to criminalise and further politicise immigra-  
45 tion. Instead, additional legal entry channels should be created through tighter



collaboration among the Member States. The core problem does not lie with irregular migration, but with dysfunctional immigration policies and alarmist rhetoric.

## Notes

- 1 The Mediterranean partners initially involved Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Turkey. Currently the EMP is composed of 44 members, 28 of which are the EU Member States, including Cyprus and Malta that joined the EU in 2004. The numbers of the partnering countries increased to 15 with the membership of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mauritania, Monaco and Montenegro.
- 2 Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom are the only four EU countries that provide annual statistics of (legal) immigrant stocks by country of nationality until 1 January 2012 (Fargues and Fandrich 2012: 3).
- 3 For further reference see Fargues and Fandrich (2012).
- 4 Fargues (2011: 3) notes that the proportion of Tunisians who have considered emigration has substantially expanded “from 22 percent in 1996 to 45 percent in 2000, and a dramatic 76 percent in 2005”.
- 5 The bilateral agreements with Egypt and Libya were signed on January 2007 and December 2007 respectively. The development of the Italian-Libyan relations would be a particularly striking example revealing that the political rhetoric might not always be reflected in the policy outcomes. As Marchetti (2010) notes, over the course of the years Italian-Libyan relations “have become closer and closer” no matter whether it was a left- or a right-wing government.
- 6 *Tangentopoli* (usually translated as ‘Bribeville’ or ‘Kick-back city’) was the term used to refer to the corruption of the system revealed by the *Mani Pulite* (‘clean hands’) investigations during 1992–1996, which led to the disintegration of the two parties that had been part of the Italian political life since its unification, namely the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) (Pasquino 2003). The only political parties that remained out of the scandal were the isolated neo-fascist Italian Social Movement-National Right (MSI-DS) (ibid.) and the LN.

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## 5 Tunisian migrants' journey through the Mediterranean

*Aide Esu and Simone Maddanu*<sup>1</sup>

If we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, ..., you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development ..., but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence.

(Foucault 1986, 27)

### Introduction

In the second half of March 2011, thousands of undocumented Tunisians reached the coast of Lampedusa, taking advantage of the collapse of border control following the political fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.<sup>2</sup> The island facilities, designed for a maximum of 800 people, were soon heavily overcrowded. More than five thousand migrants camped in the countryside, creating an unsuitable situation for both the migrants and the people of Lampedusa. The assistance of the citizens of Lampedusa and the devotion of volunteers and the Coast Guard counterbalanced the Italian government's organisational inertia, demanding a joint European Union effort to cope with the situation. In an attempt to unify the national political spirit and pressure the government to address the difficult conditions of the illegal aliens who had landed in Lampedusa, President Giorgio Napolitano called for national cooperation and solidarity, requesting that other regions shelter the migrants. In the first week of April, the Interior Minister permitted moving the migrants to other detention centres in order to clear Lampedusa. During the displacement procedures, the government issued a decree law allowing local authorities to grant six-month residence permits for humanitarian reasons.<sup>3</sup>

The northern Italian regions, where anti-migration opinion prevails, ignored President Napolitano's call for solidarity. Sardinian local authorities made available a former police centre and quickly adapted it into a reception and identification camp<sup>4</sup> (RIC) to shelter the migrants. The decree law<sup>5</sup> did not consider this specific group of migrants to be illegal aliens but placed them in a limbo similar to that of refugee status, so local authorities could adopt a flexible policy

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1 regarding their freedom. On 5 April, more than 700 migrants were displaced to  
2 Cagliari in Sardinia. Almost all were Tunisians.

### 4 **Heterotopia and the state of vulnerability**

5  
6 This research based on direct narrations sheds light on the Mediterranean journey  
7 of Tunisian migrants and explores their lives during their stay in the RIC in  
8 Cagliari during three weeks in April 2011. The unique combination of three dis-  
9 placements in a short period of time makes the metaphor of the boat acutely  
10 meaningful in capturing the complex consequences of these migrants' journeys.  
11 Foucault's<sup>6</sup> embryonic description of utopias and heterotopias has stimulated a  
12 deep debate in social and urban sciences; the concept has been explored from  
13 several perspectives and given rise to the so-called space turn, playing a key role  
14 in urban studies. Heterotopia also animates some conflicting interpretations and  
15 criticisms: Soja (1995) argues that Foucault's ideas are incomplete, inconsistent  
16 and sometimes incoherent, while Genocchio (1995) raises objections to the  
17 extensive application of the concept. Despite these views, as Dehaene and De  
18 Cauter (2008) point out, the concept of heterotopia reoriented the debate on  
19 urbanity and public space, becoming a source of inspiration, being enriched by  
20 the English translation of LeVèbvre and de Certeau, and promoting the  
21 reinvention of the everyday life and space discourse.

22 Heterotopias are described as sites "that have the curious property of being in  
23 relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or  
24 invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect"  
25 (Foucault 1986, 24). These spaces are utopias and by contrast heterotopias.  
26 Society and history assign different meanings and functions to heterotopias. **The  
27 ship, in this case study, is in [redacted]'s Tunisia a fish boat transformed after the  
28 Jasmine Revolution into a means of transportation to the EU border.**

29 Why do we use the concept of heterotopia in this research? Foucault's evalu-  
30 ation of the "ship as the heterotopia par excellence" is our reference point for  
31 interpretation. We investigate a stage of migrants' journey (the three weeks spent  
32 in Cagliari) as a lull in their floating travels, a juxtaposition (temporal and  
33 spatial) that generates other spaces (the encampment, the profiling procedures in  
34 the migration office, the public space). The immigrants' semi-free status opens  
35 new questions about their social experience of space, the everyday walking prac-  
36 tices, the relation with the public space and the contact with a different culture.

37 Foucault uses the metaphor of the mirror to describe the relation between  
38 space and utopia. He considers the social experience of space to be an intersec-  
39 tion of simultaneity and juxtaposition, near and far, side-by-side and dispersed  
40 (Foucault 1986, 22). Spaces are simultaneously physical and mental. To high-  
41 light the physical-mental space relation, we refer to the daydream as the territory  
42 of utopia, the imaginary of a better life in the future (the mental space) and the  
43 daily experience in the city (the physical space). The dialogue between the inner  
44 space (the dream to succeed) and the heterotopia creates a mixed experience  
45 (Foucault 1986, 24) in which dream, memory and courage melt together to

create this human experience. Hope represents the opportunity beyond existing reality, feeds the “utopia [that] afford[s] consolation” (Foucault 1986), and bypasses fear (Bloch 1996, 3). Ernst Bloch, reflecting on the ways to survive in Nazi concentration camps, identifies the daytime dream as a strategy to balance hope and action for change. Illegal migrants live in a state of permanent, nagging fear that does not abandon them until the end of the journey (Laacher 2005, 120). Utopia helps them cope with this feeling. In this case, the semi-free status helps to develop the dynamic relation between the physical and the mental space; utopia expands as much as fear and frustration increase. The daydream soothes migrants’ affliction. At the same time, the walking practice brings them back to a concrete living space and links them to a social reality, the relation with a concrete space curtails the utopia, and thus fear can be appeased.

“Camp-like situations” (Dehaene and de Cauter 2008, 5) are the new frontier of heterotopic studies that pay attention to the transformations in everyday life and to the state organisations engendered by the securitisation process. Following Agamben’s (2003) definition of the state of exception as a life in a space where the law is suspended and as a place of exclusion where private and public life are separate, Dehaene and de Cauter (2008, 5) declares “the camp [to be] the grimmest symptom of a postcivil urbanism”. Migrants are embedded in a precarious reality, experiencing a camp-like situation. They are subject to the biopower practices, to the whole set of technologies formed to discipline and govern normativity (Foucault 1979). Migrants’ vulnerability comes up against the governmentability; they are at the core of the process of “a model for conceptualizing power in its diffuse and multivalent operations, focusing on the management of populations, and operating through state and non-state institutions and discourses” (Butler, 2004, 51). They undergo a set of *dispositifs* based on the logic of exclusion, collecting the information and profiling to classify social groups and frame who is in or outside the normal. Normality and deviance are reframed by the emerging codes of the securitisation process; but the technologies of surveillance applied against state vulnerabilities and threats (migrants, terrorists) reveal a lack of care for legal and social guarantees (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008).

The migrants who landed at Lampedusa are involved in these securitisation practices. In this case study, the RIC camp is like a “waiting zone” (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008, 37), where securitisation practices are applied in order to issue six-month residence permits. The period of time (three weeks) is too short to allow for the creation of the complexities that characterise social relations in refugee encampments, including tensions and suffering (Agier 2008). The semi-coercive lifestyle in the RIC has common features with Goffman’s concept of total institutions. RIC structures can be considered a contemporary form of the total institution as a formally administered place of residence and work (Goffman 2001). In the RIC, the work dimension – prisons and asylums in the case of Goffman (2001) – is less relevant than in the classic description. The institutionalisation process affects notions of self, the meaning of the loss of security, and the system of privileges which compensates for and controls anxieties generated by the spatial and temporal upheaval of the exile condition.

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## The fieldwork's heuristic

1        Within this theoretical framework, the research explores migrants' inner space  
2        from different perspectives: their journey biographies and precarious life waiting  
3        for the delivery of temporary papers, their mixed feelings of fear and hope in the  
4        condition of limited rights and threatened annihilation, and their walking prac-  
5        tices as a way to manage identity dispossession and fear. Considering that the  
6        state of exception begins at the moment of disembarkation in Lampedusa (iden-  
7        tification and depersonalisation procedures, deportation for those under police  
8        records), we examine migrants' identity trajectories: the decision to leave the  
9        homeland, the heterotopic experience of being here and elsewhere in a situation  
10       of high insecurity. In their migration journey, Cagliari is a stage of forced relo-  
11       cation following the evacuation of Lampedusa, a time of deferral in their lives  
12       spent waiting for a temporary passport. Looking at this case, it is evident that  
13       geographical dislocation plays a basic role in the memory of the journey: the  
14       village, the place of departure, the Mediterranean crossing in an overcrowded  
15       boat, the disembarking, Lampedusa; the evacuation, the 48 hours in a boat  
16       garage waiting for a new location;<sup>7</sup> and finally the landing in Cagliari and, then  
17       again, the crossing of the sea for a new destination in Europe. It is clear that the  
18       exodus followed by a shaky landing in the middle of the Mediterranean and  
19       forced displacement to an unknown place exposes the migrants to an extraordi-  
20       narily heterotopic situation.

21       The weak limitations on migrants made them visible in the city. The first day,  
22       they colonised the RIC's surrounding area in a continuous flow of inquiries and  
23       observations about the new place; day by day, their exploration became fearless  
24       until they reached downtown. This crucial event drew our interest, and we  
25       explored the practicality of doing research on this migration stage. We met  
26       migrants during their outings from the camp in the north-western area city. We  
27       had daily appointments in Sant'Avendrace square, the migrants' first stopping  
28       point while discovering the city. We walked with them, sometimes wandering  
29       aimlessly, crossing the city before returning to the camp again. The discussions,  
30       questions and answers, both theirs and ours, were developed along a track from  
31       a café near the camp to downtown, sometimes walking for hours. The methodo-  
32       logical choices were gradually made pragmatically, adapted on a day-to-day  
33       basis due to the uncertainty caused by local authorities' daily agenda. We con-  
34       tacted the migrants at the entrance to the RIC, on the streets, at the police migra-  
35       tion office and along the dock, observing the boarding procedures when they left  
36       the city. Every single choice was governed by this unpredictable agenda.

37       Gradually, an urban ethnography took shape. We triangulated the data with  
38       ethnographic methods, such as observations, interviews and spending time  
39       together in the city. The participant observation was tailored on a daily basis by  
40       the field practice. We walked with the migrants through the city and became  
41       familiar with some places, soon identifiable as meeting points. At the end,  
42       we could draw a map of the migrants' urban mobility and meeting places. The  
43       daily field practice reinforced cooperation, trust and reciprocity; we shared  
44         
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information, growing the mutual ethos of trust. The migrants needed information about Italian politicians and decision-makers and the EU policies regulating the process of the obtaining temporary passports that would allow them to circulate in the Schengen area. Reading and translating the newspapers became a daily routine. Ethnographers formulated the idea of the “trust game” (Cardano 2011, 126) as a strategy in the field research setting to build relationships with informants. Our trust game was played in the daily translation of newspapers, which strengthened the climate of mutual sharing and open dialogue upon which we built the heuristic of observation. We collected information through a stream of mutual exchanges, such as accounts of “*What [do] people in the city say about us?*” Unable to enter the camp which was inaccessible to unaccredited visitors like us, we decided to collect descriptions of the camp through the migrants’ voices. We gradually reassembled the narrations composed through fragmented discourses gathered in repeated daily talks, short interviews, conversations and information exchanges. The narrative flow was strongly affected by the migrants’ emotional state. We decided not to force their accounts through lengthy questioning; we preferred to let them feel free to tell their stories in a more discursive way. The obsessive repetition of the word ‘stress’ testified to their emotional condition and revealed an obstacle to explaining their present situation and the inability to face their disheartening state. Migrants were beset with daily worries related to the issuance of temporary residency permits and tormented by uncertainty about authorisation to circulate in the Schengen area. The camp surveillance devices and rules curtailed individual will and desire; migrants were powerless witnesses of their present and frustrated by the inability to plan their future. Sharing information was crucial in their routines, even if it meant a tiring, distressful balance between the need to know and the fear of knowing.

### The journey, from harbour to harbour

When we meet them, they smile. They look happy and glad of the city’s welcome: “*Beautiful city. People are nice*”, they say. When we mention the journey from Tunisia to Lampedusa, though, they do not smile anymore. Often, they repeat the word “bad” (*mauvais*). Ali becomes our main informant. He is a 30-year-old man from Djerba, who has crossed the Italian (and so the European) border ten times, so he is a veteran of the illegal immigration. Within a week, Ali, like his 700 companions, embodied Foucault’s sense of heterotopias: the journey from Zarzis to Lampedusa, the stay on the island, and then the transfer to Cagliari and a temporary arrangement at the camp. We met him outside the camp. He is alone, sitting on a bench and smiling at the people walking by. He is apparently trustful, perhaps because it is his first day of freedom in the city. He does not have any money, and no one was going to lend to him, but he was hopeful about this journey. Like the others, Ali’s dream is to live elsewhere. He had worked as an entertainer in Djerba to save money so that he could leave whenever he had the opportunity. Perhaps the recurring, internal sense of fear

1 (Laacher 2005) in the migrants' discourses reflects the tangle of emotions experi-  
 2 enced since the departure, and the journey's memory: the wind, the seawater, the  
 3 fear of sinking. Even after two weeks of daily meetings, few answer questions  
 4 related to the crossing between Zarzis and Lampedusa. Mustapha, like others,  
 5 cannot swim and had never seen the sea. Some tell us that they took seats beside  
 6 those who could swim.<sup>8</sup>

7  
 8 I'm not able to swim.... The sea was rough. But we survived, didn't we? I  
 9 don't know what would have happened if things had gone differently....  
 10 [laughing] But I'm here now, aren't I?

11 (Mustapha, 19 years old)

12  
 13 During the crossing, everybody was speechless. Fear and loneliness were  
 14 common feelings in the crowded boat. Some migrants survived high risks with a  
 15 flooded engine, including Hamza who spent 48 hours in the water with the boat's  
 16 motor cut off due to engine flooding. Only Hamza attempts to express the  
 17 meaning of the word "bad" (*mauvais*).

18  
 19 Why did I convince myself to leave? Why, why? If you offered me 10  
 20 million dinars to do the crossing again, I would answer you 10 million  
 21 times no!

22 (Hamza, 23 years old)

23  
 24 Before the *harraga*,<sup>9</sup> others like Ali waited for years for the right opportunity.  
 25 The migrants' syncopated narrations tell of a Mediterranean odyssey, followed  
 26 by endless, suspended lives moving from port to port, and the memory of float-  
 27 ing, the mirror of their distressful conditions. The passage from Lampedusa to  
 28 Cagliari was no less tragic than the crossing from Tunisia.

29  
 30 Three days between Tunisia and Lampedusa. Then, they took us to another  
 31 boat [ferries]. The all seven hundred people! Into the boat car park, with  
 32 nothing, just sitting on the iron floor.... It was so hard, with all these big  
 33 bolts! ... Two days and two nights, in front of Civitavecchia and then  
 34 Cagliari ... But, is Cagliari an island? ... So, after [all] we [will] have to  
 35 take the boat again! [laughing].

36 (Moustafa, 19 years old)

37  
 38 Such fragmented flashbacks occur when we ask, "*What about the crossing from*  
 39 *Tunisia?*" Crossing the sea intensified disorientation. People from rural areas  
 40 sometimes do not have good geographical perceptions of Tunisia or their next  
 41 destination. This confusion appears when they ask about the geographical loca-  
 42 tion of the city or request us to draw a map of France.

43 Ali, as a veteran of the *harraga*, is very good at hiding his fears and prefers to  
 44 show hope and optimism. His past migration failures seem to be ignored by his  
 45 fellow companions who are persuaded that "*each journey has its own story*" and

“everyone tries to grasp his own chances” (Ali, Nader, Mustafa, Hamza), like a personal God for everyone, an opportunity for everybody.<sup>10</sup>

### Exploring the city: *flâneur* or semi-free men?

During the first days of exploration, the migrants’ path follows a linear trajectory, going back and forth in the same way. As they become familiar with the city, their trajectories become circular and fragmented and let them get lost in downtown’s narrow streets and alleys and move into other areas, such as the sea-coast along the harbour. Migrants explore the city, looking for a bank willing to change dinars to euro and seeking a public telephone, and very often find that Western Union and Money Gram offer the same services. Once migrants become familiar with the places and feel secure, we can fix appointments in downtown. Often, we do not schedule appointments but meet in the Sant’Avendrace cafés where migrants feel comfortable or simply wherever a group decides to stop at random. Day by day, the spatial meanings, as de Certeau (1998) defines them, take form according to the pattern fixed by the urban design (149). The urban design influences and orients path choices in the RIC surroundings. The camp is in the first section of Viale Elmas, the arterial road leading into the city. For decades, it had been a lawless place on the city periphery and remains a hybrid area, half-suburban but without any sidewalks. The migrants take a safer minor road, and Sant’Avendrace Avenue becomes their main way into the city. Following de Certeau (1998), the pedestrian speech act “actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there)” (98). Thus, in their urban experience, migrants re-create “a near and far, a here and a there” (de Certeau 1998, 99) related to their walking style. First, they explore the area near the RIC, “colonising” the surrounding bads and stopovers along the perimeter of the camp’s fence. The migrants’ many movements make this place visible to journalists and citizens who cross into the area to interview them or offer some aid. Stability – as Mitchell (2002, 177) interprets the sense of place in de Certeau’s thought – assigns a precise connotation to this localisation. Soon, this place is labelled the Tunisian camp.

Walking with migrants, confirming their viewpoints and smoking cigarettes with them supports the trust game (Cardano 2011), even if the conversations do not follow the research aims. Questions and answers occasionally appear disconnected and extemporaneous. Sometimes migrants answer serious questions in an ironic manner. Often they seem to minimise both past and present dramatic events and future risks and uncertainties. Some inquiries remain unanswered, and the outcome of migrants’ journeys seems to be a matter of fortuitous events or wishful destiny, rather than personal action and will. They downplay and take pleasure in their semi-free status, and their need to leave behind the harsh days in Lampedusa makes them feel better. “*We are like tourists in Sardinia*”, say Ali, Ramzy and Nader, taking photos with a cellphone and offering drinks to the group of six in a bar. They feel a little bit at home: Cagliari is Mediterranean; “*it’s almost Tunisia*”.



1 Repeated walking makes them familiar with squares and roads, and they feel  
2 safe in exploring the city. Day by day, they create a personal “rhetoric of  
3 walking” (de Certeau 1998, 100), which makes it possible to capture their style:  
4 alone or paired, or grouped, walking through the same roads. As well, being  
5 visible overcomes the concept of the rhetoric of walking, and they become part  
6 of the landscape, though discernible as the “Tunisians from Lampedusa”. The  
7 local media’s attention is focused on the unusual situation in the city, and daily  
8  
9



Figure 5.1 Migrants' urban trajectory.

accounts of legal procedures and citizens' reaction to the migrants' presence appear in the headlines. Within two weeks, locals become familiar with these young men hanging about in the city, and the migrants thus become less visible but still contribute to changing the social space. The city's reaction is highly positive, locals are proud to show solidarity, and groups of citizens visit the RIC area to offer food and clothes in the first days of the migrants' stay. During their stay, three minor cases of conflict with the local population are reported.

Walking downtown or discovering the arcades along the seaport, the aesthetics, architecture and beauty of this Mediterranean city ease the migrants' future expectations. Tunisians are highly visible downtown because they all dress in the same clothes handed out by Caritas (a non-governmental organisation); some wear Montana University sweatshirts and white shoes with the Italian flag. Once they catch a smile or other sign of approval, they stop hiding their identity, age and reason why they left Tunisia, as they had done in Lampedusa. By now, their only secrets are their personal, intimate dreams, hopes and fears. Their repeated thoughts concern the Italian government's decisions and the daily news about how to manage the next stage of their journey. They are wishful, of course, saying "*Insh'Allah*" (if God wills). Their daydreams surface from time to time. The discourses of hope and dream are mixed in Ali and Najah and clearly appear in the form of possibilities that go beyond actual reality.

How many days will they keep us here? Anyhow, I have to go to France. In Paris, I will find a job. Is there work in France? ... I'm able to do everything: house painter, bricklayer. ... I can also work in catering or as a mechanic.... Then, I could find a woman to get married.... I will stay in France until I have earned enough! ... Once I have arrived in France, I will be able to send money to my family. I have to pay back!

(Ali, 30 years old)

I have to go to Oslo. Then I can get married to my girlfriend. She is older than me. I met her in Djerba last year, and she told me to join her [in Oslo]. Just before, I called her to say I'm in Cagliari. She was very angry [laughing].... But she was angry because she was afraid I could have died.

(Najah, 26 years old)

*Flâner* throughout the city relieves the migrants' anguish and fear of failing. Failure means repatriation. The bravery, the courage to make the dangerous journey is the result of self-deception, of self-persuasion. They show levity in describing their choices, but they prefer not to talk about the terrible risks of those choices. To reach the other side of the Mediterranean, they took the risks of passing through the securitisation process, such as possible detention. The journey in an overcrowded, tumbledown fishing boat – a Dantesque Charon that cost 700–800 euro – was the worst memory of the migrants' *harragas*. The journey means separation from their previous life and required the courage to



1 end their precarious lives in Tunisia, as they describe their everyday life, waiting  
 2 for better economic opportunities and more freedom. They tell us how difficult  
 3 living in Tunisia is, even doing simple things like having a drink in a different  
 4 city or stopping in a square. Looking at what they have left behind, the migrants  
 5 truly appreciate their state of semi-freedom. As Najah says:

6  
 7 Here [downtown Cagliari], we are able to drink coffee peacefully. There is  
 8 the freedom here. Ah, the Italian coffee ... We went to Monastir, and they  
 9 [police] turn us away. They said, "What are doing here? Why are you at the  
 10 bar? What do you want? Go back home!" Sometimes they bring you to the  
 11 barracks. They hit you. Do you see my shaved head? I was in the bar when  
 12 they brought me to the barracks. I stayed there for 42 hours. Then they  
 13 shaved my head and they sent me back home.

14 (Najah, 28 years old)

15  
 16 Walking through Cagliari's streets, being able to have coffee in a bar and enjoy  
 17 life in public places, and being a free person are the Tunisian migrants' thera-  
 18 peutic remedies. The habit of walking daily transforms the place from hostile to  
 19 familiar, makes the space friendly, and improves the embodiment of space  
 20 (Leroi-Gourhan 1964). Then, migrants can create the imaginary of a journey in a  
 21 safe place. As they become familiar with the path from downtown to the RIC,  
 22 they explore the narrow streets of the Marina, the old fishermen's neighbour-  
 23 hood. They discover a friendly city and popular tourist attraction with outdoor  
 24 space and people standing in terraces and squares but also quickly come across  
 25 the other side of Cagliari: the jobless workers' union pickets.<sup>11</sup> Although Cagliari  
 26 appears to be a pleasant, amiable city with a familiar landscape, migrants are  
 27 aware that Sardinia cannot be their last destination.

