

The Humanitarian Frontier in the Mediterranean
Border Work and the Right to Presence

BY

GLEND A GARELLI

B.A., Università degli Studi di Milano, 1998
M.U.P.P., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008

THESIS

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Defense Committee:

David Perry, Chair and Advisor, Urban Planning and Policy
Phil Ashton, Urban Planning and Policy
Ralph Cintron, English
Norma Claire Moruzzi, Political Science
Raffaella Yvonne Nanetti, Urban Planning and Policy
Nik Theodore, Urban Planning and Policy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARA	Hosting Center for Asylum Seekers (Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo)
EC	European Commission
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
ENPI	European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument
EU	European Union
ICMPD	International Center for Migration Policy Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

SUMMARY

This dissertation explores the Mediterranean Sea as a site of migration, border enforcement, and struggle for migrants and refugees. Focusing on the central Mediterranean route into Italy in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, I map the restructuring of migration control toward a “humanitarian frontier”—i.e., the deployment of human rights rationales and humanitarian technologies to govern migration.

Analytically, I chart new configurations of sovereignty, rights, and territory; the new struggles they produce for migrants and refugees; and the impasse that these configurations create for advocacy. Diagnostically, I identify several junctures where such “humanitarian” border enforcement becomes socially, normatively, and politically friable and where it becomes possible to contribute to a democratization of contested border geographies.

To carry out this research, I spent three years engaging with local and nonlocal ethnography at arrival docks in Italy, at the refugee camp of Mineo (Sicily), and on the island of Lampedusa. I interviewed 60 people, among them migrants, refugees, policymakers, border patrol and police agents, coast guard officers, refugee processing center operators, Italian Navy officials, Red Cross volunteers, NGO and IGO employees, lawyers, and activists. Moreover, I worked on a critical policy analysis of the different scales at which migrants’ access and presence in the EU is regulated (the urban, national, EU, and Mediterranean macro-regional scale).

SUMMARY (continued)

Each chapter directs analytical attention to one specific site of the “humanitarian border work” in the central Mediterranean: the *sea*, and particularly the stretch of waters connecting Tunisia, Libya, and Italy to a persistently growing number of border-deaths and military initiatives of migration management; the *refugee camp*, with a focus on the processing center of Mineo, Sicily, opened in the context of the Italian “North Africa Emergency” in 2011; the *Schengen Area*, particularly the controversies around its internal borders in the aftermath of the Tunisian Revolution; and the *Euro-Med neighborhood*, with a focus on the regulatory landscape that followed the Arab Uprisings and, particularly, the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership. From these sites, I contribute a new conceptual toolbox for conceiving Mediterranean migrations beyond “b-ordering” paradigms and for grounding migrants' claims to presence.

CHAPTER 1

SPACING MEDITERRANEAN BORDER POLITICS

1.1 Research Project

1.1.1 Problem: The Depoliticization of Border Struggles

After shipwreck upon shipwreck of ever-escalating death tolls, the Mediterranean of migration finally seized global public attention. Images of people crammed on fortune boats, body-bags lined up on the docks of Italian shores, blurred silhouettes of bodies underwater, rugged landings of dehydrated survivors, corpses washed ashore ... all these images now compose a publicly recognized set of Mediterranean postcards. Activists had been calling attention to the “maritime cemetery” that was developing as the Mediterranean scene of migrant mobility since the Nineties. As shipwrecks have continued steadily and as their record death tolls have intensified in the past two years, these images have started to become part of the larger public’s iconography of the Mediterranean.

The accompanying narrative for these migrants’ deaths, however, has been reduced to the descriptive predicament of a “humanitarian crisis” or “humanitarian tragedy.” While this uncontroversial framing has importantly contributed to mobilizing a call for action across a broad range of different actors, it has nonetheless problematically overshadowed the politics that underpins the

production of the Mediterranean as a site of migrants' deaths—the very site where more than 75% of migration “fatalities” across the world occur (IOM, 2014).

Like the notion of a “humanitarian crisis,” the notion of “fatalities” is similarly both uncontroversial and misleading. These deaths are not unspecified “fatalities” or—as it’s often reported—the tragic outcome of natural calamities. They are *border-deaths*: deaths *caused by* the borders of migration and asylum policies, deaths *at* the “blue frontier” of the European Union, and, finally, deaths rooted