### 28 29 **Precarious lives: the day-by-day hope**

30  
 31 What happens in the camp remains largely unknown to us. Except for the police,  
 32 only Caritas volunteer workers in charge of aid can freely enter the camp. The  
 33 stories we report come from the migrants' narrations, so accounts of the camp's  
 34 everyday life are incomplete and full of omissions. However, we can point out  
 35 some elements. Along with walking around the city, mealtimes (breakfast  
 36 8 a.m.–10 a.m., lunch 12 p.m.–2 p.m., dinner 6:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m.) mark the daily  
 37 rhythm in the camp. The camp authorities take advantage of mealtimes to give  
 38 and receive general information. During the emergency, the local authorities had  
 39 quickly rehabilitated an abandoned military barracks, so all 700 illegal migrants  
 40 are placed in two large rooms and some medium-sized rooms equipped with  
 41 bunk beds. Outside, a huge playground allows some to practise soccer. The bar-  
 42 racks area is outlined by a fence. The migrants' ambiguous legal status which  
 43 leaves them in the category of asylum-seekers allows them to come and go from  
 44 the camp as they wish. However, a few days after their arrival, some restrictions  
 45 are imposed on the use of the main door. The migrants slash the fence, and by

hanging onto an electricity pole and leaning against an uneven wall, they can reach the breach and open the gate.

Waiting for their temporary papers, the migrants sit on the camp courtyard chain-smoking cigarettes distributed by volunteers. The majority of the migrants follow *al-zuhr*, the Islamic Friday prayer. Very few pray daily. Sari, a 25- to 30-year-old man, is accepted by the migrant community as its temporary imam. Sometimes, the group makes jokes about his long, bushy beard. The imam is perhaps one of the few people who never leave the camp. It is rumoured that “*he doesn’t want to fall into temptation. . . . He wants to preserve his integrity*” (field-work notes). Sari’s moral leadership is accepted and appreciated, especially when he tries to cool down the recurring fights, mostly in the evenings and often exacerbated by high consumption of alcohol and the lack of privacy. The migrants’ reports upon returning to camp serve to create Sari’s city imaginary. Generally, the role of religion seems to be limited. Camp authorities observe Islamic dietary rules, offering *halal* meat and fish, in addition to rice and pasta. Migrants can live religion in their personal manner, and it is rarely used to emphasise differences. However, for the migrants, it is crucial to accomplish their purpose, their dream, and thus they move in an intangible space between chance, will and destiny. “*Insha’Allah, God willing*”, they repeat. They leave their lives in God’s hands, hoping that he will be merciful and forgive their sins. Sometimes the migrants seem to make a vow of religious return once their dream of a stable life and stable work is accomplished.

The RIC is a hybrid detention body. Migrants are aware that the camp is a shelter for sleeping, food, cigarettes and clothes, but above all, they are aware that respectful behaviour is the only way to obtain the temporary resident papers. For those who spend their time in the camp, it is also a place for debating, where they reflect on their daily experiences. However, for those without a cellphone, it is a lonely cage. It is a place where frustrations due to the state of uncertainty lead to fights and aggression against the authorities or among migrants. When discouragement wins out, migrants lie in bed all day long, trying to overcome the stress and the depression. That is how Ali’s fellows explain his absence that day.

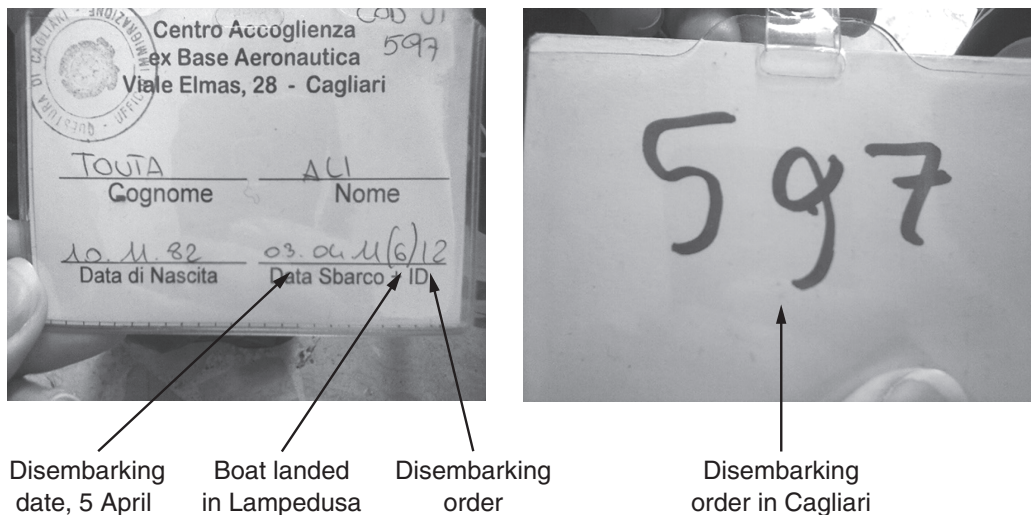
Today, Ali stays in the camp. He stays in bed. He does nothing. . . . He tosses and turns. He didn’t want go out. Too much stress! Too much stress [laughing].

(Nader, 23 years old and Ramzy, 25 years old)

Anxiety and hope are the two main feelings of the illegal aliens waiting for their temporary papers. Sometimes, in their distressed state of mind, sorrow, pain and hope overlap. Quick changes of mood depend on the unpredictable decisions of the authorities; waiting for papers is like living in limbo. The migrants’ suspended rights are (Butler 2004, 13) the core experience of their everyday life, even if the freedom to be in the city mitigates this state of mind. However, migrants still remain subject to the devices of the microphysics of power. The

1 daily rhythm of breakfasts and other meals, the control procedures, the recording  
 2 of personal information, the assignment of a new identification number, all are  
 3 beyond the migrants' control. They know neither how long they will stay nor  
 4 where they will be allowed to go: the Schengen area or in Italy. Their hope needs  
 5 to be fed by imagining a better life. Their tangible reality is the camp's micro  
 6 disciplines: the daily controls and profiling procedures, the internal tensions  
 7 between migrants fuelled by alcohol, and the absence of privacy in the over-  
 8 crowded space. The rising tensions take a political turn when two hunger strikes  
 9 are held to protest the lack of information and recognition of migrants' rights in  
 10 the camp. The fear of forced repatriation to Tunisia keeps returning. The semi-  
 11 coercive life in the camp calls attention to some features of Goffman's concept  
 12 of total institutions. First, the dispossession process resulting in the deprivation  
 13 of the identity toolkit is manifested in identification devices. Names disappear  
 14 from ID badges, and a personal identification number becomes migrants' new  
 15 ID, referring to a personal file. Identity traces are stored in police memory  
 16 devices, gathering detailed knowledge about migrants' lives ruled by the state of  
 17 exception.

18 The meaning of the loss of security for inmates (Goffman 2001, 51) is voiced  
 19 in the questions that fuel their anxiety and stress: "*What do they know about me?*  
 20 *Why do they require all this information? Why are they taking my fingerprints?*"  
 21 Stress, a theme so often repeated in their narratives, is the accumulation of the  
 22 risks undertaken: the perilous navigation, the landing, the mortification of self by  
 23 the state of exception devices, and the lack of privacy in the camp. Like the classi-  
 24 cal description of the inmates' world, their anxiety fosters a sense of helplessness  
 25 regarding their wishes. We find a system of privileges (Goffman 2001, 83), the  
 26 camp management makes concessions such as a tolerant attitude towards of the  
 27 fence breach or the distribution of cigarettes in order to contain internal tensions.



44 Figure 5.2 Provisional ID.

45 Source: authors.

Migrants ignore the government's intentions and are kept in a state of anxiety due to this lack of information. Reading newspapers with us helps control this state of mind. The information received prompts some to reassess their future projects or re-evaluate the concerns, questions and hopes, as Ali and Jamal do.

... What does Sarkozy say? If he doesn't allow entry... And to Milan? Otherwise, I can go to Milan, just to find a job ... after, with the papers ... anything [as job]. Then, if I get a job, I can get the papers ... after I'm able to go to France...? ... Otherwise, if I like Milan, I could stay there.

(Ali, 30 years old)

Berlusconi is a good guy! I know, [laughing] he's a bit like Ben Ali. But he [Berlusconi] said we could go to France. It is Sarkozy who does not want us. What is the name of the minister who said that? ... In one way or another, [I'll get to France]. Can we go to Belgium? And what is the best route to take?

(Jamal, 32 years old)

Since their departure, the migrants have endured corruption, lies and legal violations. They paid local mafias for an uninsured, one-way ticket. Migrants know very well the illegal ways to cross European borders. They know, or they learn quickly, how to adapt to tough circumstances and how to manage no-win situations. The ruse and the arrangement are not the exception. They need to find an Italian phone card and to withdraw the money sent from Tunisia without an identity card. Since the first days after the migrants' arrival, some (among these regular migrants living in Cagliari) have offered them fake employment contracts, useful for getting a year-long residency paper. These contracts are sold in Tunisia for approximately 3,000 dinars or 1,500 euro, but in this emergency situation, the price rises to 2,000 (3,500 euro).<sup>12</sup> According to the migrants interviewed after they had left Cagliari and arrived in France, many illegal aliens, not only those who arrived recently in Lampedusa, travel to Italy to buy fake employment contracts. The price is between 1,000 and 1,200 euro for a year-long contract, plus 60–100 euro for a monthly salary invoice and more than 300 euro for fake permanent papers. Migrants work off the books to collect the money to buy a fake contract. They are the pillar of this contract market, usually run by Italians and North Africans. Migrants seeking legal status are the greatest feeders of this illegal system. The migrants with whom we talk are not shocked at all by this system; they are aware that they are the victims of this market, prisoners in this vicious cycle. They are disenchanted by justice in Tunisia, and it is clear that the corruption of politicians and law officers puts the migrants in the category of law-breakers. Some describe breaching legal behaviour in order to obtain a public good as white lies. They do not feel they are in the wrong but, rather, taking a risk in order to get the opportunity to succeed in Europe,<sup>13</sup> even by means of white lies. White lies are useful and necessary, sometimes the only way for migrants to achieve their dream as victims of untrustworthy institutions and justice.



## Talking about revolution

The research took part in the aftermath of a crucial historical moment for Tunisia and, by viral effect, for the entire Arab world (Castells 2012; Khosrokhavar 2012; Lynch 2012). In this context, talking about the revolution was unavoidable. We collected some information related to the uprising and the opportunities opened by the lack of border control. We report some significant opinions that reveal an interesting vision of the revolution, far from the one portrayed by international media.

The migrants' reasons for leaving their country are various, often individual goals that reflect family hopes. The main motivation remains the desire to improve economic conditions. The recurring answer to the question "why leave now?" is that they took advantage of weakening surveillance during the Ben Ali transition. Leaving now is seen as a way to catch an opportunity, sometimes without enough planning, as Ramzy testifies.

My cousin told me there was enough place for two, three people for the next night. So I said goodbye to my friends, I took the money I had saved, and I left.... I called my mother when I was here [Cagliari]. She cried. My father was angry ... But my brothers were happy, and they encouraged me.

(Ramzy, 25 years old)

The stories about the days of Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution stay shrouded in secrecy.<sup>14</sup> No one among the migrants is talkative about or proud of the uprising. They tell us of being part of the street uprising, as they call it, but show disenchantment about the revolution's goals and results, as seen in Amar's testimony.

What revolution? There wasn't any revolution.... Ah, yeah, I understand. On the streets ... against the police. Of course, everybody was on the streets. We stayed for three days on the streets. We smashed everything, we set [things] on fire.... After, the police left ...

(Amar, 26 years old)

Unlike the general interpretation portrayed in media coverage, the uprising does not appear to the migrants to be a turning point, or *tranchant* (Ricoeur 1991), in their country's recent history and current situation. The mistrust of the Tunisian ruling class and the weak institutions pushed them to consider migration to build a better life in Europe as their only hope.

Of course, Ben Ali's downfall is great! He was a dictator. Corruption! You couldn't do anything without the Trabelsi clan's permission.<sup>15</sup> They stole everything.... So now, what do you think you could do in Tunisia? They still are there. And there is nothing; it does not work. I went to the streets to protest.

(Jamal, 32 years old)



The group we met in Cagliari does not seem to be ready to act in the democratic reconstruction of their country. They do not believe in its potential, and they never practiced politics; their material needs are too urgent, and they do not imagine themselves as actors in the present and the future of Tunisia. Being in the street did not have an exclusively political meaning. Migrants' accounts of those days testify to spontaneous participation and the expression of the need to occupy a meaningful public space, to join an uprising, and to acquire the opportunity to share in the new situation. Attending rallies, they grasp the historical moment as a social and individual need, even if they cannot attribute any political interpretation to it. They seem to accept a subordinate role in this historical moment. They prefer to leave and try their destiny by crossing the sea and following the dream of a new life. Our questions reveal to them how the Tunisian turmoil drew interest and made sense beyond the Tunisia borders. They answer our questions, quite surprised that "we knew about them", about their facts and the events. Our questions make them feel like key social actors, and we probably encourage them to present themselves in that way. Perhaps, talking about these events in a new way raises doubts regarding the meaning of these actions. The topic of the post-Ben Ali reconstruction makes them most reflexive, especially when we ask why, if they took part in the uprising, they left Tunisia.

The Revolution? Ah, Ben Ali? Ben Ali ran away. But nothing has changed... Yes, something will change, but not now. Now there is a critical situation. Police aren't there as before ... All Tunisians were on the streets! [laughing] To change really, that needs at least four years, definitely. After, maybe ... living in Tunisia will be great. Maybe I'll come back. But now, what can I do? There is nothing to do in Tunisia. We have to wait.

(Mustafa, 19 years old)

Reflecting on migrant identity, Sayad (1999) points out the conflicting mindset of simultaneously being a migrant and an immigrant. He elaborates on the concept of migrants experiencing a "double absence" from the sense of absence from their native society and a lack of responsibility to that country. The migrant, though, remains an outsider in the host society, where he is perceived only as part of the labour force subject to a conditional and revocable residency status. In this context, Sayad (1999) elaborates on the idea of blame originating from the double absence. Once again, migrant blame (Sayad 1999, 25–51) resurfaces, a feeling of incompleteness which illegal migrants might deliberately deny in order to keep determination to reach their goals strong in their minds. This sense of blame is an active element in the fear of being forced to repatriate. These migrants might experience a double frustration: the inability to change their life and find a new destiny in Europe and the denial of their own responsibilities in the search for a new, collective destiny in Tunisia.

## Conclusions

In this analysis of Tunisian migrants' experiences, Foucault's concept of heterotopia is useful to highlight the complexities of migration life events. To move freely and discover the city helps migrants to escape RIC rules and impositions, enjoy a little consumption of goods, interact with people other than the Tunisians and RIC personnel, and carve out a break, a little independent space. The opportunity to find the space for freedom provides a temporary anchorage from which to reflect on their experiences. Projecting a future life in a day-dream dimension helps migrants to accept their present, everyday experience.

Dreaming of a new life is a way out from the anxieties that fill the migrants' minds. Bloch (1996, 91) points out the significance of will and the need for dreaming in order to strengthen the chance of surviving. The migrant keeps the dream secret along the journey; the silence protects this nourishment for the soul during the mute crossing from Tunisia and in the voiceless life in the camp. If Sayad (1992) highlights the "original blame" carried by the migrant in every act of migration, we might say that this case study points to another migrant blame. We studied migrants' experience of a middle earth. They left Tunisia in the aftermath of Ben Ali's downfall, and at this stage of migration, the conflict between migrant and immigrant status had not yet erupted. In the migrants' attitudes towards the Tunisian Revolution, we recognise moral ambivalence or indifference, attributable to knowledge denial (Cohen 2002, 129). Migrants maintain a distance and virtual blindness of the political implications; they take the opportunity to leave the country, even through an unsafe journey, preferring to concentrate their efforts on their personal project. While in Cagliari, they focus their goals on building their individual fortunes in Europe, thinking of how to accomplish the personal dreams rather than engaging in a collective project for the future Tunisia.

However, migrants still participate in this collective search for human dignity, ignited in Tunisia and rapidly spreading throughout North Africa. The uprising is not a revolution in classical political terms as the world media defines it; we agree with Khosrokhavar's (2012) interpretation of it as political action to support human dignity to overcome religion and community defence (*Umma*). These events can be interpreted as the first manifestation of an emerging civil sphere (Alexander 2006), where subjective aims are pursued by claiming personal rights and fulfilling the need to choose an individual destiny. The post-Ben Ali migration in the case study we analysed testifies to a transitional process. Earlier migratory phenomenon from North Africa mainly entailed a search for better economic conditions, but today, North African migrants are seeking freedom of movement, even if the first stage involves illegal migration and being subject to the control of Western surveillance powers. The Tunisian revolution intensified participation in a larger process intertwined with individualisation, globalisation and politics that places the individual experience in an experimental sphere outside stereotypes and classical life models (Beck 2000, 169).

The migrants arriving in Lampedusa in the early days of April 2011 could not wait for institutional transformation. They put their lives at risk, not for democracy, but for urgently needed, individual changes.

## Notes

- 1 Aide Esu wrote ‘Heterotopia and the State of Vulnerability’, ‘The Fieldwork’s Heuristic’, ‘The Journey, from Harbour to Harbour’ and ‘Exploring the City: Flâneur or Semi-free Men?’. Simone Maddanu wrote ‘Talking about Revolution’, ‘Suspended Lives: The Day by Day Hope’ and ‘Conclusions’.
- 2 International Organization for Migration staff in Lampedusa say that the migrant flow is mixed; although the majority want to work, they largely want to go to other countries in Europe, including France, Germany and the Netherlands. Some migrants say they left Tunisia because they were afraid, citing insecurity and danger (see [www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2011/pbn-listing/situation-in-overcrowded-reception-cent.html](http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2011/pbn-listing/situation-in-overcrowded-reception-cent.html)).
- 3 The temporary passport granted free movement in the Schengen area of the EU-26 countries.
- 4 Three types of structures are used to shelter and assist irregular migrants: centres for first aid and acceptance (CPSA), shelters centres (CDA) and reception centres for asylum seekers (CARA), and centres of identification and expulsion (CIE). Reception and identification camps are an adapted form of the CARAs.
- 5 On 5 April 2011, the Italian government issued a decree law entitled *Misure di Protezione Empranea per i Cittadini Stranieri Affluiti dai Paesi Nordafricani*, which granted six-month residence permits for humanitarian reasons.
- 6 Foucault sketched the idea of heterotopia in the preface of *Le Mots et les Choses* (1966) and refined it in ‘Of Other Spaces’ (1986).
- 7 After the evacuation from Lampedusa, the migrants spent 48 hours in the boat garage at Civitavecchia’s port and, when authorities received the Sardinia administrators’ agreement, were moved to the Cagliari port.
- 8 Migrants’ quotations reported in this chapter were recorded with respondents’ permission during conversations and interviews. The names used are the respondents’ real names.
- 9 The North African migrants used to call the illegal migration *harraga*, which means ‘to burn’. The migrants used to destroy the passport in order to hide their nationality and enter Europe as refugees. In our context migrants keep their documents, even though they hide them in order to feel safe.
- 10 Laacher (2005) observes that this kind of travel, illegal and dangerous, cannot be done alone. It can only succeed “with others and transported by others”, but at the same time, this shared experience becomes a fear shared with the “trip fellows” (Laacher 2005, 115). This collective fear is the only element that migrants have in common with their companions, and the unique, recognisable tie that makes them a “group of illegal immigrants” (Laacher 2005, 115).
- 11 The consequences of the economic crisis were especially severe for local industry: the closure of some factories and the resulting layoffs regularly drew demonstrators to the streets. According to Italy’s national statistics bureau, unemployment in 2011 rose to 17 per cent and 42 per cent among those 15–24 years old (ISTAT). Sardinia confirms that the negative economic trend has continued, prompting internal emigration to northern Italy or EU countries. As well, in 2011, activists and citizens protested in front of the Regional Parliament of Sardinia.
- 12 According to our interlocutors’ reports.
- 13 Without an identity card, migrants need to find a trusted person able to serve as their intermediary with Western Union. The migrants communicate the name of the trusted intermediary to relatives in Tunisia in order to send correct money orders.

- 1 14 The revolution's actors prefer to call it the revolution for dignity. It started after the  
 2 self-immolation of a young peddler, Mohamed Bouazizi, exhausted by police oppres-  
 3 sion that prevented him from working in the town of Sidi Bouzid. The true dynamics  
 4 of this event are now subject to controversy (see Khosrokhavar 2012).  
 5 15 The clan of Ben Ali's wife, Leila Trabelsi.

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## 6 Freedom of movement and dignity at work

### From revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt to migrant struggles in the Euro-Mediterranean space

*Federico Oliveri*

#### Introduction

The 2011 revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have initiated processes of political and social change which, despite interruptions, obstacles and contradictions, are still in their making and whose consequences will become apparent only in the next few years. Especially in the first years, they produced significant effects far beyond their national borders, in terms of popular uprisings in other Arab countries taking them as inspiration, and new social movements reproducing some of their practices, such as *Indignados* and *Occupy Wall Street* (Schechter, 2012: xii, 28). They also became a source of inspiration for several groups of migrants, especially young Tunisians who reached Europe after Ben Ali's resignation, and North African and Sub-Saharan workers already living in Italy, who gave a second life to revolutionary discourses and practices through their struggles for the rights to move and to reside, to choose where to live and to have access to fair working conditions.

With few exceptions (Garelli, 2012; Guarinoni, 2012; Sossi, 2012a, 2012b; Sossi and Tazzioli, 2012), this side of the 2011 revolutions has been neglected. In the wake of revolutionary events in Tunisia and Egypt, both academic and institutional milieus started to assess the impact that popular uprisings had or will have on the Euro-Mediterranean border regime. There were two main focuses: on one side, on quantitative aspects of migrations in the aftermath of regime changes, and their structural impact on migration patterns (Cassarino and Lavenex, 2012; de Haas and Sigona, 2012; Fargues and Fandrich, 2012); on the other side, on critical aspects of the system of controls established on the Southern European maritime border in the last two decades, and the need for rethinking it (Balfour, 2011; Campesi, 2011; Carrera, 2011; European Commission, 2011a, 2011b). Possible updates in European 'neighborhood policies' and bilateral migration agreements between countries of the two shores of the Mediterranean were explored too (Carrera *et al.*, 2012). In the three years following the revolutions and the related migration movements, many legislative proposals have been discussed and approved at EU level as a reaction to those unexpected events. The so-called 'Schengen governance package' included two significant

changes: one establishing a new EU-based Schengen evaluation mechanism to deal with crises, and the other amending the Schengen Borders Code to lay down common rules on reintroduction of checks at internal borders in exceptional cases. The new legislation was adopted by the European Council on 7 October 2013. A further proposal concerned the establishment of a new European border surveillance system (EUROSUR), presented by the European Commission as a tool to save migrants' lives and prevent crime at EU borders, which became operational on 2 December 2013. Negotiations on the development and the implementation of 'mobility partnerships' with Southern Mediterranean countries, with the exception of Egypt, started shortly after the revolutions with the official aim to establish mutually beneficial policies in the field of legal migration, while in reality preventing unauthorised mobility, reinforcing border management and controls, facilitating the return and readmission of irregular migrants, and externalising protection measures for those in need. At the time of writing, the EU concluded mobility partnerships with Morocco on 7 June 2013, with Tunisia on 3 March 2014 and with Jordan on 9 October 2014.

Despite their accuracy in approaching the complex links between the 2011 revolutions, migrations and EU border governance, those authors generally undervalued the *autonomy* of migrants in reframing and enacting European citizenship "on the ground" (Andrijasevic, 2013: 61). They silenced their voices and obscured their bodies in the very moment when migrants struggled to become audible and visible. As a result, they rather ignored that claims, discourses and practices which emerged during the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt were transformed into struggles led by migrants in Italy and France after Spring 2011. The following research aims to overcome these shortcomings and develop a more complex representation of the reality.

I suggest reconsidering the links between the 2011 revolutions and migrations from the point of view of North African migrants and their families engaged in asserting themselves as subjects "to whom the right to have rights is due" (Isin, 2008: 18). My hypothesis is that revolutionary events in Tunisia and Egypt became a source of motivation and inspiration, in terms of political frames and repertoires of collective action, for three groups of people in particular implicated in migration processes: the thousands of young Tunisians who arrived in Europe without visa after the fall of Ben Ali's regime; Tunisian families of people missing in crossing the Mediterranean Sea and asking for the truth about their disappeared relatives; Northern African and Sub-Saharan migrants who were already working in Italy. I will show the many ways in which those people referred, explicitly or implicitly, to Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions in their struggles. First, they tended to reinterpret two central claims of the revolutions, i.e. *freedom* and *dignity*: on one side, they claimed freedom in terms of *freedom of movement* against border controls and containment mechanisms; on the other side, they claimed dignity in terms of *dignity at work* against exploitation and discrimination. Second, they tended to use political strategies and practices inspired by the revolutions in order to have their rights recognised, especially in terms of self-organisation, creation of public spaces for deliberation, participation in

1 collective actions such as escapes from detention centres, strikes and occupation  
2 of public buildings. Third, they tended to refer to the revolutions going on in  
3 Northern Africa as a multi-sided political argument, in order to legitimise their  
4 claims, motivate themselves, stimulate alleged democratic governments to  
5 recognise their fundamental rights, and gain solidarity from the rest of the popu-  
6 lation. As a result, a wide-ranging political meaning of the 2011 uprisings  
7 emerges. Both Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions may be seen, at least at the  
8 beginning, as models of successful collective change: a model which disempow-  
9 ered people can enact in order to challenge their situation of domination. The  
10 Tunisian Revolution in particular may be interpreted also as a revolt against con-  
11 temporary “global hierarchy of mobility” (Bauman, 1998: 69), which disclosed  
12 the authoritarian nature of a regime with whom the EU and its Member States  
13 had been cooperating for years in an effort to ‘manage’ migrations. Young Tun-  
14 isians who left their countries decided to manifest their subjectivity through “the  
15 insubordinate mobility of their bodies” (De Genova, 2009: 451), and affirma-  
16 tively proclaimed their right to choose where to live, in continuity with the spirit  
17 of the revolution.

18 I will provide empirical evidence in support of these hypotheses by process-  
19 ing a wide range of sources: semi-structured interviews to migrants and their  
20 families, realised by researchers-activists working on the ground; press, activists  
21 and institutional reportages; press releases, political manifestos, open letters and  
22 other documents produced by migrants themselves and their families. While ana-  
23 lysing and comparing different texts, I will stress in particular the emergence of  
24 ‘acts of citizenship’, i.e. acts that *produce new actors as rights-bearing subjects*  
25 (Isin, 2008). I will also reconstruct the principal themes of the public debate, and  
26 register in particular the translation of discourses and practices from revolutions  
27 to migrant struggles, especially those referring to freedom and dignity.

## 29 **Staying and going: two sides of the Tunisian Revolution**

### 31 *Names of the revolution*

32  
33 Tunisians often refer to popular mass protests which produced on 14 January  
34 2011 the collapse of Ben Ali’s authoritarian regime as *Thawrat al-Karāmah*: the  
35 ‘Dignity Revolution’. This homegrown grassroots movement, whose intensity  
36 and speed surprised almost everyone, erupted in Sidi Bouzid, a depressed town  
37 in the middle of Tunisia, after the self-immolation by fire of Mohammed  
38 Bouazizi. The 26-year-old fruit-seller was protesting against the official ban on  
39 his sales on the streets and the confiscation of his merchandise. After his death,  
40 he was generally credited with expressing the frustration of the local youth  
41 against unemployment, particularly high among people with higher education,  
42 lack of opportunities, social inequalities and economic imbalances especially  
43 between the more prosperous sea-side and the interior of the country. Rising  
44 GDP and per capita revenue undervalued persistent social inequality and  
45 regional disparities, misrepresented the situation in the hinterlands where the

revolution began and hid the reality of shrinking remittances from immigrants in Western countries as a consequence of the ongoing economic crisis. The concentration of public investments, services and economic activities in the coastal areas accentuated poverty and unemployment in other regions, especially for the youth and women. Socio-demographic factors, such as high literacy rates among both men and women and low fertility rates (Courbage and Todd, 2011), and the growing access to low-cost internet, contributed in making discontent widespread and progressively unbearable. The demand for radical changes rapidly expanded from Sidi Bouzid to many towns until it evolved into mass demonstrations especially in Tunis. People asked for *freedom, dignity and bread*, protesting against political corruption and familism in managing national and local economy, controls and power abuses, limited freedom of expression, internet censorship and repression of political dissent, strong disparities in accessing the benefits of national economic growth. Police assaults against unarmed civilians in protest had the only result of making them shout louder *Ben Ali dégage* – “Ben Ali, go away”.

In Tunisia, like in Egypt, ordinary men and women, mostly young, challenged the existing power system, reclaimed the streets and occupied the public squares despite the risk of violent repression. As affirmed by an Egyptian journalist:

Not once in my 43 years have I thought that I’d see an Arab leader toppled by his people. It is nothing short of poetic justice that it was neither Islamists nor invasion-in-the-name-of-democracy that sent the waters rushing onto Ben Ali’s ship but, rather, the youth of his country.<sup>1</sup>

To call this a ‘*Jasmine Revolution*’ risks underestimating people’s strong will in moving from 55 years of European- and US-supported authoritarian regime to a true form of self-government, breaking out of the colonial past and of all undue controls, including subliminal propaganda masking the rise of resentment and exotic images designed only for tourists. ‘Dignity Revolution’ claims instead a self-conscious agency and evokes the radical-democratic image of autonomous citizens, willing to change their own condition and capable of shaping their future together.

‘Dignity Revolution’ seems a much stronger and thus more appropriate name than ‘Arab Spring’, too. The widely used definition of the protests which inflamed, after Tunisia, the whole region was coined in January 2011 by a columnist of *Foreign Policy*, recalling a similar diffusion of mobilisations inspired by protest in Beirut during 2005.<sup>2</sup> Spring suggests the sudden awakening of vital energies after the winter: a new beginning. However, it also denotes a limited and transitional moment that soon gives way to the next season and, above all, it evokes something natural that just happens to helpless and passive people, who have no power and no say in the process. Especially today, when many Tunisians no longer see within reach the goals that animated the Revolution, it is essential to preserve its spirit and reject any attempt to orientalise (Khoury, 2011) or neoliberalise it (Özdil, 2012). Narratives that minimise popular activism and courage prepare the return to business as usual. They also conveniently erase the



1 long-lasting cycle of social struggles and strikes that constituted the background  
2 of the 2011 revolution and remove any foreign responsibility for the decades  
3 people spent under family-mafia regimes, like Ben Ali's government, while  
4 trying to maintain Western control over the Arab world.  
5

### 6 ***European self-interest in maintaining the current migration regime*** 7

8 As the revolution in Tunisia gained international visibility, the reaction in Italy  
9 and other European countries was not really supportive of the revolting people.  
10 Among the many self-interest reasons which explain this behaviour, there are in  
11 particular migration control issues.

12 Significantly, in the first months of 2011, there was much more discussion  
13 about migration from Northern Africa and its impact on the EU external border  
14 than about the Tunisian Revolution and the war in Libya as such. The debate  
15 generally assumed over-dramatised tones, announcing the risk of a mass exodus,  
16 incontrollable invasions and humanitarian crises, stimulating fears and hostility  
17 in the European population instead of solidarity, especially towards young fight-  
18 ing people. In fact, like other European countries, Italy was not only interested in  
19 preserving economic privileged partnership with Tunisia, but also in maintaining  
20 the profitable migration regime established in the Euro-Mediterranean space  
21 since the 1990s, through multiple processes of *securitisation*, *multiplication*,  
22 *detritorialisation* and *externalisation* of borders (Pinyol, 2008; Karakayali and  
23 Rigo, 2010; Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011).

24 As a result of those multiple processes, today European external borders do  
25 not match a fixed geographical demarcation any more, but can be traced both  
26 within and beyond the territories of Member States. Measures to control access  
27 to Europe take place more and more often before third country nationals reach  
28 the EU territory itself. Many responsibilities in preventing migrations have been  
29 allocated to Northern African countries by outsourcing police controls, offices,  
30 detention camps, etc. The maritime surveillance system, in particular, has been  
31 designed in order to detect not only movements occurring within the coastal  
32 waters of Member States, but also those in their direction. New loci of control,  
33 including military patrols of the Mediterranean, have been disseminated in the  
34 whole area. This Euro-Mediterranean migration regime is the result of converg-  
35 ing legal frameworks and agreements between European governments, EU insti-  
36 tutions and Northern African countries. It rests on multiple policy mechanisms,  
37 such as visa obligation, responsibility of transport companies, militarisation of  
38 the maritime border, readmission agreements, penal laws against unauthorised  
39 emigration, conditional development cooperation, police cooperation, militarisa-  
40 tion of border controls and administrative detention centres.

41 This highly articulated migration regime has been implemented with the sub-  
42 stantial help of authoritarian governments such as Ben Ali's. As a result, legal  
43 migration is artificially reduced and irregular migration towards Europe  
44 only becomes more expensive and dangerous, exposing people to exploitation,  
45 extortion, violence and even death. There is a continuous legal production of



irregular migrants (De Genova, 2002), aimed at selecting and hierarchising people coming from not Western countries through their criminalisation. Such a regime of “differential inclusion” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 7) is particularly evident in national and European legal systems linking migrants’ right to have rights to varying residency statuses and temporal requirements. This constitutes an essential part of the dominant neoliberal agenda which provides national economies, both on the Southern and the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, with disposable workers virtually available for any low-grade and low-paid jobs, at any time and at any place, while reducing spaces for real democratic negotiations. In countries of departure, barriers to free movement contribute to maintain high unemployment and low labour costs, thus meeting the demands of multinational and local companies. In countries of arrival migrant workers, especially if undocumented, are employed in underground economies and seasonal sectors where they can be used more extensively when the economic cycle is booming and more flexibly when the economic cycle is slowing down (Oliveri, 2015). Moreover, as European societies are ageing societies, and European welfare systems are insufficient or have been downsized in the last decades, there are growing links between care work, welfare and migration (including irregular ones): it is only through the provision of a plentiful and affordable migrant labour force that welfare and care regimes in Europe become affordable, cost-efficient and functional (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010).

#### ***A deeper link between revolutions and migration***

Although European governments paid lip service to freedom and democratic transition in Tunisia, and generally supported the regime change in Libya, policies and discourses remained driven by imaginary fears: ‘invasion’, ‘biblical exodus’, ‘human tsunami’, ‘migration bomb’ and ‘explosive situation’ were the most recurrent expressions used in the public debate (Marchese and Milazzo, 2012). Migration continued to be portrayed only as a threat to European security, stability and prosperity and thus politically addressed in terms of emergency. This calculated alarmism constituted a strong argument for reinforcing the existing migration regime and challenging the current balance of powers on migration issues between Member States and European institutions. As a result, the trend towards militarisation and externalisation of border controls in the Euro-Mediterranean space has continued, as if nothing has really changed.

Sensational and exaggerated predictions on new arrivals lacked any scientific basis. So it should come as no surprise that they have not come true (de Haas and Sigona, 2012). The 2011 events in Tunisia offered to many people a unique opportunity for no or fewer border controls, but they didn’t change the structure of migration patterns in the Euro-Mediterranean space, eventually rerouting already existing trajectories of irregular migration. Analyses of flows released by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External EU Borders attest that between January and September 2011, about 42,800 persons were recorded as entering Italy by sea without visa, compared

1 with fewer than 5,000 in 2010 and fewer than 10,000 in 2009, and an annual  
2 average of 18,788 in the preceding decade. Of these, about 24,350 were Tuni-  
3 sians, 53 per cent of the total, becoming 27,982 at the end of the year  
4 (FRONTEX, 2012: 14). In order to have a proportioned picture of the situation,  
5 the flows of people directed to Europe should be compared with those moving  
6 from Libya because of the NATO war: in a few months, 96,913 Tunisians  
7 returned to Tunisia from Libya and out of more than one million which fled the  
8 country, only 25,000 reached Europe (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012: 17).

9 Once this new version of the ‘myth of invasion’ (de Haas, 2008) has been  
10 exposed, the link between revolutions and migration can be explored in *political*  
11 terms, not just as a question of migration flows and patterns. This original per-  
12 spective allows us to assess how migrants’ attitudes changed in 2011 according  
13 to the revolutionary momentum. In general, *revolution-related mobility* showed  
14 a strong element of visibility, self-determination and self-organisation which was  
15 rather new and politically relevant. In particular, many undocumented Tunisian  
16 migrants claimed, in an unprecedented direct way, a right to freely move in the  
17 Euro-Mediterranean space as a direct implication of the political freedom they  
18 had just claimed against Ben Ali’s regime. The act of claiming and struggling  
19 for their right to move made them no longer ‘illegals’, also in the sense that they  
20 stopped hiding and unmasking their identities and started being political subjects  
21 acting in the public space. In a similar way, many migrants already living in Italy  
22 saw in the revolutions an increase of collective dignity to be asserted by them  
23 too, against exploitation and racial discrimination at work.

24 Migrants struggling in the Euro-Mediterranean space could take inspiration  
25 from the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions because they were expressions of  
26 autonomous *popular power*. This kind of power comes into being only if and  
27 when people “join themselves together for the purpose of action, and it will dis-  
28 appear when, for whatever reason, they disperse and desert one another”  
29 (Arendt, 1963: 175). In Tunisia and Egypt people collectively created a new  
30 political scene, in which their voices became audible and their common actions  
31 could start. Daily demonstrations of resistance against police and military were  
32 animated by ordinary citizens, who were gathering together with a common  
33 purpose: to demand the fall of the regime. They gather not as small groups  
34 around kitchen tables, as has gone on for decades, but occupy the streets and the  
35 squares (Balaton-Chrimes, 2011) and invented new forms of grassroots self-  
36 organisation. The power generated in the public space by shared discourses and  
37 common actions created collective memories and thus stimulated emulations.  
38 Revolutions became therefore for many people, including migrants from Tunisia  
39 and other African countries, a source of inspiration, motivation and legitimation  
40 of their struggles. They offered the ideal background for ‘acts of citizenship’ by  
41 which people previously excluded, silenced or deprived of rights could become  
42 political actors, i.e. break with the given political patterns, tell the truth to  
43 authorities, invoke justice against social domination and illegitimate laws, build  
44 a new common sense, a new legality, new institutions, evoke solidarity in the  
45 rest of the population (Oliveri, 2012).

## **Freedom of movement: carrying on with the revolution against border controls**

### ***We're no longer afraid***

In Northern Africa those who cross the Mediterranean by boat and try to enter Europe without a visa are generally called (and call themselves) *harraga*, i.e. “those who burn their papers” if they are about to be captured or risk deportation or, metaphorically, “the burners of borders” (Milanovic, 2011: 153). The term is also related to the consequences undocumented migrants have to face, for example the necessity to hide while crossing the frontiers, living in the new country, searching for alternatives to a future without opportunities. *Do revolutionary experiences change this self-perception and the social representation of irregular migrations?* It is still too soon to answer these questions in depth. What we can affirm is that many of those who entered Europe after Ben Ali’s resignation had the opportunity to actively and openly claim the right to move freely and to choose the life they really wanted to live, because they became protagonists of collective struggles against European border mechanisms and reactivated languages and practices inspired by the revolution.

The end of fear seems to be, in retrospective, one of the prevailing sentiments among the thousands of *harraga* who decided to leave Tunisia in early 2011. Most of them ignored that the trajectories they imagined, from Southern Italy to France, would be soon deviated and slow down by multiple spaces of containment: islands and boats transformed in extraterritorial prisons, reception tent camps, holding centres, identification and expulsion centres, militarised rail stations, etc. These mechanisms are not new. Nevertheless, after the revolution, the gap between people’s aspirations to freedom and the reality of border controls became unbearable: it produced collective mobilisations instead of silent endurance. Migrant struggles against spaces of containment took place essentially for two reasons, which are specific to the new context. On one side, the extraordinary situation of emergency created by the right-wing Italian government itself on Lampedusa Island, where mostly of the migrants from Northern Africa were disembarked in 2011. On the other side, the activist impetus coming from the recent revolution, which at that time was still considered a successful regime change opening to democratisation.

Tensions, revolts and mass escapes from tent camps contributed, among other political factors, in persuading the Italian government on 5 April 2011 to find an agreement with Tunisian authorities, the precise contents of which still remain undisclosed at the time of writing. As a result, a limited-term residence permit on the basis of humanitarian concerns would be granted to all migrants arrived in Italy between 1 January and 5 April 2011, allowing them free travel throughout the Schengen area. Of more than 23,500 Tunisians theoretically eligible for the permit, about 5,000 had left Italy before the introduction of this humanitarian permit to stay (Campesi, 2011). Many others did not respect the eight-day deadline set by the government for the application. Some of the demands were

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1 rejected because of further eligibility criteria: to have valid travel documents,  
2 and not being deemed ‘dangerous’ or having been issued an expulsion order in  
3 the past. Moreover, 4500 applications for asylum were lodged by Tunisians in  
4 2011 (UNHCR, 2012: 26). As a result, no more than 11,000 temporary permits  
5 were issued. In October 2011 about 5,000 of them were extended for an addi-  
6 tional six-month period (Livi Bacci, 2012). There are no official data on the  
7 number of people who returned voluntarily in Tunisia.

8 Tunisians arrived after 6 April were expelled with a fast-track procedure. In a  
9 first stance, post-revolutionary authorities were determined to assume a new atti-  
10 tude when facing pressures from European countries on sensitive issues. They  
11 would no longer allow migration to be treated as a mere security issue, to the  
12 prevalent profit of EU Member States, nor would they accept having to close the  
13 borders to stop their own nationals from crossing over the Mediterranean. More-  
14 over, mass repatriations from Italy would not help the democratic transition,  
15 running contrary to public opinion and hurting its growing attention to human  
16 rights and social justice issues. The 2011 Italian-Tunisian agreement was the  
17 result of a long negotiation: it produced an almost immediate diminution of  
18 arrivals. On one side, besides special residence permits, Italy offered to the new  
19 government 200 million euro in aid and credit. On the other side, fast-track  
20 return procedures were accompanied by Tunisia’s engagement to prevent further  
21 irregular departures and increased supervision of their coast, excluding however  
22 joint patrols. Moreover,

23  
24 readmission was to be confined to small groups of migrants, fifty at most, so  
25 as to avoid any backlash in public opinion and the risk of delegitimising a  
26 temporary government that had just taken on responsibility for leading the  
27 country in its transition to democracy.

(Campesi, 2011: 12)

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30 ***“In a few hours I decided to leave, too”***

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32 People who left Tunisia in the days of the revolution and in the weeks after, decided  
33 to go away very rapidly (Guarinoni, 2012). Police and military forces, employed  
34 since then in the border enforcement on people who leave the country without  
35 documents, were not operative because of the upheavals in the principal cities of the  
36 country. These enforcements were never popular: with the crisis and the end of Ben  
37 Ali’s regime, this was one of the first policies to collapse. In the immediate after-  
38 math of the revolution, Tunisian police and National Guard, viewed by the public  
39 as compromised by their role as enforcers for Ben Ali, came under acute strain. In  
40 rural areas and in city centres, Tunisia’s military stepped in to back up the police  
41 and the National Guard, and to fill the security void left by Ben Ali’s departure.  
42 New demands on the security forces drew resources away from the established  
43 border-protection regime. The escalation of the conflict in Libya, and the inflow of  
44 significant numbers of Libyans and third country nationals seeking shelter in  
45 Tunisia, further augmented demands on security forces across Tunisia.



Those who left were essentially all male and generally aged between 18 and 25, even if there were also many adolescents.<sup>3</sup> The motivations for crossing over varied, according to different personal background. The most frequent reason was to join friends and relatives already established in Europe, especially in France, in order to find a job more suited to their vocation, to become emancipated from the families or to help them with remittances, to improve their education and their chances on the labour market (Boubakri, 2013: 6–7). The representation of Europe as a space of opportunities, freedom and democracy also played a role: “sometimes, there is just a wish to see what there is on the other side. Just like young Europeans, when they participate in the Erasmus Program.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***“The island became an open air prison”***

Lampedusa is a small, 20 square kilometres Italian island in the Sicilian Channel, 113 kilometres from Tunisia and 176 kilometres from Sicily. It has a population of approximately 4,500 people working mainly in fishing, agriculture and tourism. Since the early 2000s, for many reasons related to the construction of the current Euro-Mediterranean migration regime, the island has become a primary European entry point for migrants coming from Africa, experiencing a “borderisation” process carried out through specific policies, practices and discourses (Cuttritta, 2014). Between January and April 2011 more than 30,000 people transited through the island: the peak occurred at the end of March, with 6,200 migrants halted there. The subsequent situation of chaos and rising humanitarian emergency was the effect of a deliberated choice made by the Italian government to let all migrants crossing over the Mediterranean to be concentrated in Lampedusa, and to stop their transfer to other Italian territories. This allowed once again the “border play” to be staged (Cuttritta, 2014) in order to meet multiple aims: to support the rhetoric of invasion and of border security, to prove the efficiency of the government in keeping African people far from Italy, to justify the decision to manage the situation as a natural disaster through emergency laws, and to put pressure on European institutions and other EU countries in order to “share the burden” of the “migration crisis” with them. As a result Lampedusa became a kind of open-air prison, in which migrants repeatedly protested against their condition by trying to escape from the island and pretending to be debarked on solid ground, in the name of freedom of movement. Tunisians received the support of local NGOs and of the residents, who oriented frustration and critics towards the government, held responsible for the situation (Bartoli, 2012: 115–135). They also received an important support from the no-border activists of the *Welcome* campaign, in terms of active solidarity, social and cultural mediation and reliable reports on the events.<sup>5</sup>

The first isolated boats had showed up near Lampedusa already on December 2010, but nobody imagined that Ben Ali’s regime was about to fall and stop controlling borders. The speed of arrivals augmented progressively after 15 January. Between 10 and 11 February more than 1,000 people were debarked. The



1 following day the Italian government proclaimed a state of emergency because  
2 of the extraordinary flux of migrants from Northern Africa and on 14 February it  
3 reopened the holding centre in the interior of the island, closed in 2009 when  
4 migrants had burned it down during a revolt. In the following month Lampedusa  
5 received an average of 200 people every day, but only 500 of them were relo-  
6 cated in other centres every week. The number of migrants on the island rapidly  
7 exceeded the capacity of the local holding centre. An old military base was reo-  
8 pened and used as a shelter. The church started to host women and minors. Hun-  
9 dreds of people camped in the open air, waiting to being identified and moved to  
10 other holding centres.

11 Between 26 and 28 March new arrivals, also from Libya, and the news of  
12 possible repatriation agreements between Italy and Tunisia produced a large  
13 mobilisation. The local population joined the protests too, trying to block the  
14 access to the harbour, and calling for a general strike.<sup>6</sup> The following day the  
15 government decided to open provisional tent camps in 13 sites in Central and  
16 Southern Italy and started to transfer people by cruise and military ships. On 31  
17 March the holding centre was closed, and migrants organised a march from there  
18 to the harbour. Because of the new Italian-Tunisian agreement, migrants had no  
19 other perspective but expulsion or escape from Lampedusa and similar spaces of  
20 containment. Those who arrived in the weeks after 5 April started a hunger strike  
21 on 25 May in order to receive a similar permit to stay and to move in the Schen-  
22 gen area. On 9 September a new agreement for fast-track expulsions was signed  
23 by Italian and Tunisian governments: against the menace of being deported, on  
24 20 September migrants set on fire again the holding centre and invaded the  
25 streets: after disorders on the island and high tensions with the local population,  
26 on 23 September Lampedusa was declared 'no safe haven'. The last migrants  
27 were embarked and many of them spent one week on prison-ships in the gulf of  
28 Palermo before being repatriated. On 25 October fast-track expulsions officially  
29 ended.

30 Migrant protests in Lampedusa were essentially about freedom of movement.  
31 They were raised first of all because of the inhuman living conditions, which  
32 produced claims of a dignified welcome. Designed for 850 people, the holding  
33 centre was housing more than 2,000 people at a certain time. Migrants were  
34 sleeping outdoors, in the area of the harbour and in the hill over it, renamed 'the  
35 hill of shame', with insufficient tents and chemical toilets, bad quality and insuf-  
36 ficient food. They also revolted against the very idea of an open-air prison in  
37 which, profiting of a sort of extra-territorial status, migrants were suffering lack  
38 of information of their legal status and thus arbitrary detention on a large scale,  
39 in the absence of formal measures decreeing detention and without the possib-  
40 ility of appealing against any decision. The large majority of migrants was held  
41 on the island beyond the time needed to deliver first aid and to identify them,  
42 violating the constitutional principle that detention should be judicially validated  
43 within 96 hours and kept as short as possible (Vassallo Paleologo, 2011). More-  
44 over, according to Doctors without Borders Italy, before leaving the pier Tuni-  
45 sians were separated from Sub-Saharan Africans on a physical appearance basis,

probably in order to “prevent interactions with other migrants who intended to submit an asylum application and could provide some information on asylum” (FRA, 2013: 102). Significantly, on 1 September 2015 the European Court of Human Rights upheld the case of three Tunisians expelled from Italy in Summer 2011, ruling that they had been subjected to degrading and inhuman treatment during the time spent in Lampedusa, suffered a collective expulsion and could not challenge their forced return home.

**“Freedom! Freedom!”**

At the end of March the Italian government decided to open several emergency, detention or reception centres for Northern African migrants, mostly situated in dismissed military sites in order to satisfy unspecified ‘security requirements’. The legal status of such facilities remained unclear for a long time, as the intention of the government to transform them in identification and expulsion centres was opposed by local authorities. The tent city in Manduria, Apulia was the first reception centre to be opened on 26 March, provided with 720 places. It was supposed to be, at the beginning, an open centre which migrants could leave and return to for the night. Threatened by the obligation to stay within the centre also during the day, without any information about their legal status and the negotiations between Italian and Tunisian governments, migrants began to escape in groups. *Liberté! Liberté!* was their main shout, while bypassing the metallic fences surrounding the camp and trying to move to Northern Italy or to France by train.

Having in mind the alarming spectacle of the border staged by the government in Lampedusa and supported by mainstream media, part of the local population was scared by the possible opening of migrant centres in their territories, and thus opposed the plans of the government. Mass escapes generated in certain cases xenophobic reactions, with small groups acting as private, informal watchmen against fugitive migrants.<sup>7</sup> Generally speaking, solidarity overcame fear: especially in Manduria, there were many episodes of active support enacted by the local population, which provided clothes and food to the young Tunisians. Nevertheless, the migrants’ main claim was still the permit to stay and to move freely throughout Europe. “We are not illegals” – affirmed one of them interviewed for a docu-film on the tent camps – “we’re just looking for freedom and peace. Help us to join our relatives in France.”<sup>8</sup>

After 6 April, access to expulsion centres where several Tunisians were hosted was restricted to a few international organisations and NGOs, which limited access to information and counselling (FRA, 2013: 102). Escapes and out-and-out riots in migrant holding and detention centres were extremely recurrent in Italy during 2011, with Tunisians playing an important role in them.

The figure of the 580 escapees is anything but negligible compared to the numbers of the deportation machine. Considering the total of 3,600 Tunisian nationals repatriated from Italy in 2011, the number of evasion represents 16% less deportations to Tunisia.<sup>9</sup>

1 Hunger strikes and acts of self-harm were also more frequent than in other years.  
2 At the same time,

3  
4 living in Europe without papers is hard. The fear of being stopped by police  
5 while going to visit a friend or just as soon as you step out of your city. The  
6 impossibility of signing employment contract or a lease. The more fortunate  
7 can work in black, and for those who have lost fortune's address, they can  
8 push drugs. Fortress Europe becomes a trap. A maze in which it is much  
9 easier to enter than to exit.<sup>10</sup>

10  
11 ***“Our Europe has no borders”***  
12

13 France has always been the favourite (and openly declared) destination for most  
14 of the young Tunisians who left the country after the revolution. In February and  
15 March, part of the almost 5,000 people who transited from Lampedusa were dir-  
16 ected to Ventimiglia, the Italian town closest to the French border. The Italian  
17 police estimated that an average of 50 Tunisians reached Ventimiglia each day:  
18 many of them started to camp out in the area around the rail station, deciding to  
19 profit from the absence of internal controls in the Schengen area. In the mean-  
20 while, the French local prefecture started to reinforce border controls, denounc-  
21 ing the fact that some 3,000 undocumented Tunisians had crossed over from  
22 Italy. Using the 1998 French-Italian readmission agreements, which allows both  
23 countries “to return illegal immigrants found in their own territory when it could  
24 be materially proved that they had transited through the other country” (Campe-  
25 si, 2011: 15), French police halted 2,800 Tunisians at the Saint-Ludovic border  
26 station, and sent back to Italy 1,700 of them.

27 After the Italian decision to issue a residence permit to those who arrived  
28 between 1 January and 5 April, the French government tightened internal border  
29 controls, calling for an even stricter respect of the entry conditions under the  
30 Schengen Borders Code: to be in possession of a valid travel document; to  
31 justify the purpose of the stay and have sufficient means of subsistence, calcu-  
32 lated in 62 euro in cash, which is the estimated amount of money a tourist would  
33 need to spend one day in France; not to be considered a threat to public policy,  
34 internal security, public health or the international relations of any of the  
35 Member States. The French government declared that controls would be carried  
36 out at random, in line with the same Code.

37 The tensions escalated on 17 April, when French authorities suspended trains  
38 arriving from Italy for several hours, citing public order concerns after some 300  
39 Tunisian migrants and no-border activists announced that they wanted to board a  
40 ‘Train for *Dignity*’ from Italy to France. The idea of the group was to cross the  
41 border openly and publicly instead of underground: a demanding decision, espe-  
42 cially for the migrants who risked, despite the permits issued by Italian authori-  
43 ties, to be expelled from France. ‘Our Europe has no borders’ was the title of the  
44 petition announcing the special train: a public denunciation of racial and classist  
45 biases of European border controls. Migrants and activists found these biases in

the fact that internal European borders abolished by the Schengen Agreement were suddenly rebuilt as soon as the right to free circulation was enacted by unwanted migrants from Tunisia. Their petition was clear-cut:

whereas it is generally acceptable that migrants cross borders in any possible way, with the possible risk of falling into clandestinity, undeclared work and blackmails, this Europe cannot accept that borders are crossed under the sunlight, with your head held high, with a dignified look typical of whom does not yield to this violence.

(Welcome, 2011)

This public gesture of crossing the border, despite all the risks, let emerge the contradictions of border controls: “You can cross the border with a coyote or risking your life crumbling a mountain, but you’re not allowed to stop the hypocrite spectacle of politics, or the false quarrel between Italy and France” (Welcome, 2011). ‘Dignity has no borders’ was one of the main mottoes of the mobilisation: once again, the spirit of the Tunisian Revolution found a new life in the claim for free movement and the right to choose where and how to live.

**“*We, the children of the Revolution*”**

Tunisians who arrived in France were greeted by a strong-armed police presence at the railway stations in cities like Nice or Marseille. Police made it clear that they were to be considered just like any other *sans papiers*: they were to be expelled as soon as possible after the six-months permits issued by the Italian government had expired. French local authorities did little or nothing when it came to providing food and shelter for newcomers, and to respect their dignity. Active solidarity came from NGOs, networks of Tunisian immigrants and anti-racist, leftist, neo-communist groups. The same thing happened in Paris (Sossi, 2012a).

During the 2011 May Day manifestations a group of 100 people, calling themselves a Collective of Tunisians from Lampedusa, occupied a building belonging to the City of Paris in Simon Bolivar street, after being removed from the nearby Belleville Park. They hung from the window of the building a banner reading “No police. No charity. A place to self-organise”. They started negotiations with municipal authorities, which produced no results. They demanded a shelter for everyone, but also papers to stay in France legally.

*We are the children of the Revolution...* We demand a place for living and self-organising. Is that really impossible? In Tunisia, we made the impossible, we made the Revolution and now we host thousands of Libyans. And how are we hosted here?

(Tunisian Collective, 2011a)

They left after police carried out raids in the following days, detaining and expelling some of them.



1 The occupation in Simon Bolivar street was the first of a long series of political  
2 actions undertaken by the Collective of Tunisians from Lampedusa. On 7  
3 May, they occupied a junior high school owned by the City of Paris, in the same  
4 neighborhood. More than 150 occupants were demanding the immediate release  
5 of all the remaining prisoners from the last occupation, the regulation of their  
6 current legal status with the issue of stay permits for all and a place where they  
7 could reorganise in autonomy. In response to the latest occupation, the City of  
8 Paris guaranteed that no eviction would be ordered. Many Tunisians were gradu-  
9 ally relocated. On 31 May, about 60 members of the Collective occupied another  
10 building in Paris, owned by former President Ben Ali and used as an office for  
11 his political party and probably even for the presidential secret police. The Tun-  
12 sian Consulate in Paris refused to support the initiative and after a week author-  
13 ised the police to evacuate it. As one last political action, on 30 June some  
14 members of the Collective and other no-border militants contested Paris' Mayor  
15 during the official ceremony of dedication of a square to Mohammad Bouazizi:  
16 "among the arts of domination, there is the power to give names to things, in  
17 order to better neutralise them. Authorities prefer Tunisians when they are dead,  
18 than alive" (Tunisian Collective, 2011b). Alive and fighting for their dignity.  
19

20 ***"All lives count. Where are our sons?"***  
21

22 Since 2000, over 30,000 people have died or disappeared trying to reach Europe  
23 according to *The Migrants' Files*, which is the most comprehensive database on  
24 migrant fatalities ever assembled by collecting and cross-checking data from  
25 news, official archives and NGOs reports.<sup>11</sup> It states also that at least 13,000  
26 migrants have died or disappeared since 2000 while crossing the Central Medi-  
27 terranean, with a peak of 1,674 people during 2011, 2,447 people during 2014  
28 and 2,535 between January and August 2015, which attests to the extreme  
29 dangers of this specific route. Before 2014 and 2015, the death toll in the year of  
30 the revolutions was the highest ever recorded.

31 In the case of missing Tunisians who left after the revolution, the deadly  
32 nature of the Southern European border became, maybe for the first time, a polit-  
33 ical issue (Oliveri, forthcoming). The lessons learned during the protests in terms  
34 of resistance to power, and the revolutionary claims of freedom and dignity,  
35 encouraged dozens of relatives of missing people to raise in public their claim of  
36 truth and justice. Since Summer 2011, mothers, fathers, uncles, sisters and  
37 brothers of about 500 Tunisian migrants who disappeared during the journey to  
38 Italy are still demanding the truth about what happened to their relatives after  
39 they left the country by boat, between September 2010 and September 2012.  
40 They built de facto a political collective, which became in 2013 a formally con-  
41 stituted association called '*La Terre pour tous*', i.e. 'The Earth for everyone'.  
42 While in Morocco and Algeria associations of the families of missing people  
43 have operated at least since the beginning of the 2000s, this is the first publicly  
44 recognised organisation of this kind in Tunisia, as the very issue of the *harraga*  
45 was removed from the official public sphere during the Ben Ali regime.



The experience and the memory of the revolution played a role in the mobilisation. For instance, the first manifestation in front of the Italian embassy in Tunis took place on 18 December 2011, a year after Mohammad Bouazizi's suicidal gesture. The families of the missing migrants asked Italian and Tunisian authorities to exchange information, in order to verify if their relatives arrived in Italy or not: "Tunisian IDs show the bearer's fingerprints, and Italian authorities capture digital fingerprints of all migrants identified at arrival, and of all migrants detained" (Storie migranti, 2011). At the end of January 2012 a delegation of the families arrived in Italy and demanded the formal involvement of the authorities in this case. In March, they were informed that fingerprints of the missing people had finally been sent by the Tunisian authorities and that the checks had begun. In April the authorities let them know that the check was nearly complete, but no information was relayed to the families. On 21 April one of the mothers attempted to set herself on fire as a form of protest. As finally some information was provided by the authorities, none of the missing Tunisians were identified. At the time of writing, the collective of families still asks for truth and justice, including in their claims further dispersed people who left Tunisia in 2012: "so far we only have gotten vague answers, formalistic commitments, and no clarity on whether the fingerprint exchange has indeed been performed" (Storie migranti, 2013).

Families of missing Tunisians build a new link between the two shores of the Mediterranean, claiming the right to know and holding new democratic institutions accountable for the human lives they put at risk through border controls: 'the Earth belongs to everyone' read a banner held in front of the Prefecture of Milan, during a sit-in on 14 January 2012, the first anniversary of the revolution (Sossi, 2012b). Solidarity from below and self-organisation allowed the families to politicise their claims:

you start to realise that your son or your brother is not the only one who has left and never called home again. You start to organise with other families, to ask your country's authorities to investigate.... you organise sit-ins and marches, you talk with journalists and various associations' representatives. You bring your son's or your brother's picture everywhere.

(Storie migranti, 2011)

They succeeded in telling the darkest side of the adventure started with the revolution. And they will continue denouncing the discrimination non-EU people are suffering concerning the respect of their fundamental rights:

We are mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. And we are mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers in the same way that one is such in Europe. But only 6 of us obtained a visa to go to Italy to try to understand what happened to hundreds of missing young people. For European policies, our love and our pain do not have the same value that would be granted to family members of European young people in a similar situation.

(Storie migranti, 2013)

## Dignity at work: evoking the spirit of revolutions against exploitation

### *Nourredine Adnane's suicide as protest in Palermo*

The first noticeable influence of the Arab revolutions on migrants living in Italy was a tragic one. On 10 February 2011, in the aftermath of the Tunisian Revolution's acute phase, Nourredine Adnane set himself on fire, dying nine days later. He was a 27-year-old Moroccan, residing and working with regular permits as a street vendor in Palermo. After the latest police control, which he felt as intimidating and discriminatory, he decided to commit suicide as protest. The judicial inquiry opened by the Public Prosecutor of Palermo is now closed: the alleged offence of instigation to commit suicide didn't find enough evidence to be further supported. Unlike Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire at the beginning of the revolt in Sidi Bouzid and became a symbol of the uprising, Nourredine Adnane met a different fate:

The life of an immigrant, particularly a poor one, counts for less than nothing. Adnane's name does not make the list of martyrs like Bouazizi, nor does he stir the conscience of Italian citizens making them aware of the daily episodes of discrimination and humiliation undergone by immigrants or the abuse that they are forced to undergo at the hands of domineering individuals, whether in uniform or not.

(Lunaria, 2011)

### *"Together we can change things, like in Tunisia"*

In Summer 2011 hundreds of migrants working as tomato pickers in Nardò, Southern Italy, started a two-week strike against illicit work and extreme exploitation (Brigate di solidarietà attiva *et al.*, 2012; Oliveri, 2013). They took action autonomously, in the beginning without any support from the trade union, in order to be regularly hired, to be paid fairly, to have direct relationship with the companies employing them, instead of going through illegal intermediations. Farmworkers contested in particular the role of gang masters, who directly recruit them on the streets often with fake working contracts. Early each morning they transport a group of 50–70 people to the field, and control the harvest in terms of speed of work, breaks, length of the working day, etc. Gang masters usually pay on a piece-rate system instead of on a working-hours base. In Nardò, for instance, in 2011 they paid 3.50 euro per crate of 300 kilos of tomatoes, but they also compulsorily deducted about 8.50 euro for each worker's food, water and transportation. Each worker collects about 7–8 crates in a day. As a result, after working between 10 and 12 hours, no-one earns more than 20 euro daily.

Farmworkers called their gang masters *capi neri*, that is 'black masters', because they were all Africans. The fact that exploited workers and the masters who exploit them share the same origins may have played a role in the

mobilisation: it made disrespect become unbearable, and discrepancies in earning and working condition become unacceptable. Humiliating relationships stimulate the sense of injustice and the need for a radical change because they affect people's dignity, as the Arab revolutions have largely shown. There are two other conditions that made the strike in Nardò possible. The first condition was the special open nature of the old farmhouse where migrants were hosted, the *Masseria Boncuri*. The possibility for migrant farmworkers to freely meet and speak there, to receive and exchange information, and to confront each other on their working conditions in open assembly definitely had a basic role in the start of the mobilisation. The practices of active solidarity and self-organisation, which played an important role in Arab revolutions, were assumed spontaneously as example. In particular, the revolt against Ben Ali played an important role: many Tunisians in Nardò considered those events as a proof that change was possible, if one is able to organise collectively. The second condition for the strike was the campaign against illicit work launched since 2010 by two grassroots NGOs in charge of the farmhouse. Thanks to information from these organisations given in many languages and to the legal support offered by volunteers, migrants became generally aware of their rights under the law in terms of legal contracts, minimum salary, maximum working hours, free access to medical care, to clean water.

Since 2011 many regressions have taken place in Nardò, especially in relation to the living conditions. Because of the convergence of many political and economic interests contrary to the emancipation of migrant farmworkers, the *Masseria Boncuri* didn't open again. In Summer 2012, for example, hundreds of migrants camped around an abandoned carpentry or slept simply in the olive fields, in very poor hygienic conditions (Oliveri, 2013: 51). A new tent-city for migrant farmworkers was announced by the mayor of the city, just the day before the visit of the Ministry of Integration, Cécile Kyenge, the first African-Italian minister in the country's history.<sup>12</sup>

### ***"The strike was our revolution"***

The city of Piacenza, Northern Italy, hosts the largest logistic hub in Europe. Since July 2011 it has become the scenario of a cycle of struggles in which migrant workers from Northern Africa played a key role. Blockades and strikes started at TNT, the express distribution company, then spread to General Logistics Systems and finally reached IKEA. Their claims were almost the same everywhere: respect of national collective agreement by cooperatives providing services for the mentioned multinationals; fair and dignified wages commensurable with those paid to workers directly employed by the multinationals; safe working places; no humiliating or discriminatory treatments. Supervisors often intimidated migrant workers, who had to possess a valid working contract in order to renew their permit to stay in Italy. They tended to create a "slavery-like system of work" (Curcio and Roggero, 2013): they decided daily who was allowed to work and who was not, and for how many hours per day; they

1 silenced people asking for a wage rise or respect of the maximum working  
2 hours; they declared only a part of the salaries they paid, in order to evade  
3 payroll taxes.

4 Against this kind of semi-legal gang-mastering, there is a problem of lack of  
5 information among workers. According to Mohamed Arafat, working in the  
6 logistic hub of Piacenza and engaged in an independent union, many people  
7 simply don't know their rights. They spend years working and believing that the  
8 law entails a set of conditions which are not included in the contract (Narda and  
9 Sprega, 2012). Nevertheless, there is a potentially strong interest in changing  
10 their own conditions:

11  
12 when we explain to people that they have a right to demand, they start to  
13 demand their rights. Because they know that by law these are their rights  
14 whilst the boss had always made them believe that the law was what he said.  
15 If, instead, you inform the workers well, they start rebelling and also getting  
16 together. So they start to organise.

17 (Narda and Sprega, 2012)

18  
19 On 9 July 2011 about 150 workers of two cooperatives related to TNT went  
20 on strike and blocked the gates of the warehouse, supported by independent  
21 unionists of S. I. Cobas. They were mainly from Northern Africa, especially  
22 from Egypt. They brought their national flags at the blockades, directly linking  
23 their action to what happened (and was still happening) in Tahrir Square at  
24 Cairo. The closure of the gates provoked long queues of vehicles and important  
25 losses for TNT: after the first day, the cooperatives apparently accepted to  
26 respect the national collective agreement. On 16 July the gates were overseen by  
27 riot policemen: those who had taken part in the strike were not allowed to enter  
28 work and were threatened with being fired.<sup>13</sup> After a week of further blockades,  
29 all fired people were reintegrated. The two cooperatives accepted to apply in a  
30 complete and transparent way the national collective agreement. They also  
31 agreed to register the hours which were really worked, so as to check the corres-  
32 pondence with the contract and the salary. Beyond these results, the stress was  
33 on the political gains in terms of "*dignity*, which is even more worthy than  
34 money" (Curcio and Roggero, 2013).

35 The example of TNT played a role in the whole logistic sector in Piacenza. At  
36 the end of October 2012 about 20 workers, all migrants from Northern Africa,  
37 started a struggle denouncing a situation of exploitation and discrimination. They  
38 worked in two cooperatives which were subcontracting the loading and unload-  
39 ing of wares in IKEA's storage.<sup>14</sup> They were denouncing similar violations of  
40 the national collective agreement. Violent clashes took place on 30 October,  
41 when police intervened to clear the workers' blockade aimed at preventing  
42 trucks from entering the warehouse. The same occurred on the morning of 2nd  
43 November, when police violently attacked the protesting workers with tear gas  
44 and batons, injuring five of them. Under pressure from IKEA, the cooperatives  
45 retaliated the mobilisation by firing 12 workers deemed as the main organisers of



the protests and members of the independent union S. I. Cobas. This decision spread the protest to other cities: solidarity rallies were organised in Bologna and Piacenza on 7 November, during a general strike of the logistic hub.

Meanwhile, thousands of citizens used an IKEA promotional campaign on the web as a way to express their solidarity. When the company asked its customers to imagine ways of promoting ‘change’, thousands replied by advocating for the respect of labour rights. After an unsuccessful attempt at reorienting its own presence on the web, IKEA shut down the website, labelling the protest as ‘hacking’. In the following weeks, workers and other activists started an information campaign in front of IKEA stores in Piacenza and Bologna, receiving large solidarity. On 28 December and on 3 January workers again blocked the entrance to the warehouse. The unsustainable situation led IKEA to put pressure on the cooperatives: on 7 January, after a long negotiation between representatives of the City of Piacenza, the unions and the companies involved, the fired workers were reintegrated. Nevertheless, the struggle is far from being concluded. The conditions which led the workers to protest have not changed: discrimination against unionised workers, racism and miserable wages. Now, though, IKEA and the cooperatives will find it much harder to repress workers’ claims, also because workers’ attitude has changed. The example of Arab revolutions and the success of their collective struggles made them more aware of their strengths: “enough with hunger strikes. It’s time for the masters to fast” (Curcio and Roggero, 2013).

## Conclusions

Revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt became a source of inspiration for a plurality of people: young Tunisians who arrived in Europe without visas after the end of Ben Ali’s regime; Tunisian families of people missing in crossing the Sea; Northern African and Sub-Saharan migrants who were already working in Italy. They referred to those events in terms of legitimating discourses and exemplary practices. They interpreted political freedom as *freedom of movement* against containment mechanisms, and national dignity as *dignity at work* against exploitation. They adopted strategies of self-organisation, created public spaces for deliberation, participated in collective actions such as escapes from detention centres, strikes and occupation of public buildings. They used the revolutions as a political argument, in order to motivate themselves, stimulate alleged democratic governments to support their claims, and gain solidarity from the rest of the population.

These struggles enacted processes of political subjectivation, through which migrants asserted themselves as rights-bearing actors: they contested the present-day “global hierarchy of mobility” (Bauman, 1998: 69) which produces their subaltern position in European societies. Moreover, their claims inspired by the revolutions uncovered the post-democratic nature of governments and institutions in Europe, who pay lip service to freedom but subordinate human rights to border security, selective migration policies and economic competition based on



1 exploitation. They contributed therefore to anticipate another idea of Euro-  
 2 Mediterranean citizenship, based on equal free movement and equal rights for all  
 3 those who live around the same sea.  
 4

## 5 Notes

- 6
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  - 17 10 Ibid.
  - 18 11 Launched in 2013 by a group of European journalists, the *Migrants' Files* use as first  
 19 sources on deaths and disappearances of migrants the data collected by *United for Intercultural Action*, a non-profit network of 550 organisations across Europe, and by  
 20 the already mentioned blog *Fortress Europe*. The *Migrants' Files* are regularly  
 21 updated and can be found at [www.detective.io/detective/the-migrants-files](http://www.detective.io/detective/the-migrants-files). Mostly  
 22 based on press reports, these data are problematic, because changes in the number of  
 23 reported deaths may also reflect changes in media attention. In order to have more  
 24 reliable data, a new methodology has been recently experimented by creating an  
 25 aggregated data set based on local death registries (Spijkerboer, 2013).
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**Part III**

**Transit migration and new  
mobilities in question**

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## 7 Transnational migration is always a migration in stages

### The Moroccan stopover of Sub-Saharan migration

*Mehdi Alioua*

#### **Introduction: the transnational migration of Sub-Saharan Africans en route to Europe**

Carrying with them only the dream of making their life better, tens of thousands of migrants<sup>1</sup> cross Africa in stages, past the Sahara and through Maghreb countries where they settle, often for a longer period of time than their previous stopovers (Alioua 2005). Fleeing poverty, war, unemployment, or simply because they feel trapped in a society where they cannot find their place, they leave – borrowing their words – “in search of their own life”. Almost two-thirds of the 300 migrants I have met in the course of my fieldwork are young men under 25 years old. Consequently, the borders they attempt to cross also appear to be symbolic boundaries between childhood and the independence of adulthood: these borders are perceived and conceived as a rift between the impossibility of changing one’s condition and social status and mobility schemes granting choices. Frequently used to qualify their migration, locutions such as “I’m leaving in search of my life” as well as the word “adventure” are rooted in this imaginary.

Travelling thousands of kilometres, they strive to carry out their personal project, side-stepping the laws of the countries they travel through and re-routing their migratory itinerary: this migratory phenomenon is akin to transmigration since in its basic form it is the sequencing of various stages through which these migrants come together. However, this was not their initial purpose: by migrating, they had to adapt to a practically semi-nomadic way of life in order to escape controls or even state repression. It is through emulation and from necessity that they turn into transmigrants, step by step, through mobility and in a state of constant urgency. They followed ‘existing’ paths already paved by previous migrants (Alioua 2007), matching their circulation know-how and even mirroring their lifestyles. For these Sub-Saharan migrants who originally targeted European and, in some cases, North African labour markets, this ‘adventure’ still remains a transitory moment in their life. Despite its transitory nature, it is still long enough to have an impact on them and the populations who witness these entrances and settlements. It is much more than an ‘in-between’: the spatio-temporal dimension (Tarrus 1989) is crucial to make sense of this ‘adventure’,

more or less temporary for those who produce it, experience it (and go through it), but much longer as it is indeed a social form.

The majority of these Sub-Saharan transmigrants eventually reach Europe (Alioua 2011), settle there or continue on their way; others settle down in African ‘stages’ where they find themselves abandoning their ‘adventure’ (at least for a time); others go back to their country of origin, or, more tragically, are deported or die. Yet new migrants replace them, roughly following the same routes punctuated by the same stops, using similar strategies, thereby perpetuating the phenomenon of transmigration. These migrants thus construct a sort of territorial continuity; it is made possible by the networks they activate since the ones who pass from a regulation space to another show the newcomers how to successfully negotiate this passage according to their past experiences. It implies that the signs marking out the route are recognisable, that is to say, that a collective consciousness socially gathers together all of these individuals and allows them to interpret the codes that they produce. By joining forces<sup>2</sup> despite having no reliable bonds, by exchanging services and information, through the narration of their projects and journeys, sharing the dream of better life, etc., they define the contours of a ‘collective cosmopolitan consciousness’ that solidify in the face of adversity. Sub-Saharan transnational migrants have to rebuild a ‘social life’ and collectively organise the everyday life and the spaces through which they circulate, where they settle down and end up dwelling in. Taking a closer look at these stopping places in the Maghreb in general, and in Morocco in particular, one can notice that these places were already strongly permeated by the web of social relationships woven by preceding migrants: they were already marked by internal and international mobility and migration (Bensaad 2009).

International migration has turned into a globalised issue reflecting multiple realities in which individual dimensions, initiatives and projects, ought to be placed centre stage when appraising this social experience. Transnational actors emerge around the world at every socio-political level and with many different scales of power and impacts on territories and social relationships. We find among them migrant populations such as those documented in this chapter: poor and marginal but taking important individual and collective initiatives, who through their projects struggle to break free from territorial constraints through transnational mobility. Migrants, whatever their status, are actors who connect different places: they connect territories, build multiple networks, boost the circulation of goods and services, and carry with them their relational universes as well as the social networks that sustain them. When borders are closed, the nature of the flows changes, new forms of movements emerge and modify the migratory space while simultaneously expanding it. Simultaneously, former emigration countries become immigration countries and vice versa. In this light, usual distinctions between emigration and immigration countries, between economic migrations and displacements of all sorts, between definite and temporary migrations, fail to capture the mutations under way. It is in this ambivalent context of migratory reconfiguration and globalisation, producing both territorial rigidities (such as border reaffirmations and the tightening of controls) and more

1 options for individual initiatives, that tens of thousands of Sub-Saharan migrants  
2 struggle, sometimes risking their lives to reach Europe through the Mediterrane-  
3 an, crossing Africa step by step, reorganising and settling usually clandestinely  
4 in countries of the Maghreb, and more specifically in Morocco. Their long  
5 and perilous journey is first and foremost transnational: they are transmigrants.  
6 They seek to carry out their migratory project by using spatial dispersion as a  
7 resource.

8 Based on ten years of qualitative and ethnographic work on this migratory  
9 form and, specifically, with populations of Black Africa, I seek to grasp the  
10 embodiment of migrant collectives in social spaces and transnational territories,  
11 the continuing tensions in their mobilities, and their anchorages in the countries  
12 of the Maghreb, especially in Morocco. I met more than 300 migrants, men,  
13 women, young, refugees, ‘adventurers’ (as they call themselves), with whom I  
14 built more or less prolonged relationships depending on circumstance and fol-  
15 lowed them in their daily lives. I conducted biographical interviews when neces-  
16 sary, without restricting the analysis to local frameworks and social  
17 organisations: the objective was to find out about migration backgrounds and tra-  
18 jectories that span several spaces and nation-states during which individuals  
19 must reorganise themselves and activate links between time and space. Although  
20 the researcher cannot become a fully integrated member in the field, insofar as  
21 he partakes in day-to-day activities and exchanges of minor services, that is to  
22 say, when he engages in part of their daily lives even without being involved in  
23 the totality, he can still find his way into the relational networks of these  
24 populations. In this situational setting, the *dispositif* of ethnographic influence  
25 allows, as opposed to formal sociological inquiries – statistical, monographic,  
26 that better grasp the morphology of these populations as well as their organisa-  
27 tion – direct interaction at the core of the action. Indeed, once trust is established,  
28 thanks partially to encounters marked by gift exchanges, the researcher forms  
29 part of the network.

### 31 **Maghreb countries: emerging migratory relays**

32 Since the 1990s, Maghreb societies have been increasingly crisscrossed by  
33 unique transnational migratory patterns, forming layers as they get superimposed  
34 on preceding ones and growing ceaselessly. Their articulations are visible in  
35 some spaces which I call ‘stages’. Well before the arrival of Sub-Saharan  
36 migrants who circulate in this region to reach Europe, the Maghreb region also  
37 witnessed internal migrations – that is, migrations taking place within one  
38 country and between countries of the Maghreb – and international migrations,  
39 displaying diversified circulation patterns (Arab 2009) and migratory itineraries  
40 (Chatou 1998) involving various countries at the same time, developing in stages  
41 and following a circular scheme. They do not only target the European Union  
42 and, therefore, become transnational spaces of departure, circulation, return,  
43 stopover and settlement. Scrutinised Sub-Saharan migrant populations have  
44 sought to transplant their own circulations onto existing Euro-Maghrebian ones,  
45

trying to circumvent borders – such as the one separating Algeria from Morocco near Maghnia, or Morocco from Spain in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla – and taking advantage of their geographical proximity and political, human, commercial, socio-cultural relations with Europe nurtured by this contiguity. They turned portions of the Maghebrian space into an operatory mode of their mobility: by inscribing their own circulations and mobility (or mobility desires) into those stopovers, they created migratory relays. This was made possible because this space was already traversed by migratory circulations well before their own arrival.

These new circulating populations in the Maghreb adopt, for the most part, a migratory strategy consisting in crossing and circulating in stages on the road to Europe from North African countries, where they hope in the meantime to find resources to fund their personal projects. But in the face of gradually closing European borders, these Sub-Saharan migrants have been – and still are – forced to settle down in this region for a longer period of time than they originally expected. As a consequence, they have to reorganise and redefine their migratory projects. Therefore, North African stopovers and, in the frame of my research, Moroccan stopovers established along the paths paved by these new migratory forms become places of social condensation: places from which these populations, constantly on the move, reconfigure forms, times and territories of migration, seeking new destinations and new migratory routes, but also new ways of bypassing territorial constraints, borders and injunctions of nation-states. In the Maghreb, these migratory movements, which in some parts are absorbed by Euro-North African circulations, superimpose on these same spaces: the majority of these migrants, old and new, North Africans and Sub-Saharans, foreigners and nationals, whether ‘circulating’ or ‘sedentary’, pass through the same stopping places. More precisely, these are the large and increasingly cosmopolitan cities such as Alger, Oran, Rabat, Casablanca, Tunis, Nouakshott, Tripoli, and transborder spaces like the cities of Tanger, Nador, Oujda, Maghnia, Nouadhibou, Tamanrasset. These cities become migratory relays whose importance is increasing due to the constant inflow of migrant populations and the dynamics involved in the mobility and articulations of the latter. Some transborder and/or urban spaces as well as certain neighbourhoods of large cities are recurrently stimulated by this mobility: it is the case of popular peripheral neighbourhoods of large cities where national migrants coming from economically jeopardised regions establish themselves and where foreign transmigrants today settle down. These new cohabitations encompass populations of various and diverse ethnic backgrounds that nonetheless adopt in their relational expressions the same social forms linked to mobility and migratory mode. This first translates into temporalities of mobility: long term, repetitiveness, redefinition of the migratory project in the course of the journey, entry into the city, adaptation to urban mobilities, context-dependent readjustment. It also translates into spatial forms of movement: migration in stages, circulation, circumvention of borders (social or national) and of the laws that regulate them, use of specific places as ‘bouncing places’, diversification and widening of destinations with multiple migratory

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1 itineraries, displacement from one neighbourhood to other. Regardless of the  
2 characteristics previously mentioned, it finds its utmost expression in the nature  
3 of the social link that weaves together all these migrations and that are mostly  
4 noticeable during these stopovers: by stretching their *circulatory territory*  
5 (Tarrus 2000), spanning in the case of transmigrants multiple nations, the  
6 migrant populations are compelled to establish anchors and resource-spaces in  
7 which they meet, cooperate, avoid each other or clash.

8 Indeed, while this Sub-Saharan migratory movement begins in an assortment  
9 of ways, in terms of places, reasons and situations, once these players have left  
10 home with their personal migratory project, they reorganise themselves collec-  
11 tively (Alioua 2003) during the stopovers which punctuate their journey. To  
12 anchor themselves in these spaces, these migrants must collectively (Alioua  
13 2005) make up for an absence of territory by channelling their individual desire  
14 for mobility (Alioua 2010). So, having wandered the roads and crossed Africa  
15 from south to north, thousands of Sub-Saharan transmigrants enter and relocate  
16 themselves collectively every year in the Maghreb, setting up stopovers which,  
17 since their establishment in the 1990s, have continued to serve as migratory  
18 staging posts for newcomers: these staging posts have a social history which has  
19 gradually built up along the migratory trajectories. This is the fruit of the experi-  
20 ences built up by the first transmigrants, who organised themselves into collec-  
21 tives, which has been passed on and shared out throughout the whole of the  
22 migratory networks. All of this has therefore required social skills and the ability  
23 to learn new ones. For, since they are constantly moving from one place to  
24 another, they are confronted by things which are alien, new, unstable: this is  
25 clearly the opposite of the norm, of the “habitus” (Bourdieu 1980) linked to a  
26 social order with a particular territory, a socially organised space to which this  
27 order applies. Feeling lost and alien to the societies in which they anchor them-  
28 selves for a period of time, they get their bearings as best they can, thanks in  
29 particular to their project which allows a certain social closeness with the other  
30 transmigrants, but also with the local people who share some of the same  
31 characteristics.

32 North African stopovers are interconnected through social relationships built  
33 by migrants through incessant movements: deterritorialised social relationships  
34 woven through migration reflect the conditions of their fulfilment. These migra-  
35 tory relays become places where links are mobilised: the collective reorganisa-  
36 tions through space, despite situations of instability and the diversity of ethnic  
37 and national background and the competition between migrants, become a sine  
38 qua non modality, even though these collective reorganisations go through  
39 phases of conflict. They are first articulated to a common sense of belonging,  
40 and the first factor is arguably the ethnic dimension. Step by step, however, the  
41 reorganisations expand, including and gathering populations on the basis of their  
42 projects, of their migratory modes, and because they share a migratory space  
43 where they are able to actually meet, particularly during the stopovers. Let us  
44 explore more concretely how this capacity of linkage from a distance allows  
45 them to integrate rapidly in foreign places.

By way of concluding, I want to stress again that the transnational migration of Sub-Saharan Africans across the continent, where they ask neither authorisation from their countries of origin nor from those in which they circulate and settle, must be understood in the context of transmigrants' desires to control their destinies by acting in multiple spaces, even if this means ignoring the State, its institutions and the rule of law. Throughout Africa, the nation and the nation-state, in which citizens had placed their hopes in the aftermath of independence, are no longer able to produce enough socio-economic progress, enough sociopolitical ties or trust in the system to prevent some people from circumventing authority and slipping into the margins.

Not only do African countries, north and south alike, fail to produce enough wealth to sustain their populations, but uneven wealth distribution also gives many the impression that the situation is irreversible and that the political system is not capable of enabling their life projects. If we add this to wars and ethnic conflicts often resulting from the incapacity of nation-states to manage the presence of disparate groups, and the sense that these countries remain more or less subjects to former colonial powers (the same powers that impede them from migrating as they wish), the feeling shared by many Africans is that they will only succeed if they rely on their own resources and side-step state rules when needed, which forms an integral part of the social dynamics of African societies, partly producing this migratory form.

C. is a young Congolese member of an activist association of transmigrants in Morocco:

C.: Well, in my country, I was studying medicine. I was in the faculty of Medicine, in the capital of course. As for the reality of the country, well, I thought I would [someday] leave! And there is a reality that I feel deep inside [as if] ... some [people] form an elite, well I mean ... I noticed there was an elite when I realised that some of the friends we studied with didn't have ... well, how to say ... they were no better than we were but still, when they were leaving and going back, those were the ones who were kind of 'ruling' us. And this aspect really revolted me. Why? Just because they were studying in well-ranked universities, that they were leaving to get education in ... well ... better conditions than ours ... I really knew that my education would not be worth anything given that those were the guys, those daddy's boys, who would get the chance, who could build a good life for themselves ... and this thing appalled me. Well, at least, I thought about ... leaving the country altogether to pursue a degree abroad. I had to go in search of my life. And for me, it had to be elsewhere, because I knew that I would never amount to anything here! Legally, when I was in my country, I did my best: I tried to get a visa, a study visa in Belgium, to get a degree in the University of Louvain. But it didn't work. At the last minute, we didn't get the loan to pay for my study there. So I thought ... no, I will hit the road, leaving the country for Cameroon and from Cameroon I [will] figure out what to do from there ... and this is how this whole adventure started. But well, I even

1 spent two years in Cameroon! So, you see? You take one step at a time, but  
2 I know why I left. I know what I'm seeking.  
3

4 To borrow a phrase used by Mustapha Belbah to talk about young Moroccans  
5 who were seeking to migrate 'clandestinely', all Sub-Saharan migrants concep-  
6 tualize the 'outside' as the "universe of all possibilities". The interviews I have  
7 been conducting with dozens of Sub-Saharan transmigrants from all origins for  
8 four years led me to the same analysis as his [Belbah]: the borders that these  
9 migrants want to 'burn' are first and foremost those lying in their imaginary  
10 between the impossibility of modifying their social status and the mobility that  
11 opens the door to the 'possible'. It is this boundary separating a world dominated  
12 by immobility and 'wait-and-see' positions from another characterised by action  
13 and innovation that they want to cross.  
14

### 15 **The Moroccan step** 16

17 Once in Morocco, after crossing the Sahara and the Algeria-Morocco border from  
18 the north-east, near Maghnia, they reorganise and fan out across the north of  
19 Morocco on the Mediterranean coast, with strong concentrations in Tangier and  
20 near the cities of Nador and Tetuan. They then try to cross directly by land into the  
21 Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, because it used to be the least dangerous  
22 way to reach the EU. Those in Tangier try to cross the Strait of Gibraltar by sea,  
23 on tiny boats known as pateras, with all the associated risks. Others try to cross the  
24 Atlantic, from the coasts of southern Morocco to the Canary Islands. Like Moroc-  
25 can migrants, they hope to reach the Spanish coasts, and beyond them, Europe.  
26 Those who remain in northern Morocco hope to cross as soon as possible. Gener-  
27 ally they have few financial resources and only one obsession: leaving the country  
28 as soon as they can before falling into poverty. But while awaiting the crossing, or  
29 after a failure, they have to reorganise in a safe and stable place where they can  
30 live while they redefine their migration project and reconstitute a small capital.  
31 This is why makeshift camps are established over the course of time in the north-  
32 ern forests, which obviously reveal to the observer a state of extreme precarious-  
33 ness, but also an impressive organisational structure and a high level of  
34 intermigrant solidarity. Others – no doubt the majority – prefer to head for the  
35 large cities of Casablanca and Rabat, where they set up mutual aid collectives.

36 Indeed, they begin to organise into collectives on the basis of their comple-  
37 mentarity, their common points: namely, their new identity as 'adventurers' and  
38 'clandestines'. These individuals come to recognise each other within the space  
39 they cross during their transnational migration, because in the course of their cir-  
40 culations they gradually create a shared history, an 'adventure': their migration  
41 projects resemble one another, and assemble them as a group. Despite the diver-  
42 sity of national and sociocultural ties, cooperation becomes the only way to face  
43 adversity. Strategies of individual crossings are then redefined collectively. By  
44 confronting each other these transmigrants come to adopt a collective position,  
45 and in cooperation they learn by experience (first that of others, then their own)

how to cross the borders. Thus, migrant populations of widely diverse origins cross borders, circulate and move into the societies of the Maghreb, even as their mobilities, rationalities and migration strategies gradually overlap. It is easy to understand that if these Sub-Saharan transmigrants, whatever their status or origin, apprehend these places as relay points of migration, it is because they expect to encounter social relays that will allow them to fit in and find means of subsistence. Generally speaking, if new Sub-Saharan transmigrants continually arrive and circulate in the space of the Maghreb, it is because at each stage they find resource-persons who show them how to fit in, helping them to survive until the next departure. This relational concentration clearly implies a demographic concentration.

P., President and Founder of the Council of Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, recounts how the need to organise and to campaign arose:

HIM: As you may already know, we are blocked here. But every single person in this place had an ambition for his life, but now, you see, we don't know where we are heading anymore. So we had to get out of this situation at all costs. We didn't have anything to lose ... except for our lives! But what exactly are our lives here? Eat, sleep, hang out in the street, wait for someone to come just like that and throw you in the desert! So, we had to break the deadlock that Europe designed in this country, or we are going to lose our minds. We can't take it anymore. We can't end up like zombies after all! And the only solution was to help each other.

ME: Where does this solidarity among you come from?

HIM: The solidarity between us ... well ... we [value] mutual assistance in our countr[ies] ... Because it is poverty that inspires us to follow that path ... you have nothing, that guy doesn't have anything, now between us we can get more than we can individually, you see? Well, even when we were at home, we had more than here, because since [we were] in the desert, I swear ... I know everyone here, for me three years have gone by since the desert [he talks about crossing the Sahara] and I can tell you that since then we lost everything! We don't have anything left, except for our lives, well ... our dignity. So it is in this sense that mutual help is important for us. So, now, we are trying to convince our 'brothers' that "if you stay there by yourselves, with only your hopes, you will never get what you want" ... Truth be told, we experienced it as soon as we leave home. But you only fully get it when you arrive there in the desert. Or in the forest, for those who were lucky enough to not cross the desert and come directly here. This thing transformed us! We buried the dead! Yes, I swear to you, brothers died there, so we know what it means! Believe me! This is exactly why we help each other and now we wish that this solidarity were ... how to say ... political! I mean ... for our rights! Eating is not enough, we need rights! It is also in this sense that we gather.... Because nothing but Europe matters to us. We think of only this ... every single day that God creates! So we are ready to do anything to achieve our goals, you see?



1 Since these Moroccans stopovers were integral to the country and localised in  
2 specific territories, they become the places where the bond is activated: col-  
3 lective reorganisation, despite the precarious situations, despite the diversity of  
4 origins and despite the competition between migrants, becomes an indispensable  
5 method in this new form of migration. It is then easy to conceive that if these  
6 Sub-Saharan migrants, whatever the status imposed on them and the origins they  
7 claim, see these stopovers as migratory staging posts, then it is because they  
8 think that here they will find social staging posts allowing them to fit in and find  
9 the means for survival. More generally, if new Sub-Saharan migrants are con-  
10 stantly arriving and circulating around the Maghrebian area, then it is because  
11 they find people-resources in these stopovers who can show them how to fit in in  
12 order to survive until their next departure. Relational density certainly implies a  
13 demographic density. Indeed, it is a matter of gaining a sufficiently embedded  
14 presence in the areas in which they find themselves that will make it possible for  
15 those following them to circulate there. Some of these migrants, particularly  
16 those who have a collective awareness of their staged transnational migration,  
17 like the ‘chairmen’ for example, call this “leaving the travelling route open”. The  
18 ‘chairman’<sup>3</sup> is a kind of manager for one or more collectives. He owes his posi-  
19 tion to his ‘savoir-circuler’, his experience of transmigration and particularly his  
20 knowledge of the social environment in which he finds himself, particularly his  
21 networks and relationships with ‘important’ people: smugglers, the police,  
22 lenders, potential employers, doctors, lawyers or activists defending the  
23 migrants’ cause, etc. He also generally surrounds himself with a ‘policy commit-  
24 tee’ in which each person’s role is defined, such as ‘treasurer’ for example. The  
25 chairman is a migrant-smuggler: he is part of the transmigrants’ world, he has  
26 been introduced into the space he frequents, he has inherited experiences and  
27 relationship networks from those who were there before him, and in turn he  
28 ‘resocialises’ new arrivals. He has this incredible capacity to work across several  
29 areas, far from the negative image of ‘trafficker in human beings’ that the media  
30 have constructed to describe him.

31 This is to say that these stopovers have been migratory staging posts in which  
32 transmigrants can be sure of finding other transmigrants like themselves who are  
33 able to help them, for example enabling the new arrivals to identify a district  
34 where they can find accommodation without difficulty and without the risk of  
35 provoking rejection by the natives, to assimilate the way of moving from one  
36 place in the town to another and how to behave in these places by avoiding  
37 social control. These services and information are sometimes subject to a finan-  
38 cial transaction. Even when this is the case, it is only a way of surviving which  
39 is constantly subject to negotiation. This is an economic means which is fully  
40 “embedded” (Granovetter 1985) in the social realm to such an extent that there  
41 is not necessarily any financial payment. Furthermore, the transaction may take  
42 place later, during the course of financial services or help, for one person in par-  
43 ticular or for the collective which takes care of the new arrival. This debt  
44 amassed by new arrivals enables exchange and solidarity, along the lines of ‘give  
45 and take’. In collectives which are based on self-management, whose members



claim to be free in the sense that each individual has his own project but “must be responsible regarding the other brothers”, the new arrivals are assimilated through their active participation in the structure. The fact of becoming involved and participating actively in a collective enables the exchange and drives solidarity. Transmigrants’ collectives which organise themselves in order to achieve their personal project can inform us about their degree of autonomy and the capacity of their players to weave relationships with people they do not know, changing from weak link to strong link depending on the situation. To live – or should we say to survive? – in these stopovers, they must also cause themselves to be accepted by the local population and cooperate with some of their neighbours, organising their diversity around common points and social values. That is to say that they must avoid social control by adapting their lifestyles: they must have the capacity to make what is distant closer. Generally they live there first thanks to ‘sponsors’<sup>4</sup> who send them postal orders and who live in Europe, at the other end of the network, or who are in the country of origin and make an investment in spatial dispersion by supporting a relative who is migrating. They also manage thanks to the solidarity of the collective in which they find themselves, and sometimes the solidarity of an NGO or the Moroccans. Due to state controls and repression, this transmigration can only be achieved for its players by finding ‘ways in’ among the local populations. Transmigrants know how to slide into the gaps left undisturbed by the state and the margins which the native populations have found ways of negotiating locally.

Little by little, some Moroccan towns have become, despite appearances, favoured stopovers for these Sub-Saharan transmigrants, who find everything they need there to survive and to realise their migratory project. Now the stopovers where the Sub-Saharan migrants live are working-class districts whose abiding trait is mobility (Alioua 2007). So it is no coincidence that they shelter extranational migrants today having welcomed so many nationals undertaking internal migration. In fact, these districts have always sheltered persons judged undesirable by the ruling classes of the time. It should be remembered that during the years of ‘apartheid’ imposed by the French colonial system, country dwellers who wanted to settle in town were frequently rounded up in these districts and then expelled from the town. At the time of independence, the Moroccan authorities would sometimes end up reproducing the same violence: the sociopolitical history of these districts is strongly characterised by resistance against the authorities, by a fear of the state and a lack of trust in its agents.

In addition, a proportion of the inhabitants of these working-class districts has ended up emigrating to Europe from these locations (Hambouch *et al.* 2000), and a huge population of young Moroccan men and women who live there wish to do the same. Today they harbour foreign ‘illegals’ as they did with the national ‘illegals’ who arrived during the rural exodus and piled into shanty towns in the hope of improving daily life. With a mixture of rejection and fascination, Moroccans living cheek by jowl in these working-class districts where the transmigrants settle are impressed by the path these new arrivals have taken. Some young Moroccans learn from these transmigrants and open up a little more

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1 to the outside world. Sometimes, even, 'plans' are worked out between Moroc-  
2 cians and Africans from two or three different nationalities, cooperating to find  
3 the best way of getting into Europe. They exchange advice and information on  
4 what they have been able to learn themselves from someone they know who has  
5 already attempted the journey, or who simply lives in Europe and gives them  
6 advice on the best way of moving around without getting caught. Each has their  
7 own basic idea about the issue, but by pooling these ideas they increase their  
8 chances of success.

9 There are also mixed couples which form, between Moroccans and Sub-  
10 Saharan Africans, and their plan is often to get into Europe together. Leaving  
11 aside the more or less hidden or assumed affectionate relationships (short-lived  
12 affairs) between Moroccan women and Sub-Saharan African men, there are  
13 'regular' mixed couples which form in these districts of Morocco. They are cer-  
14 tainly few in number but not marginal. In these places they are common know-  
15 ledge, and they can be found in all working-class districts. In the city of Rabat  
16 alone we met 27 mixed couples, five of whom had one or more children. The  
17 majority of these couples marry, even if these men are not straight with the  
18 authorities, legally speaking. This is possible because, rather like under rural  
19 practices, it is sufficient for a certain number of witnesses (men) to endorse the  
20 marriage for it to be legitimate, at least in the eyes of family and neighbours.  
21 Thus they do not need to apply to the Cadi<sup>5</sup> or Adoul.<sup>6</sup> The husbands are just as  
22 frequently Christians as they are Muslims. But in order to marry, Christians have  
23 to convert to Islam: most of the time, all they have to do is to recite the Fatiha in  
24 public and choose a Muslim first name. The feast which follows, by virtue of its  
25 public nature and the publicity it generates, legitimises the marriage. However, I  
26 have only met one mixed couple comprising a Moroccan man and an Ivorian  
27 woman (Christian). Although at least one-third of Sub-Saharan transmigrants I  
28 met were women, one does not find the same proportion among mixed couples.  
29 It must be said that Moroccans most often consider these women to be prosti-  
30 tutes whom they can use as best suits them. In the minds of many men, be they  
31 Moroccans or migrants, these routes are not the place for single women; there-  
32 fore, in their minds, they imagine those who are there without the (supposed)  
33 protection of a man as 'women of easy virtue', or amoral.

34 All these social relationships are evidence of the emergence of new forms of  
35 cosmopolitanism, which extend beyond the national frameworks and institutions  
36 for socialisation and identity creation within Maghrebian society: complementa-  
37 rity merges into both a kind of rejection of the nation-state,<sup>7</sup> and the formulation  
38 of a project to move to another place where everything becomes possible. These  
39 values are also those of youth which tries to be the author of its own destiny. The  
40 Sub-Saharan migrants and their Moroccan neighbours also meet in queues at the  
41 Western Union, where they come to pick up their money order sent by a relative  
42 living in Europe. In fact, like the Sub-Saharan migrants, many of the people who  
43 live in these districts survive thanks to money orders sent by a relative who has  
44 emigrated abroad, and many small houses have been built thanks to these remit-  
45 tances. In the urban setting, the number of owners and co-owners overtook the

number of those renting at the end of the 1980s. The influence of unofficial building companies (they produce 80 per cent of buildings) has encouraged this trend, and it is in these districts that self-finance represents 80 per cent of homes produced<sup>8</sup> that is at its height. Generally, these new owners build one floor at a time, and they repay the loan by renting out rooms. They then rent out a room, or the ground floor perhaps, whilst they themselves live at the top of the building. Most of those renting are migrants from the interior, workers who have come to work in the city, who have left their family behind and send back the majority of their wages. But Sub-Saharan migrants on a stopover also make up a proportion of the people who rent, the number of whom has been underestimated, but which enables some of the Moroccans in these districts to achieve ownership or to share the rent in the case of sub-letting, which gives us a picture of the degree of interdependence, as can be seen with the naked eye: the floors of these small houses in the working-class districts are getting more and more crammed! Sub-Saharan migrants play a role in the local economy, which is mostly an informal economy, and are turning the urban scene upside down. Thus they have fully integrated themselves into the urban fabric of these towns, particularly the areas on the margins of the so-called legitimate town, transforming them by their presence. Somewhere, Moroccans have made room for them in spite of themselves. Admittedly, it is often a secondary position, tainted with contempt and domination, but at other times there are real cooperations which develop, or at least relationships based on interdependence.

**The stopover: the best place to observe and understand so-called ‘transit’ migrations**

Boundary effects do indeed persist, and it is the migrants’ ability to get over (or fail to get over) those which confront them, in other words their circulatory know-how or ‘savoir-circuler’ (Tarrus 2001, 2007) – the way in which they organise themselves socially in time and space to achieve this – along with the way in which they take their own boundaries with them, transferring them to where they settle, which will help us most in understanding what these transnational dynamics mean. For the sociologist, this most clearly manifests itself on the ground at the stopovers, where migrants settle through choice, though necessity or through no will of their own, for as long as it takes to get their bearings, reorganise themselves and sometimes to redefine their migratory project.<sup>9</sup> It is these stopovers – whose organisation and regulation we have been working to describe for the past seven years in Morocco – which enable them to organise their mobility and their stay. So here we shall not concentrate principally on the original or destination societies, nor on the so-called ‘transit’ societies, but rather on the deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation/re-deterritorialisation process and the interactions it produces. Whilst our research work – looking at the Moroccan stage of the transnational migration of Sub-Saharan Africans from various origins and whose migratory projects are often quite distinct and personal – fits into these observations and draws its inspiration from the suggestions and

1 concepts mentioned above (and most particularly that of the circulatory ter-  
2 ritory), our empirical data have also provided information about the difficulties  
3 these populations have in crossing certain frontiers or getting used to the feeling  
4 of deterritorialisation, as well as the complexity of the transnational social ties  
5 they create between themselves. Their transnational social networks are not bor-  
6 derless configurations, and since their deterritorialisations only last a certain  
7 amount of time, they cannot be understood without considering their reterritori-  
8 alisations. Staged transnational migration is in fact a movement where the time  
9 and space of migration are punctuated by deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation  
10 and redeterritorialisation. In the case of Sub-Saharan migrants, who often have  
11 no visas, since the transnational migratory space they have established is not  
12 smooth, and can extend over several years, straddling several countries which  
13 have not planned for their arrival or settlement, the space-time dimension must  
14 necessarily be reintroduced to this context where migratory trajectories are  
15 punctuated by stopovers during which they reorganise themselves until the time  
16 arrives to cross the next border confronting them.

17 In order to reconstruct the uncertain development of the transnational migra-  
18 tory experience and its interactions with unpredicted situations, we shall describe  
19 the form of the links that Sub-Saharan transmigrants create between themselves  
20 over the course of their journey, along with the effect they have on the areas they  
21 enter. Though this approach, our study of the transnational networks of Sub-  
22 Saharan transmigrants stopping over in Morocco therefore raises the issue of the  
23 creation of unrestricted spatial configurations produced by these moving popula-  
24 tions, but within a geopolitical context where the borders are not as porous as the  
25 term ‘transnational’ would suggest. In answer to this, the notion of stopover,  
26 seen simultaneously as an observation location, a methodological framework and  
27 an analytical tool, seems the most relevant to us. In fact, it is not simply a ques-  
28 tion of giving an account of the social autonomy of these migrants and their  
29 capacity to get through borders and to renegotiate some of the ground rules  
30 applying to the ‘sedentary’ peoples – know-how which contributes to the con-  
31 struction of transnational spaces in which they manage to circulate with varying  
32 degrees of success – but also of painting a picture of the difficulties they have in  
33 getting through these ‘trials’,<sup>10</sup> all these ‘barriers’ which are not only located at  
34 the geographical confines of nation-states, but also within them, most often at  
35 the margins, such as some of the peripheral districts of the larger towns and  
36 cities.

37 To circulate, there is a need for staging posts in which these populations can  
38 get their bearings and find all the information, connections and resources (eco-  
39 nomic, social and symbolic) needed for survival and the next part of the journey  
40 they wish to make. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco who want to  
41 go to Europe but feel ‘stuck’, top priority in the sociological analysis could then  
42 be given just to the original migratory projects, at least those declared by the  
43 individuals. There could also be the temptation to reduce this type of migration  
44 to simple ‘transit’ and to talk of Morocco as a ‘transit country’, of this move-  
45 ment as a ‘transit migration’ and of these people as ‘transit migrants’. But here



we would like to distance ourselves from these terminologies which we think are both unsatisfactory in terms of our sociological understanding, but also sufficiently ambiguous politically to mislead the researcher.

Since it has a rather restrictive definition from the space-time point of view, the term ‘transit’ is really not good enough for migration sociology. For us, ‘transit’ is first and foremost the time one spends wandering about, for example in the terminal building at some international airport where, waiting for one’s next flight, one strolls around, disorientated by the time difference, gazing through the windows of the ‘tax-free’ shops. Furthermore, this term assumes subjective realities which vary depending on whether one is a migrant, a journalist, a politician, a lawyer, or even according to the country in which one finds oneself. This restrictive understanding of transit matches the place it occupies today within our societies, whether as a subject for discussion by ‘experts’ or as an issue in public debate (Morice 2008). In Europe, for example, the term ‘transit country’ is curiously dedicated in its common meaning to the countries on the fringes of the EU, accentuating further the presumption of the exteriority of these countries and the idea that a ‘natural’ border separates the EU from the rest of the world. However, it should be remembered that countries such as Spain and Italy were considered transit countries in the 1990s before becoming important immigration countries. Furthermore, countries formerly known as ‘transit’ countries, such as Cyprus or Malta, have changed status simply because of their entry into the union, becoming ‘countries of first entry into the EU’, whereas we are well aware that the majority of migrants do not wish to settle in these countries, but try to get into the Schengen area!

It is partly for this reason that we prefer the notion of stopover, which we feel better conveys the complexity of migratory routes, replacing the space-time dimension, which does not become reduced during the waiting process into a “non-place” (Augé 1992) with a minimum of interaction before moving on to another. The stopover is a much longer and much more complex period during which social interactions and immersion are large enough to transform, or at least to influence, those carrying out migratory activities as much as those who see them passing by and settling. Stopovers bring players together who did not previously know one another, who have developed their migratory project individually and independently within their own social environment, but who must now negotiate together and organise themselves collectively. They bring together players who can be distinguished one from another by their origins and their aims: staged transnational migration then becomes a vehicle for the value where cohesion is something which moving players have to achieve.

Because just like life and biographical trajectories which are made up of setbacks, bumps, frustrations and adjustments, migratory trajectories are not smooth and often run into obstacles: in the case which concerns us here, they are governed by transnational networks which are affected by the border control policies introduced by the nation-states, particularly the European ones. Migrants must therefore reorganise themselves, working out strategies during their stay at the stopovers which are often stronger than the dissuasive policies, which reveal the



1 density of their social networks. During their stopovers, Sub-Saharan migrants,  
2 who are almost nomadic and always strangers in the societies they pass through,  
3 must of necessity acquire know-how and social skills during their process of  
4 deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, of engagement in and disengagement  
5 from new social relationships. This encourages a certain distancing from so-  
6 called ‘ethnic’ belonging, which is all too often seen by researchers as irrevoc-  
7 able and insurmountable.

8 The transnational migratory space described in this chapter has to be con-  
9 ceived as a stopover in the journey, dedicated to preparing for the next step: a  
10 temporality effect then submerges spatial markers whether it has been antici-  
11 pated by migrants or not. By remaining so long on the move then stuck in those  
12 stopovers where they try to make a living – should I write ‘survive’? – they are  
13 forced to reorganise in this new temporality and make sense of it. As some Sub-  
14 Saharan transmigrants say, borrowing a locution well-known throughout Africa  
15 including North Africa, “white people have clocks, we have [the] time”, or even  
16 this Moroccan variant: “Christian people can tell what time it is, we have [the]  
17 time”. Indeed, through these stopovers where they find themselves they have to  
18 reframe the interactions and experiences that give meaning to it: this also reflects  
19 the process through which they become transmigrants and resist this new tem-  
20 poral ordeal. In my opinion, it does not only invalidate the vague notion of  
21 ‘transit’ or even ‘migrant in transit’, it also allows distancing from the notion of  
22 ‘in-between’, a notion that gives more importance to materiality than to time –  
23 implying a ‘vacuum’ into which these ‘poor people’ are thrown – whereas it is  
24 precisely the time variable that shapes those spaces. Migrants themselves  
25 organise those spaces<sup>11</sup> built under constraint and within ‘margins’ taking on  
26 little by little a certain materiality: “routes make the city”, as Braudel once said.

27 Following this line of reasoning, the stopovers described in this chapter are  
28 not only ‘waiting spaces’, or spaces ‘in-between’, but also anchorage points in  
29 transnational trajectories and social relays. Migrants need to join forces and  
30 organise connections between these points to diffuse information related to  
31 recommended routes and methods to contact people in these places. It follows  
32 that they need ‘mediators’ who welcome them, incorporate them into these  
33 spaces or, to borrow their words, ‘resocialise’ them. ‘Mediators’ – I call them  
34 ‘migrant-smugglers’ – as chairmen for example, may only emerge from a social  
35 organisation and exist through their bonds to other ‘intermediaries’ of ‘local’  
36 populations. This competence in organising a collective and integrating it into a  
37 new space in which members are aliens only exists because populations preced-  
38 ing the new migrants are somewhat familiar with it. In other words, these social  
39 skills, this expertise in hybridisation, can also be found in sedentary people. It is  
40 an essential characteristic of modern human societies (Simmel 1999). There is  
41 no ‘us’ and ‘them’, with ‘smugglers’ building bridges rationally, but imbrica-  
42 tions that compel either of the parties to position itself with the others or relative  
43 to ‘the others’ using non-identity mobile logics. The stopover is the place and  
44 the time when and where these dispersed social worlds intersect, coexist and  
45 exchange, conflicting at times, within unorganised spaces or getting more

organised through time without solidifying. The stopover is always ‘indexed to’ mobility, no matter the forms it takes, because transmigrants succeed in setting up, outside and within cities, times to reorganise, protect themselves and mediate, within intermediate spaces and producing forms of social and territorial continuities constructed in the face of instability.

For example, the ‘slums’ and other cities mushrooming out of urgency to accommodate ‘marginal’ populations are spaces created provisionally for displaced people, on hold, without any place ascribed to them or the benefit of exercising ‘full citizenship’, but, as described by Michel Agier (2003), are appropriated by these populations who, little by little, make them more habitable. If one can observe a remote process and the production of places characterised by juridical status of exceptions, there is at the same time of movement resistance. Michel Agier provides an accurate description: refugees camps, as well as socio-economically jeopardised districts just like favelas or ‘invasions’ are not ‘non-places’ but the results (mainly due to the ethno-cultural belonging of these ‘undesirables’) of processes recreating the “shared space of the city” (Agier 1999, 2009), processes through which populations act as much as the authorities wishing to control them, managing their mobility or the way they appropriate the space including wishing to deport them or put them aside, but do not succeed efficiently in this task or at least they have to face resistance.

The same applies to what I witnessed in the self-managed camps in Northern Morocco close to Sebta and Melilla and within peripheral districts of some urban Moroccan spaces where these Sub-Saharan migrants live. These places are invested in by Sub-Saharan transmigrants and transformed, step-by-step, despite the repression of Moroccan authorities.<sup>12</sup> This is visible to the naked eye: in some peripheral districts in Rabat, previous ‘slums’ made up of sheet metal are rebuilt in concrete and rented out to newcomers; poor dwellers have found new income sources, even a way to gain access to property, improving economic conditions through adding one floor to their houses thereby transforming the architecture and landscape of these places. The true specificity of stopovers, as I describe them, is that they are not spaces of relegation. They are an intermediate meeting space allowing people to halt, to seek shelter, to access resources, to increase and diversify interpersonal relationships and connections, facilitating thereby the enrichment of networks: it is first of all a social relay point for the most fragile people and newcomers.

### **The stopover as a spatial and temporal framework**

In this sense, the stopover does not stand by itself or ‘outside of places’: it is inscribed in space and time and is connected to other stopovers, other places. It is recognised and conceived as such by the migrants: newcomers are familiar with the names of these places, their location, what they will find there and their ‘function’ as social relays. These stopovers punctuating trajectories are set up by these transmigrants who make them habitable and promote encounters, allowing entrance into the city. However, we do not speak about the city as an entity

1 rooted in the territory, but the city as a process of urbanisation, as a space inter-  
2 connected to encounters and conflicts, within which migrants seek shelter.  
3 Transmigrants plan these spaces, reorganise their migratory projects, reorganise  
4 their lives: some of them get married, have children, the dead are buried and  
5 ceremonies are public. Some of them work, pray, engage in business activities  
6 and activism; others end up entering into a new phase or go back to their home  
7 country, but new migrants arrive, perpetuating the movement while reshaping it.  
8 It is through these stopovers that transmigrants join collectives of solidarity that  
9 connect them with other migrants as well as locals who are able to help them in  
10 these places. These stopovers allow them to take a step back and have a fresh  
11 look at their trajectory. They then become fully conscious of the collective char-  
12 acter of their migration. This identification can be measured in the light of their  
13 circulation 'know-how'. By confronting and experiencing it on a daily basis,  
14 these populations learn to live in their transmigration. Hence, these stopovers are  
15 also 'resource spaces' allowing transmigrants to build material and symbolic  
16 supports that enable circulation and subjective situation.

17 We are miles away from either transit or boundless nomadic circulation. Of  
18 course, in the global era mobilities and the forms of deterritorialisation that  
19 ensue are essential elements of migrations. Arguably, transmigration as a form  
20 of socialisation is thus a movement within which deterritorialisation and re-  
21 territorialisation are pendular through time and space. This new migratory form  
22 stems from the establishment of social networks that cut through nation-states,  
23 enabling these actors to circulate and shape circulations (of other people but also  
24 'goods'), while submitting to state controls. Transmigrations then adopt strat-  
25 egies to circumvent these injunctions and controls – but not without problems –  
26 producing their own norms and values, their own forms of mobility and social  
27 action, and their own networks and territories. When it came to analysing this  
28 phenomenon, however, I got caught between, on the one hand, sociological  
29 approaches focusing on territory, nation, identity, integration or on acculturation,  
30 relationships of domination and dispossession, and, on the other hand,  
31 approaches focusing on deterritorialisation, fluidity, flexibility and post-modern  
32 'nomadism'.

33 I had to find a new perspective to analyse the adventure of Sub-Saharanans dis-  
34 tancing myself from the sociology of immigration (Rea and Trippier 2003), and  
35 even of emigration (Sayad 1977, 1992), in order to deepen and complexify the  
36 approach to this migratory phenomenon beyond the binary 'emigration/immigra-  
37 tion', and proposing, following Alain Tarrius (1989), a ternary analysis, more  
38 longitudinal and process-like, and adding to the prefix 'im' and 'em' the prefix  
39 'trans': the phenomenon under study is one of 'emigration', that could become  
40 'immigration' but to truly achieve this state, or in the meantime, is a 'transmi-  
41 gration' or even once an immigration (if so) could be extended once again to a  
42 transmigration. This migratory phenomenon cannot be fully grasped if not con-  
43 ceived as a migratory movement in stages, that it is to say, a ternary process  
44 whose evolutionary path is neither certain nor unilateral. I also had to avoid ana-  
45 lyses that depict the migrant as a post-modern hero, a bondless nomad, a rational

actor endowed with mobility and flexibility capabilities, able to manage his 'assets' depending on the context, just like tricks he would pull out from his hat, integrating after a natural selection based on his abilities into the 'fluidity' or 'liquidity' (Bauman 2000) of the liberal globalisation, even able to do without the social-state and its institutions.

Not only have the people under study had a hard time accommodating de-territorialisation and mobility, which are usually at their premises a kind of 'vagabondage' necessary to circumvent borders, to escape locally institutionalised power relationships, avoid employers' exploitation and state controls, but they frequently fall into these traps and take time to cope with them, leading to harsh experiences. Moreover, against the backdrop of the political mobilisation of some Sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, while bypassing rules dictated by the States, they also demand that the state respect their rights, including supporting them directly or indirectly in exclusionary situations: access to health and education facilities, police protection and justice. This 'transmigration' is a complex and ambivalent process because it is as a matter of urgency through exclusion and instability, and even repression, that these Sub-Saharan transmigrants have reinvented their lives. To understand this ternary process, this process whose beginning and end – if any – are difficult to grasp, we need an intermediate space. This intermediate space can be one of transition and one of transformation or not. The notion of stopover I put forward allows us to have a place and a complementary time frame, between e-migration and im-migration, that can durably transform (or not) these migrant populations. They not only reorganise themselves but also have to reinvent a social life in de-territorialisation: they have to relocalise, reterritorialise and thus adapt to rules, norms and values that define this intermediate space, this time-space which is also the one of transmigration. It is neither integration, in the French sense of the word (even less an assimilation) nor a full superposition or independence (as captured in France through the notion of *communautarisme*). Transmigrants have to adapt in these stopovers and incorporate themselves into them.

They learn new things, even find resources. However, most of the time, they suffer from domination (racism, discrimination, exploitation, violence<sup>13</sup>) but since they cannot integrate (in the French understanding of the word) they make use of strategies to push their project forward in a form of social autonomy described above, which allows them to partially escape from these domination relationships. In order to do this, they have to be able to cross administrative, political, natural, social and cultural boundaries that separate the stopover where they find themselves from the next one. It also presupposes that they are able to insert themselves into this stopover to reorganise, prospect new opportunities likely to be of some interest to them (salary work, commercial and economic opportunities, support of NGOs, administrative 'opportunities' such as getting access to the UNCHR, etc.) and find ways to take the next step into a new stage of their migration, and so on. Deterritorialised and transnational networks, here described in their social form, mobilised by Sub-Saharan migrants along migratory routes leading from Black Africa to Europe through the



1 Maghreb have a certain social width incarnated in the relationships between  
2 populations and social relations of proximity that are observable in the stop-  
3 overs where these transmigrants reterritorialised in order to reorganise them-  
4 selves, thereby creating in a way links between circulating people and  
5 territories. These articulations, that sometimes appear to be simple superposi-  
6 tions, between the social density of the deterritorialised and transnational net-  
7 works mobilised by these adventurers and the more sedentary issues of local  
8 populations are observable in situ through these stopovers where these interac-  
9 tions are numerous and complex.

10 The transmigration I described here allows us to conceptualise the assem-  
11 blages, both territorial and symbolic, between different regimes of action and  
12 mobility almost outside of any territorial framework. The stopover allows to  
13 rethink the articulation of the diverse regimes with territories and the different  
14 levels and logics of regulations and organisations on which or next to which they  
15 act. The settlements of the Sub-Saharan transmigrations are singularly made up  
16 of specific temporal dimensions, less substantial for those who don't share it.  
17 Yet, they are not always, or not fully, impermeable to regulation efforts under-  
18 taken by public powers or/and normative pressures from local populations. But  
19 they are never fully indentured, adjusting, circumventing and recreating original  
20 spaces and temporalities, to resist and escape territorial controls and identity and  
21 social normalisations. That does not mean that these deterritorialised and trans-  
22 national social networks are borderless configurations, or even social forms  
23 impermeable to influences and domination relationships exterior to them: their  
24 deterritorialisations, limited in time, cannot be grasped without taking into  
25 account their sequences of reterritorialisations.

26 The notion of stopover offers therefore both a time and a space of observation  
27 and an interpretative framework to understand the way some deterritorialised  
28 phenomena reterritorialise for a time, before deterritorialising again, in a move-  
29 ment which would be otherwise more difficult to grasp. Even if this framework  
30 is unstable, it allows us to follow these people in their daily lives and observe in  
31 situ how they experience, individually or collectively, these ordeals as a totality,  
32 drawing them closer together as time goes by. That is to say without any precon-  
33 ceived idea of their settlement or departure, exclusion or integration, or to put it  
34 the way the classical sociology does, replacing instead the temporal dimension,  
35 notably the one of transmigration, which is a long time period in the analysis.  
36 The stopover is both a well-rounded and chosen strategy and a consequence of  
37 restrictive migration policies, compelling them to follow complicated migratory  
38 routes and constraining them to long halts during which they have to survive; it  
39 is an ambivalent characteristic of contemporary globalisation; it is also a place  
40 and a time of observation for the sociologist, a methodological framework and  
41 an analytical tool. The Sub-Saharan migration in stages is a remarkable example  
42 of the transition between the image of a world divided by state borders that  
43 is gradually being supplanted by a multidimensional image which reveals  
44 the density of relationships. But to be able to observe these fluid, and even at  
45 time liquid phenomena in practical terms, we need interstices in which they



materialise, solidify, over an instant in time. We therefore feel that the notion of stopover is precious to our understanding not only of current transnational migrations but also to the sociopolitical dynamics linked with globalisation (Sassen 2007).

## Notes

- 1 Mainly coming from West African countries, with an important number of them coming from Cameroon and Congo RDC.
- 2 The ‘adventure’ is a complicated and risky endeavour: migrants have to join forces, create bonds in order to succeed – forming a *collectif d’entraide* (a form of socialisation I describe throughout my research) – but also have to find external support.
- 3 See Alioua (2003).
- 4 This is the way they describe friends and relatives who send them funds.
- 5 A Cadi is a judge.
- 6 The Adoul is the administrative authority in the religious jurisdiction that can be defined as akin to a notary only dealing with family and marriage issues.
- 7 For these social groups, the nation-state is that which imposes, assigns, controls and prevents the crossing of borders, which represses but offers no solution.
- 8 Source: CERED (Centre for Demographic Study and Research) and HPC (High Commission for Planning), 2005, Rabat, Morocco.
- 9 As we have already shown, some decide to settle in the Maghreb countries for a longer period without in any way abandoning their European dreams (Alioua 2005).
- 10 For a sociological view of the trial, particularly in the individuation process, see Martuccelli (2006).
- 11 Finally embracing the views and perspectives of historians, Maurice Halbwachs did understand this well. It is what he proposed in Halbwachs (1997, 2008).
- 12 See GADEM reports, [www.gadem-asso.org](http://www.gadem-asso.org).
- 13 See reports and press releases from GADEM, especially the one jointly drafted with CERD (Comité des Nations Unies pour l’élimination de la discrimination raciale) as it requires Morocco to take action against racial discrimination while expressing concerns about discrimination and xenophobia against refugees and asylum seekers as well as non-citizens without residence permits, [www.gadem-asso.org](http://www.gadem-asso.org).

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## 8 Constructing mobile lifestyles between Europe and Africa

*Sha'bi* Moroccan men and new  
European nomads

*Marko Juntunen and Špela Kalčič*

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the contemporary developments within the field of transnational mobility between Europe and Western Africa, paying particular attention to Morocco. Our ethnographic data regarding emerging forms of mobile lifestyles in the region indicate that the global economic recession beginning in 2008, together with restrictive migration and border policy in the EU, have had far-reaching consequences to the patterns and the cultural logic of transnational mobility in the Western Mediterranean. It has become increasingly difficult to conceptualise some of these newly emergent mobile lifestyles in the conventional analytic terminology of migration and mobility studies. Our aim is to demonstrate this by offering ethnographic insights into the transnational movement of popular class (*sha'bi*<sup>1</sup>) Moroccan men, who arrived in Spain as irregular migrants in the 1990s, and new European nomads who engage in a mobile life between Europe, Morocco and other parts of Western Africa.

### Arab Spring, the global economic crisis and the new mobilities

In the global era nation-states face increasing challenges in controlling their economies and the conditions of their labour market. The recent media representations from many parts of North Africa but also from EU member states such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Greece reveal similar developments; states face severe problems of nationalising and disciplining their populations who openly demonstrate their frustration and devise various strategies for adapting to the uncertainty of political future, instability of markets, unexpected capital flows, price and tax increases and reduced welfare benefits and services.<sup>2</sup>

The global economic crisis beginning in 2008 has pushed more than 12 million people under the threat of falling under the poverty line in the EU.<sup>3</sup> In many areas across Western Europe the crisis struck particularly hard on the youth and elders regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> The crisis furthermore generated wide disillusionment as the constant increase in the economic

influence of global corporations on national economies furthered the dislocation of power from politics.

While Western Europe was struggling with the financial crisis, the social and political developments in the Northern African states took a dramatic turn. By early 2011 mass demonstrations with demands for social justice and political reform became a routine scene from Morocco to Egypt. Widely shared popular frustration manifested in the form of increasingly direct criticism against rampant corruption, price increases, unequal distribution, nepotism and human rights violations.

Following the turbulent socio-economic conditions growing readiness to migrate has been reported on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. However, the EU policies have largely followed old positions regarding Mediterranean migration with strong emphasis on the control of external borders of Europe (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012). In conventional manner the mobile subject from the Global South remains largely the sole object and challenge for EU migration policy.

The threat perceptions regarding uncontrollable new refugee and migrant flows from Northern Africa to EU territory became particularly clear in the Western media that provided insights into the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya (cf. Barry, 2012). Counter to these expectations several hundreds of thousands of people leaving their homes fled to neighbouring countries and only some 60,000 reached EU territory as irregular migrants and asylum-seekers.

It should be highlighted that the Arab Spring coincided with a period when increasing numbers of Europeans but also African migrants in Europe with EU passports, Moroccans among them, escaped economic recession by moving outside of Europe.<sup>5</sup> In most academic and media representations these population movements were conceptualised in the conventional terminology of migration research as forms of labour-, return-, circular- and pendulum-migration (cf. Arango and González Quiñones, 2009; De Bree *et al.*, 2010) reflecting the theoretical approaches of the earlier studies in the region (cf. De Haas and Fokkema, 2010; Khachani, 2008; Skeldon, 2009; Triandafyllidou, 2010). By drawing on our extensive ethnographic data our aim is to demonstrate that many of the people leaving Europe were not, in fact, representing migratory movement between fixed destinations. They had engaged in a nomadic lifestyle that involved constant movement between Europe and Western Africa. This phenomenon has up until today remained largely unrecognised and unaddressed in both popular and academic debates on mobility and migration.<sup>6</sup>

### **Unorthodox comparisons**

In this chapter we follow Urry's (2000) idea that the social analysis should expand its focus on locations and bounded social units to human mobilities and fleeting social formations that are on the move, simply because mobility in the current era is an increasingly important social issue. However, mobility has become a fact of life in an era when it is regulated, controlled and surveilled in



1 unprecedented ways through state or supra-state regulation (Cunningham and  
2 Heyman, 2004; Stepputat, 2009), making people increasingly unequal with  
3 regard to their right to engage in mobility in a global scale.

4 At present the methods of enclosing mobility in the EU include regulations  
5 regarding citizenship, the control of national boundaries and formulation of  
6 stricter immigration regimes. While it is important to pay attention to the ways  
7 in which people experience enclosures and to the strikingly unequal individual  
8 positions vis-à-vis the freedom of international movement, equally pivotal is to  
9 observe the ways in which people circumvent enclosures on individual or group  
10 level. Attention should be paid as well to the fact that enclosures constructed by  
11 the nation-states and international agreements are not only about controlling the  
12 mobility of 'outsiders'. Currently, nation-states in the EU face challenges when  
13 attempting to enclose their own citizens. The popular press nearly everywhere in  
14 the EU claims that it is merely the populations from the Global South with  
15 migrant backgrounds who manipulate European welfare systems, for example,  
16 by claiming different forms of benefits while spending extended periods of time  
17 outside its territory. In the following we demonstrate that the new European  
18 nomads use highly similar methods of circumventing the sedentary norm  
19 imposed by the nation-state as many migrant populations from the Global South.  
20 Our aim is not to stigmatise either group. We merely wish to highlight the fact  
21 that these strategies are responses to a uncertain economic future and they are  
22 adopted by people regardless of their origins and ethnic backgrounds.

23 The highly mobile lifestyles of both Europeans and Moroccans (and other  
24 West Africans) with EU passports not only challenge the existing conceptual  
25 tools of migration and mobility studies, but also call for rethinking the adminis-  
26 trative taxonomies ('migrant', 'tourist', 'nomad', 'asylum-seeker') dealing with  
27 mobility and migration. In our ongoing fieldwork we have observed mobile sub-  
28 jects who do not follow strictly fixed travel trajectories, nor does their travel  
29 occur between a limited number of sending and receiving communities where  
30 they reside for extended periods of time (cf. Juntunen, 2002; Kalčić, 2012). It is,  
31 in fact, the movement itself that distinguishes these mobilities from con-  
32 temporary migrations. More and more people today, both Westerners<sup>7</sup> and Afri-  
33 cans, circulate along loosely defined transnational trajectories (cf. Angeras,  
34 2011; Hetherington, 1992: 93; Kalčić, 2012; Kohl, 2009; Korpela, 2009; Mac-  
35 Gaffey and Rémy, 2000; Peraldi, 2005; Rogelja, 2012) and share similar relation  
36 with space as traditional peripatetic nomadic groups (cf. Berland, 1992; Berland  
37 and Rao, 2004; Berland and Salo, 1986), yet the cultural ethos of their move-  
38 ment can only be grasped against the global late capitalism.

39 Unlike many contemporary migrant and diasporic communities, these mobile  
40 groups do not create politicised identities nor politicised public spheres for the  
41 simple reason that they are constructed by individuals who are most of the time  
42 on the move. The social relations among the mobile subjects we have studied  
43 have a distinctively fleeting and situational character. Social weightlessness and  
44 readiness to test how life would work elsewhere characterise their relation to  
45 spaces they traverse.

The conventional classification of mobilities as either voluntary mobilities (tourism, lifestyle migration, business travel and economic migration) or forced mobilities (refugees and asylum migration) hardly bears relevance with regard to the subjects of our studies. Many of our interlocutors simply conceive of themselves as being pushed from behind in a variety of ways and marginalised by their background society. In the case of those originating from the EU countries experiences of unemployment, blocked careers, a precarious labour market position and homelessness together with sharp criticism towards the dominant norms of the background society marked by neoliberal capitalism are widely shared. The Moroccan men whose life courses we followed for several years for this study, on the other hand, display a deeply ambivalent relation with Morocco. Their personal testimonies regarding reasons for departing from Morocco reveal embitterment and disdain towards Moroccan political and social order. Particularly those with education or professional skills and thus legitimate claims for decent social position portray Morocco as a corrupt and unjust society run by an exclusive elite circle that controls the key political, military and economic institutions.

The recession of 2008 pushed many Europeans to resort to peripatetic survival strategies (i.e. nomadism that exploits social rather than natural resources) or to migrate to places where they are able to reduce the living costs, for example to Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Turkey) or to Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa) (Harding, 2012; Kalčić, 2012; Rogelja, 2012). According to unofficial estimates of 2011, approximately 50,000 French people who are not ethnic nomads live in converted vehicles within the French territory (Angeras, 2011). These people could be compared with traditional peripatetic nomads, according to Berland and Salo (1986) defined as nomads engaged in nomadic strategy ‘that exploits social rather than natural resources in larger ecocultural systems’ (ibid.: 3). Peripatetic nomadism is according to Thomas Acton defined also as ‘the recurrent exploitation of spatially and temporally discontinuous economic opportunities’ (Acton, 2010: 6), as well as an economically, not culturally driven movement, which similarly as in the case of economic migration, builds on pursuit of better living standard (ibid.: 7). Many of these newly emergent European nomads (moving in and out of Europe) include people who find themselves in vulnerable economic positions and use a mobile lifestyle to ‘muddle through’ the period of unemployment until they obtain the pension, or alternatively, work and use several income-making strategies while on the move. In Europe they meet their expenses by engaging in the unregulated economic niches of tourism services, construction and agriculture. Others resort to remote work or mobile economic strategies enabled by the internet and development of other information and communication technologies. The nomadism of these people is not rooted in a tribal system and organised through descent groups as in the case of traditional nomads where kinship presents a structural and organising principle of community (Berland and Salo, 1986: 4). Belonging is not based on blood relations, but rather marked by pronounced individualism.

1 The experiences of the Moroccan *sha'bi* men with EU citizenship that we  
2 encountered in our research speak of uprootedness and futurelessness where  
3 departure from Morocco appears as a means to escape life without a horizon.<sup>8</sup> In  
4 Europe the Moroccan migrants often faced extremely difficult economic con-  
5 ditions, xenophobia and racism and lethal dangers as irregular migrants on the  
6 way to the West. The traditional sector of migrant labour, industrial work, no  
7 longer absorbed them and they had very few other options than to engage in  
8 manual labour in the lowest and unregulated echelons of the European labour  
9 market in services, manufacture, agriculture and construction (cf. De Haas 2007;  
10 Glass *et al.* 2014). For a large part of these Moroccans permanent EU residence  
11 and citizenship turned into a means of broadening the sphere of transnational  
12 movement and economic strategies. Thousands of Moroccans engage currently  
13 in transnational trading activities of second hand goods, *khurda*, including small  
14 electronics, shoes and clothes, household utensils, construction materials, furni-  
15 ture, used cars and car parts.

16 We realise that that there are several pitfalls we can fall into while comparing  
17 Western (predominantly European) mobile subjects with non-Westerners  
18 (Moroccans). By no means do we intend to dilute the clear structural inequalities  
19 between the Western and the non-Western subjects, at times apparent economic  
20 and educational status differences as well as their differing positions vis-à-vis  
21 the migrant regimes, border policies, racist and xenophobic discourses and prac-  
22 tices, and systems of state and supra-state surveillance. There are also funda-  
23 mental differences with regard to the ways in which our interlocutors relate to  
24 social and material expectations of their background societies. While the *sha'bi*  
25 men are surrounded by expectations of material success and economic assistance  
26 by the family and kin, many of our western interlocutors made a highly individu-  
27 alistic choice to uproot themselves from the market oriented lifestyle and norms  
28 that value professional and economic success. However, regardless of these dif-  
29 ferences, our wish is to demonstrate that comparison between cases that may at  
30 first hand seem very different can reveal interesting new aspects of mobility in  
31 the era of global economic recession.

32 Several scholars have argued that the period of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman,  
33 2000), marked by accentuated and all-embracing mobility (Sheller and Urry,  
34 2006), provides opportunities for new kinds of social formations based on shared  
35 elements which may be activities, interests, beliefs or lifestyles (Amit, 2002a,  
36 2002b; Amit and Rapport, 2002; Bauman, 2001; Delanty, 2003; Kennedy and  
37 Roudometof, 2002; Maffesoli, 1996). These formations are outcomes of prac-  
38 tices of people who are merely 'conceptually connected'. They do not neces-  
39 sarily imagine their personal commonalities in ongoing and ascribed collective  
40 identities (see Amit and Rapport, 2002). In short they reveal very weak group-  
41 ness among themselves.

42 Individuality plays a significant role in the construction of specific types of con-  
43 temporary social formations that arise out of individuals' search for identity and  
44 personal fulfilment through collective participation (Amit, 2002a: 16; Delanty,  
45 2003: 120–122). These social formations are characteristically situational, fluid

and composed by people with multiple and simultaneous attachments with several such formations (Amit, 2002b: 16; Delanty, 2003: 131; Kennedy and Roudometof, 2002: 15).

Both the Moroccan and the Western subjects described in this chapter create distinctively fleeting trans- and multi-national social formations that are played out during ‘temporary rests’ (cf. Urry, 2003: 126). They engage in a shared lifestyle on the road and exchange experience, information and solidarity. These mobile lifestyles arise out of global modernity which promotes, enables and generates an escape to an alternative *modus vivendi* and experimentation with new kinds of social formations.

At the moment, more and more people from both the Global South and North construct such mobile lifestyles. They in most cases feel marginalised and deceived by the neoliberal world order and they cannot be conceptualised simply (in the case of Westerners) as affluent privileged tourists/travellers/lifestyle-migrants or (in the case of Moroccans and Sub-Saharan) as poor and unprivileged irregular-/economic-/asylum-migrants (or traditional nomads).

The legal regimes controlling mobility in the EU treat these mobile people in increasingly unequal terms, and the stratification is based largely on citizenship and social and cultural backgrounds of the mobile subjects. While the Westerners enjoy great freedom of global mobility and remain outside of public debates on migration, mobility and citizenship, Africans/Moroccans are perceived as the central constituents of the immigration problem (i.e. threat to social cohesion and burden for the welfare system). The preoccupation with the immigrant-other has up to the present muted a critical debate in the EU member states on the relation between human mobility and wider political, economic and technological transformations in the global order.

Before providing deeper ethnographic perspective to the life worlds of the subjects of our studies it is essential to focus on the political and economic contexts of transnational mobility in the Western Mediterranean.

### **Transnational mobility in the Western Mediterranean**

Since the first years of the new millennium the EU has begun to invest great efforts in the development of advanced systems of border vigilance and computerisation of border monitoring in the Western Mediterranean. For nearly two decades irregular migration from Morocco to EU territory had served as a prospect for the future for the youth across Morocco, Sahel and Sub-Saharan West Africa.<sup>9</sup>

The changing migration policy in the EU resulted in sharply reducing numbers of attempted arrivals and arrests of irregular migrants, but also lethal accidents in land and sea.<sup>10</sup> Through complex forms of political and financial incentives the EU gradually managed to transport its migration control agenda to its southern frontier, turning Morocco into one of the main buffer zones of south–north mobility.<sup>11</sup> This development was particularly clear with regard to the situation of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco. Thousands without



1 prospects for survival in their countries of origin, nor possibilities to enter EU  
2 territory, were stuck in Morocco, often with a concrete fear of brutal deporta-  
3 tion.<sup>12</sup> The Moroccan press and the internet based new media together with  
4 Moroccan and international human right organisations debated widely on the  
5 situation of youth entrapped in extremely difficult conditions in the Spanish-  
6 Moroccan frontier in Ceuta and Melilla and the emergence of destitute Sub-  
7 Saharan street prostitutes and street vendors in the major cities of Morocco.  
8 Many Moroccan human rights activists accused the Moroccan state for its prac-  
9 tice of ‘State racism’ towards Sub-Saharans as it currently denies rights to work,  
10 schooling and health care together with right for residence to irregular migrants  
11 in its territory. Forced removals to the Moroccan-Algerian and Moroccan-  
12 Mauritanian border received equal critique often accompanied by accusations  
13 towards the EU as it offers benefits to the Moroccan state based on the imple-  
14 mentation of these policies (cf. GADEM 2012: 13–18).

15 The changing political attitude towards irregular migration in the EU sent a  
16 clear message to Moroccans; realism had taken over a large part of the youth. In  
17 2012 irregular migration with the help of migrant smugglers was no longer a  
18 prospect for the future and economic survival. The Spanish economy fell into  
19 crisis and had little to offer for the incoming irregular migrants. The major cities  
20 in Catalonia, that had for more than a decade attracted thousands of irregular  
21 Moroccan migrants witnessed that the unemployment rate of Moroccans  
22 increased rapidly in 2007 reaching 55 per cent in 2011 (Perez Pons and Delgado,  
23 2011). The migrant men were the first to suffer from the recession because many  
24 worked in the construction sector which proved to be particularly vulnerable to  
25 economic shifts. Those with temporary contracts (or none at all) were the first  
26 ones to go. In contrast to men the *sha’bi* women’s situation looked very dif-  
27 ferent. As noted the recession pushed many married women to return more or  
28 less permanently to Morocco. Those Moroccan *sha’bi* women who participated  
29 in the Spanish labour market were in many cases ‘women without men’, i.e.  
30 divorcees, orphans and unmarried women who had engaged individually in the  
31 irregular migration (cf. Ramirez, 1998). In Spain they often work in domestic  
32 services and they witnessed that their labour market situation was not hit as hard  
33 by the recession as in the case of men.

34 As noted by the Spanish daily newspaper *El Pais* in August 2011 the total  
35 number of interceptions in the Spanish-Moroccan-Algerian waters had reached  
36 its lowest figure (1,600 cases) in more than two decades (‘Llegan en patera’,  
37 2011). Thousands of Moroccans in Spain who managed to obtain Spanish resid-  
38 ence or citizenship had few other options than to return periodically to Morocco,  
39 or to engage in survival strategies that required constant transnational movement  
40 between Morocco and the EU territory.

41 While these developments were on the way there was hardly any academic or  
42 media attention on the fact that many Europeans were turning back to Europe.  
43 Attracted by the pleasant weather conditions in Morocco (and other regions in  
44 Western Africa), together with a possibility to minimise the living costs, many  
45 took up a nomadic life between the two continents. Often these Europeans found



life in a mobile home a preferable solution and engaged in trade with second hand goods and/or vehicles resembling transnational Moroccan (and other African) dealers with EU passports in their economic activities.

The effects of the global economic crisis coincided not only with the Arab Spring, but also with the increased insecurity in the Sahara and Sahel regions. The Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) organisation received international attention as it abducted Swiss tourists in Algeria in 2003. After this incident it gradually increased its influence in many parts of the Sahel area and finally overpowered the North of Mali after the Tuareg seizure of the area in February 2012. This contributed to a change in the travel trajectories of traders operating between Europe and Africa. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the major trading routes of used European vehicles led across Algeria to Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Many Europeans who have engaged for several years in trans-Saharan trade told us that after 2005 and with the construction of the first roads in Mauritania the cross-continental trade was redirected entirely through Morocco. Mauritania became a new market area for used vehicles, and Morocco a lively transit zone for international second hand vehicle dealers of both European and African origin.

In the following we will shift attention to our ethnographic data regarding these mobile lifestyles that on the surface level may seem very different. A closer ethnographic scrutiny reveals that we are dealing with people who are constantly on the *move*, work and use several income-making strategies while on the road and this they do in a highly comparable manner. We furthermore wish to demonstrate that not only mobility and economic strategies but also conceptions concerning reasons to be mobile, relations with background society and public spaces these people traverse share similar features.

### **New mobility among popular class (*sha'bi*) Moroccans**

In 1998, as we began studying the mobile lives of the *sha'bi* men, the social effects of the increasingly controlled borders were visible all over Northern Morocco. Our main fieldwork location in Morocco, the town of Larache, is situated in an area which had experienced a rapid increase in cases of migrant smuggling into Spain in the mid-1990s (cf. López García, 1996: 73). At the turn of the millennium the town and its surrounding rural areas were understood according to popular Moroccan stereotypes as heartlands of the *bilad harraga* (the land of migrant smuggling) – the coastal area stretching from the Northern Atlantic shores of Kenitra to the easternmost points on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. All over the cafes and street corners of Larache the topic of the day among youth was migration. The unjust border regimes, the huge profits corrupted officials in the security institutions and border guard made from secret pacts with local migrant smugglers, the arrests of irregular migrants by the coast guard and the deathly accidents at sea were troubling nearly every person. This ‘border talk’ (Nyberg-Sørensen, 2000) constructed a discursive space within which the people’s perceptions concerning ‘obligation’ to migrate was shaped

1 and individual success or failure as a migrant were evaluated. From the point of  
2 view of the main protagonists of irregular migration, the young men, everyone  
3 had in reality migrated in their imagination long before they embarked on the  
4 first journey to Europe (cf. Mescoli, 2014).

5 The new mobility was surrounded by a constantly transforming and expand-  
6 ing informal ‘migration market’, economic space that had emerged largely as a  
7 response to restrictive border and immigration regime in the EU (Juntunen,  
8 2002: 35–36, 90–91). This economic space included three interconnected and  
9 overlapping contexts. First there was the practical sphere of smuggling of  
10 migrants (on open boats, cargo boats, passenger buses, lorries and private cars).  
11 Second, it involved the commerce and bribery related to obtaining of official or  
12 counterfeit documents (travel documents, work contracts in Spain, birth certifi-  
13 cates, criminal records, educational or professional certificates, marriage con-  
14 tracts and any kind of document that increased the possibilities for international  
15 mobility of the prospective migrant). Finally, it involved the commercialisation  
16 of numerous social relations and arrangements that could improve the candi-  
17 date’s chances of embarking on a journey north (marriages of convenience,  
18 lending of EU passports to similar looking friends or family members in  
19 exchange of economic compensation, etc.).

20 This new mobility was largely detached from the destinations and the logic of  
21 movement of earlier generations of Moroccans in Western Europe (De Haas,  
22 2007). Instead of targeting France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, all  
23 popular destinations among the labour and chain migrants of the 1960s and  
24 1970s, the new migrant men perceived the booming construction and agricul-  
25 tural sectors in Spain as preferable destinations. Citrus farms in Alicante and  
26 Murcia, greenhouses of Almeria and construction sites of Catalonia attracted  
27 thousands of Moroccans, particularly from the north of the country. The migra-  
28 tion routes were part of a shared social memory distributed through informal net-  
29 works.

30 It is common in Morocco that migration flows of neighbouring regions – even  
31 towns – find largely different destinations. In this reality informal social net-  
32 works offered the only means to contact migrant smugglers and to acquire essen-  
33 tial official or forged documents that were necessary for international mobility.  
34 The migration market connected with migrant smuggling expanded rapidly  
35 throughout the 1990s in the area and constructed a new social and economic  
36 linkage reaching both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar (cf. Driessen, 1998).

37 A large majority of the men whose lives we have observed between 1998 and  
38 2012 represent the first urban born and fully literate generation in their families,  
39 which trace their history to the rural areas surrounding the town of Larache.  
40 They had taken up employment in their early teens as apprentices in garages,  
41 workshops, small industries and construction sites but prior to their migration all  
42 faced either extended periods of underemployment or unemployment. The large  
43 majority of these men were born in the early 1970s, in 1998 still bachelors and  
44 resided in their parental households. Many survived by petty street commerce,  
45 occasional manual work and by providing a variety of services connected to the

migration market. Many were furthermore engaged in occasional contraband trafficking of household goods and small electronics from Spanish enclave Ceuta to other locations in Northern Morocco.

The men's individual experiences varied greatly with regard to actual embarking on the journey to Europe. Especially those who financed their journeys with family members' or relatives' financial help, rarely left without informing their households, while it was not uncommon to hear of men who simply left without a notice when a promising opportunity opened (cf. De Haas and Fokkema, 2010). Several men had made three to four extremely risky and often extremely costly attempts (up to 2,000 euro) to reach Spain; with migrant smugglers, in passenger boats, underneath tourist buses, or hidden in lorries conveying agricultural products. While some had exhausted their financial resources and given up their hopes invested in migration, others with more luck and economic success kept the illusion of migration alive.<sup>13</sup>

In Spain the chances of the migrant men reaching their desired destination depended largely on their social relations with fellow Moroccans in Spain. Upon reaching the Spanish territory people begun to arrange immediately their further travel. Those with better resources had managed to set costly 'package deals' already in Morocco and upon reaching the Spanish coast they were transported by Moroccan smugglers operating in Spain to Almeria, Barcelona, Madrid and further. Others had agreed to contact relatives and friends in Spain immediately after the arrival and were often picked up by private cars from the roadside along the southern coastal areas. The fortunate ones reached target destinations relatively securely and had often accommodation and sometimes even work in construction and street maintenance companies established by Moroccans waiting for them. For these men the first years in Spain were marked by the fear of deportability. One had to participate in public spaces in order to find work, yet it was understandably a risky venture as any sporadic encounter with the Police and the Civil Guard might have led to rapid deportation.

Due to the fear of deportability, the men had hardly other options than to remain mobile and look for employment in the lowest echelons of the Spanish labour hierarchy in agriculture, refuse collecting, street vending, construction and street maintenance work. Others had no other choice but to resort to drug dealing, pick pocketing and shoplifting for survival. The men sought occasional housing from squats or resorted to fellow Moroccans with the residence permit and more settled living arrangements.

The men had highly similar experiences in Spain over the first years. The precarious labour market position and deportability constructed a social world characterised by mutual competition over jobs and shelter. For the majority the years without papers was a period full of social tensions between fellows sharing similar dreams for the future and the daily struggle of survival. The men repeatedly told us that it was extremely difficult to escape the vicious circle; everyone was in many ways indebted to others after receiving information, help, shelter and money for food and cigarettes from others. As soon as a young man managed to find more permanent work and was prepared to send money home

1 for elders and family members he was immediately surrounded by increasing  
2 expectations to assist his fellows in need.

3 These conditions did not allow the formation on durable group formations,  
4 nor cooperative initiatives among the men. Largely because of the precarious  
5 labour market situation, the insufficient conditions of work, discipline and dis-  
6 crimination exercised by the employers, together with tensions related to recip-  
7 rocation of help there was a high emotional readiness to try one's luck elsewhere.  
8 Whether the meetings took place in Almeria, Barcelona or Terrassa we were sur-  
9 rounded by men whose dreams for the future rested in Germany or the Scandina-  
10 vian countries, while others thought that life in London, or Montreal, would  
11 work out better.

12 After a strenuous bureaucratic struggle and costly bargaining with the unoffi-  
13 cial migration market nearly all of our interlocutors whose lives we had observed  
14 over the years had managed to regularise their status in Spain by the year 2005.

15 After gaining official residence some men experienced extended periods of a  
16 relatively sedentary life in Spain as they had gained more or less stable work  
17 opportunities in the booming construction sector particularly in different parts of  
18 Catalonia. The men however made frequent returns to Morocco and routinely  
19 engaged in import activities of household goods and domestic appliances. Many  
20 returned for marriage in their home community yet often the economic con-  
21 ditions in Spain had not allowed the establishment of households in Spain; in  
22 many cases the wives and children remained in Morocco.

23 The economic recession of 2008 forced these men to expand their sphere of  
24 movement. The women who had joined their husbands in Spain returned to  
25 Morocco while the husbands began to search for job opportunities in different  
26 parts of Spain and engaged in the trade of second hand goods over the Spanish  
27 Moroccan frontier. These activities often involved the beneficiaries of unem-  
28 ployment and other benefits and the returns occurred outside the knowledge of  
29 the Spanish authorities. Many of our interlocutors had a nominal permanent  
30 address in Spain, which usually belonged to a more affluent relative.

31 While we carried out the latest period of fieldwork for this chapter in 2012  
32 the spirit of protests and mass demonstrations was widely spread all over  
33 Morocco. Thousands of internet news rooms, Facebook pages, blogs and pro-  
34 democracy organisations together with sporadic street demonstrations and stand-  
35 offs sent a similar message; Moroccans had shown great determination to  
36 construct a more open space for political expression. Several of our interlocutors  
37 had periodically returned to Morocco from Spain in order to escape severe eco-  
38 nomic difficulties. Spain had no longer anything to offer them yet they expressed  
39 feeling in Morocco increasingly "humiliated and ripped off of personal dignity"  
40 and not willing to put up with life in a society run by "the lobby of thoroughly  
41 corrupted thieves" where "laws exist only for the poor". The men routinely pre-  
42 ferred to take a less direct role in public demonstrations stating that they person-  
43 ally had "nothing to do with Morocco" or alternatively that the "Moroccan state  
44 did not have any meaning for them", voicing their alienation from Morocco as a  
45 nation-state and political and economic system. When talking about their



demands, people idiomatically expressed simply wanting their just ‘share’ (*haqq*) of the society in economic social and moral terms, expressing that the current order deeply violated their ‘personal dignity’ (*karama*).

Highly individualised ethos marks the social world of the mobile *sha’bi* men whose lives we followed. These men interact, get together, yet they are only linked through the fact that they share the same ethos and sentiments and motives of being mobile. Much alike the Algerian suitcase traders described by Michel Peraldi these men form emotional communities – rather than communities with shared values and norms (Peraldi, 2005: 49). They are united by similar dreams of winning personal liberty, gaining authority to make decisions and to settle in emotional and existential terms.

### The new European nomads

Long before engaging in actual fieldwork among European nomads we came across many Westerners during our travels in Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Guinea and who resembled tourists and travellers, yet there was something peculiar about them. These people were of working age, but gradually we learned that they were not involved in any way in the labour market of their home societies. For them travelling was clearly not simply a holiday ‘flee’ but a way of life; while many of those whom we met travelled and lived in vehicles converted to mobile homes, others were carrying backpacks and used public transport or hitchhiked. We began to conceptualise them as peculiar kinds of Western nomads worthy of deeper ethnographic scrutiny.

Regardless of the fact that they all engaged in a mobile lifestyle between the two continents they were far from a homogenous group. First, their connectedness to the sedentary life differed considerably. Some of them told us that they had real estate and land property in their country of origin where they returned frequently. Many others, however, confessed to not owning anything else of value but their mobile home in which they lived in both continents. We met several people who spent part of the year parked in areas where they were left in peace; in suburban areas of Berlin, mountains and forests of Portugal, Spain and France or in Britain in camp sites established for New Age Travellers and the Roma people. Others lived in close vicinity of squatters in Toulouse, Marseille, London and other places but it was not uncommon to meet those who lived part time in squats or alternatively turned to their friends, families and the official rental market for housing while in Europe.

Second, they represented not only several nationalities (the largest groups being French, Spanish Portuguese, British, Italian, Dutch, Slovenian and Croatian) but also different age groups, with a variety of educational and professional backgrounds.

Third, there appeared to be varieties of mobile households. The most common form consisted of a couple without children (the minority with children commonly stated that mobile life with children requires more economic resources, planning, security and time-consuming household chores). Others travelled in



1 pairs of friends, however single men on the road was not an uncommon sight in  
2 Africa. Single women on the road were rare exceptions.

3 Most of the interlocutors had left a sedentary life after the year 2000. While  
4 some lived off savings or had regular income thanks to pensions, or wage work  
5 facilitated by the internet or other ITC technology, the large majority had to  
6 resort to various flexible economic strategies while on the road.

7 Regardless of these differences a common sentiment and cultural logic of  
8 engaging in mobile life was clearly shared by the interlocutors. In conversation  
9 situations they unanimously displayed a great readiness to emphasise the fact  
10 that by making a rational decision to engage in nomadism their lives had  
11 improved. Yet closer observation revealed that the decision was in reality taken  
12 amidst unfortunate or unsatisfactory circumstances; in most cases involving  
13 crisis with family, personal frustrations such as an unsatisfactory professional  
14 situation, economic difficulties or general personal disharmony with dominant  
15 values of the consumption oriented background society.

16 Most of these people come from the lower economic strata of their back-  
17 ground societies and had previously suffered from precarious positions in the  
18 labour and housing market. Thirty-two-year-old Stella was in many ways repre-  
19 sentative: After she completed her PhD in 2006 her research funds obtained from  
20 the national research council ended. The research institute where she used to  
21 work could not provide resources for extension of the work contract and she  
22 became unemployed. As she had never travelled for a longer period of time she  
23 was very happy to join her boyfriend on a trip with an old Land Rover to Niger.  
24 Like many other travellers to West Africa they covered their travel expenses by  
25 selling the car in Africa. After her return, Stella applied without success for  
26 several postdoctoral positions and found herself in an extremely dissatisfying  
27 situation working as an underpaid part-time entertainer in a team organising rec-  
28 reational events for big companies. She told us that her monthly housing  
29 expenses exceeded her salary. Soon afterwards her boyfriend informed her that  
30 he had found a mobile home; an affordable four wheel drive truck. Stella decided  
31 to give up her dream of saving for an apartment and helped her boyfriend to buy  
32 the vehicle.

33 As her boyfriend had gained a one-year writing grant he suggested that they  
34 could cover their living expenses for a longer time by going to Africa. In West  
35 Africa Stella began to write articles for journals to supplement their budget.  
36 Together with her boyfriend she engaged in occasional tour guiding in Morocco  
37 and they gained experience in the trade of second hand goods. In the second half  
38 of the year 2008 the journals she had cooperated with stopped buying articles  
39 from freelance journalists. Due to budgetary cuts in her home country Stella's  
40 options for gaining academic scholarships reduced greatly. Stella and her boy-  
41 friend were now forced to find a new source of income. They decided to fly back  
42 to Europe in order to buy a Mercedes Benz which they could sell for profit in  
43 Bamako, Mali.

44 As in the case of Stella the predominant form of income generating among  
45 the nomads we have met is engagement in various flexible and mobile economic

strategies. Many among the nomads in fact operate in exactly the same unregulated economic niches as Moroccan and other African migrants with European passports (see e.g. Kohl, 2009).

While in Europe our interlocutors usually work in tourism related services and construction sites, and during the harvest season in agriculture picking fruits and grapes. Furthermore they export domestic appliances and second hand goods such as clothes, computers, cameras, bicycles, motorbikes and furniture, as well as second hand vehicles and spare car parts to Africa. Interestingly they reported discovering suitable market items by observing the African traders circulating between the continents. Those who sell vehicles always bring along goods that can be sold on the way to one of the West African vehicle markets. Such places include the border zone between Morocco and Mauritania, Nouakchott in Mauritania, the Mauritanian-Malian border, Bamako in Mali, Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso and Niamey in Niger. Many rely economically entirely on importing vehicles, making up to seven annual trips between Europe and Africa. Second hand goods usually cover the expenses for fuel and depending on ‘cargo’ generate some profit. Smaller items are usually sold on the way; in Moroccan souks, in front of motels, and on parking sites and petrol stations. These trade sites are chosen spontaneously whenever opportunities for trade open. By far the most profitable second hand goods are the vehicle engines and spare parts together with computers. Profitable business in West Africa requires good connections with the local population. Those who sell vehicles have often established long term connections with local brokers and with each trip they make agreements regarding future business transactions with them.

However, not all of the new European nomads were interested in trade. In fact the majority of the interlocutors told us that they needed money just to cover the everyday expenses and to spend life in a meaningful way. A French couple in their late twenties who had led a mobile life in a housetruck for several years stated: “We have little money but lots of fun”. They claimed that they spend no more than 400 euros monthly. They suffice their budgets by picking grapes and fruit in France and supplement their income with unemployment benefit.

In fact many European nomads rely on different kinds of benefits granted by their national social security systems; these include benefits for disabled people, child allowances, unemployment benefits and income support. They often stated in interview situations that in Africa they can minimise their expenses and thus save part of the benefit money for the future. We talked with several retired people who had encountered increasing economic problems since the recession of 2008 as the government of their home country had implemented pension cuts. Rather than spending money on heating and other housing expenses they told us that it is much more preferable to spend winter time in Morocco or Western Sahara. As a 64-year-old French interlocutor expressed in Dakhla in the Western Sahara in November 2011:

We come here [Dakhla] every year. We always stay at this place. We don’t go to camping sites, as we cannot afford it. We don’t stay in France as we

1 cannot afford to spend money on heating either. My husband is already  
2 retired, I have lost my job. Next year I'll be entitled to a pension. Every year  
3 in November we travel to Dakhla and every April we travel back to France.  
4 It is not bad to live like this. We enjoy fresh air, sun and good food. And we  
5 catch our own fish!

6  
7 Some of those with better vehicles occasionally run more or less official touring  
8 businesses. While some operate through their internet sites others are completely  
9 unofficial entrepreneurs. The new information and communication as well as  
10 navigation technologies have enabled many to engage in entirely mobile work.  
11 However, those who engage in remote work and have steady Western-standard  
12 salaries were the privileged few among my interlocutors. These individuals work  
13 in fields such as computer programming, translating, writing, illustrating, design,  
14 photography, research, education, businesses and overland touring.

15 Most of these new nomads said that they spend the summer months in Europe  
16 and begin their journeys towards Africa and south along the Atlantic coast of  
17 Morocco and the Western Sahara in the late autumn, when the European climate  
18 gets colder. However, those who engage in petty commerce, second hand trade  
19 of vehicles and domestic appliances literally live on the road and circulate with a  
20 more or less intensive frequency between the continents all year long. On the  
21 other extreme are those who stopped in one place for extended periods and cir-  
22 culated only between their winter and summer camps. In the case of these indi-  
23 viduals destinations keep changing along the travel trajectory, largely depending  
24 on the social, political, economic and climatic conditions in the localities tra-  
25 versed. However, the freedom of this spontaneity lies in the domain of restric-  
26 tions, as more often than not their movement is directed by pursuit of income.

27 In our conversations many expressed a feeling of being deceived and margin-  
28 alised by their home societies. They lacked patriotic feelings of belonging  
29 towards their states of origin. On the other side, they stressed commonality with  
30 people of similar experiences that they met on the way. Social interactions  
31 among them take place in shifting and occasional small groupings that simply  
32 happen to stop in the same places for a few days. These sporadic gatherings  
33 often involve fixing the vehicles, the exchange of nomadic experiences and  
34 information on travel routes. Solidarity and readiness for reciprocal help is  
35 clearly displayed, but these solidarities are first and foremost purely circumstan-  
36 tial. They all live on the road and shared the same experience, which provide  
37 feelings of belonging despite the ephemeral nature of their gatherings. Those  
38 with a place to stay in Europe clearly demonstrated a willingness to host others  
39 if they should drop by one day and seek shelter on their plot. This solidarity is  
40 particularly stressed among full-time houstuckers who face numerous prob-  
41 lems in Europe with regard to makeshift and free-of-charge camping.

42 In the EU territory the vehicles used for housing are required to fulfil strictly  
43 defined qualifications regarding fuel usage, water reserves, hygienic standards  
44 and insurance policies. While England is known among our interlocutors as a  
45 considerably lax country in relation to vehicle homes, in other areas they are

obliged to improvise in order to bypass bureaucratic rules. Most Western nomads attempt to register their vans, trucks and lorries as ordinary vehicles, and hide the fact that they actually live in them. Furthermore, it is common practice to drive on fuel oil and vegetable oil – extremely affordable strategies but prohibited by law in the EU member states.

In the Western Africa mobile Westerners face a much more relaxed bureaucratic culture than in Europe. The people we met rarely report being troubled by the police and other authorities. However, many African states require a personal entry visa from EU citizens, a country specific car insurance, and a temporary ‘pass through permit’ for the vehicle. As many Westerners have extremely limited budgets they are highly motivated in learning how bureaucratic requirements can be bypassed in the most economic way. Many for example manipulate technical or administrative information concerning the vehicle to cut down insurance costs. They learn about suitable stopover sites from online forums, other travellers and by observing roadsides. As they tend to minimise expenses they avoid payable services such as camping sites and resort to makeshift camping, which requires more interaction with local populations whose consent is required for the stay. As most of them lived on extremely limited budgets they were highly motivated to learn how bureaucratic requirements can be circumvented in the most economic way.

Many perceived Western Africa as a place free of countless bureaucratic rules imposed on citizens of Western states. A man, who had at the time of our conversation lived for seven years between Europe and West Africa, described his relation to Africa with the following words:

Sometimes I ask myself, what I am actually doing in this dust, swinishness, illiteracy, and unbearable heat? Why am I not in some other, more ironed part of the world? The answer is hidden in the amount of the practical freedom that (however paradoxically this might sound) the black continent has to offer.

### **Discussion: marginal and mobile**

Our main motive in this chapter was to demonstrate that at present many people from both north and south of the Mediterranean respond to globalised social, political and economic challenges in a comparable manner. We share the belief that it is time to examine critically the mobile lives around us and challenge the widely shared academic consensus to draw clear analytical and conceptual boundaries between the mobile subjects from the Global North and South.

An increasing number of scholars have recently begun to draw similar conclusions to ours; a fine tuned ethnographic work on Tuareg youth (Kohl, 2009), Western bohemian travellers in Goa (Korpela, 2009) and liveboards in the Mediterranean (Rogelja, 2012) share a common thread with our study.

Subjects of all these ethnographical studies move along loosely planned trajectories and their movement is not entirely voluntary nor forced. They are



1 distinctively critical of their background societies and they uphold embittered  
2 attitudes towards the political and social order in their home societies. In all of  
3 these cases we meet widely shared feelings of uprootedness, liminality, margin-  
4 ality and general invisibility from politicised public spaces. While on road they  
5 all resort to mobile and flexible economic strategies, which are made possible  
6 through constant negotiation with the state bureaucracies that impose sedentary  
7 norms on their mobile lives. The circumvention of bureaucratic restrictions  
8 implies marginality (and invisibility), which most probably is one of the main  
9 reasons why these mobile people have until now received far too little scholarly  
10 attention.

11 As ethnographers our interest has been drawn by the multiple ways in which  
12 people deal with their marginal social position and devise flexible strategies of  
13 survival by being mobile. In the social sciences and humanities, much has been  
14 written about marginality, but much remains to be said about its complex rela-  
15 tion with contemporary forms of mobility. Marginality routinely refers to the  
16 outer limits of society and social acceptability but also to lack of social influ-  
17 ence, often accompanied by stigmatisation and disqualification by dominant  
18 social groups. In other words, the notion involves two frameworks; societal and  
19 spatial (Gurung and Kollmair, 2005: 10), evoking the ideas of social inequality  
20 and the (outer) boundaries of society. Many authors, particularly in geography,  
21 have established a strong link between marginality, poverty and vulnerability,  
22 lack of civil liberties, weak political representation and uncertain future  
23 (Coudouel *et al.*, 2004; Gerster, 2000; Gurung and Kollmair, 2005). This under-  
24 standing about marginality is undoubtedly relevant in many different social con-  
25 texts, yet detailed ethnographic case studies may bring to the forefront serious  
26 challenges.

27 Sarah Green among others has pointed out that marginality implies a difficult  
28 and ambivalent relation to the “heart of the things” (2005: 2). In her ethno-  
29 graphic study of the Pogoni region (Greek-Albanian border) marginality can be  
30 understood as the lack of particularity (*ibid.*: 13). In other contemporary ethno-  
31 graphic accounts of the Mediterranean Region (e.g. Gilsenan, 1996; Herzfeld,  
32 1997; Serematakis, 1991; Vale DeAlmeida, 1996), marginality has been closely  
33 associated with accentuated otherness, resistance and social critique, together  
34 with claims to empowerment. Another option is to approach marginality as a  
35 position in-between rather than at the boundaries or peripheries (Boon, 1999 in  
36 Green, 2005). For Boon, the essence of marginality lies in its un-identifiability.  
37 Such a view brings marginality close to Victor Turner’s understanding of limi-  
38 nality as a “position between positions” (1974: 237). Green (2005) further  
39 develops these ideas highlighting the fact that in-betweenness and ambiguity are  
40 associated with inventiveness and the possibilities of making something new out  
41 of making things uncertain (*ibid.*: 4).

42 All these various aspects of the concept – marginality as accentuated other-  
43 ness and difference manifested in the form of resistance, in-betweenness, inven-  
44 tiveness, being nothing particular – proved to be especially useful as we engaged  
45 in a comparison of our ethnographic data. As we have aimed to demonstrate the



*sha'bi* Moroccan men and new European nomads communicate about the world of fluidity, ambiguity and uncertainty, but also about subversive inventiveness, i.e. the possibility of making something new, enabled by mobility, invisibility and in-betweenness.

The key feature of the people that we have studied over the years is their apparent dislocation from everywhere, the location that they have left and the places where they are going to – there is no particular aimed destination, and as a result, the movement, rather than a specific destination of settlement, characterises distinctively these people's lifestyle.

## Notes

- 1 The Arabic term *sha'b* is in Northern African contexts often attached to urban; in economic terms the lower middle class strata of population. The practical usage of the category in Northern Moroccan settings indicates that its translation in terms of class or income group is not justified. While in its most general usage the term is attached to people without official income or steady wage labour, it also refers to spatial divisions. The *sha'bi* quarter (*hayy sha'bi*) is in Northern Morocco typically composed of unofficially constructed housing, unpaved roads and lack of infrastructure, and it has a high prevalence of sheet-metal huts. In its adjectival form *sha'bi* the term refers to a whole variety of cultural practices, notions of socio-economic conditions, including work, social relations, the quality of social networks and forms of behaviour.
- 2 See for example Daley (2012); El Amrani (2012).
- 3 According to EUROSTAT the highest percentages of population at the risk of poverty threshold in the Euro-area in 2011 were in Spain (21.8 per cent), Greece (21.4 per cent) and Portugal (18.0 per cent) (EUROSTAT, 2012).
- 4 See for example Erlanger (2012).
- 5 According to Colectivo Ioé, a social sciences research centre in Spain, in 2011 some 63,000 Moroccans returned to Morocco from Spain. In 2012 the unemployment rate for Moroccans in Spain was 50.7 per cent. Available from: [www.colectivoioe.org/](http://www.colectivoioe.org/) [11 September 2013]. A report by Spanish think tank Fundación Alternativas from 2013 indicates that more than 700,000 Spaniards (nearly 1.5 per cent of population) have left the country since 2008. Available from [www.fundacionalternativas.org/](http://www.fundacionalternativas.org/). [20 June 2015]. High unemployment rates and lack of future prompted increasing numbers of young Portuguese and French graduates to leave their countries of origin for Brazil, Mozambique, Angola and Morocco among other places. The number of foreigners legally living in Brazil rose to 1.47 million in June 2011, up more than 50 per cent from 961,877 in December 2010. Between 2009 and 2011 the number of Portuguese migrants choosing to move to Mozambique increased 30–40 per cent (Phillips, 2011; Tay, 2011). Young French graduates preferred to leave France in the direction of Morocco in search of employment in Casablanca, Rabat, Marrakech and other cities of the country (Mathlouti and Lemaire, 2012).
- 6 Despite the fact that we spent long hours in reviewing the extensive literature on Moroccan migrants in Spain, the return migration of Moroccans, lifestyle migration and modern forms of nomadism we have not found any academic works focusing on the nomadic mobility of the Westerners and the Moroccan migrants in the Eastern Mediterranean and West African regions.
- 7 We use the term 'Westerner' as a category that commonly refers to people from the affluent countries of Western Europe and North America, together with other countries with firm historical, cultural and ethnic ties to Western Europe such as New Zealand and Australia.

- 1 8 The *sha'bi* men's experiences and sentiments of futurelessness and uprootedness are  
 2 analysed at length in Juntunen (2002: 62–86).  
 3 9 In 2001 the Spanish authorities captured almost 15,000 Africans, the majority of whom  
 4 were Moroccans, in the Strait of Gibraltar. The busiest single month was August 2002,  
 5 with 1,000 interceptions in the Strait (see 'Isbaniya tattahimu al-shurta al-maghribiya  
 6 bil-tawatu' fil tahribi l-laji'in' ['Spain Accuses Moroccan Police of Complicity in  
 7 Smuggling Refugees'] in *Al Jazeera Arabic News*. Available from: [www.aljazeera.net/  
 8 news/pages/8954be8d-2f95-4d35-828a-888fc878eebc](http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/8954be8d-2f95-4d35-828a-888fc878eebc). [6 June 2001]).  
 9 10 According to Arabic on-line journal *Maktoob*, between the years 2001 and 2006  
 10 nearly 4,000 irregular migrants, the majority of whom were Moroccans, lost their  
 11 lives on the way to the Spanish territory, the majority in the sea (see 'Al-Harik, al  
 12 hijra as sirriya bi l-Maghrib ... ila mata?' in *Maktoob*. Available from: [http://majdah.  
 13 maktoob.com/vb/majdah34378/](http://majdah.maktoob.com/vb/majdah34378/). [15 November 2012]).  
 14 11 On the Spanish Moroccan frontier in Ceuta several hundreds of Sub-Saharanans who  
 15 camped in the forests of the frontier zone began to use inflatable floats and swam  
 16 across the border to the Spanish territory from the Moroccan side in Tarajal. In the  
 17 year 2010 the Sub-Saharanans who were blocked in Ceuta organised several demonstra-  
 18 tions demanding access to mainland Spain (cf. Altozano 2011a, 2011b). Spanish  
 19 authorities accused repeatedly their Moroccan neighbour of temporarily loosening its  
 20 border vigilance and letting in Sub-Saharanans to clear its responsibility (see Altozano,  
 21 2011a, 2011b; Ramos, 2011).  
 22 12 Moroccan reactions also began to materialise at the turn of the millennium. During the  
 23 first half of 2001 Morocco carried out some 15,000 deportations from its territory. At  
 24 the same period Moroccan authorities arrested 20,000 persons accused of attempted  
 25 irregular migration from Morocco (see: 'Isbaniya tattahimu al-shurta al-maghribiya bil-  
 26 tawatu' fil tahribi l-laji'in', *Al Jazeera* 6 June, Available from: [www.aljazeera.net/news/  
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 28 13 The social dynamics of migrant smuggling and the gendered and ritualised aspects of  
 29 return are discussed in length in Juntunen (2002).

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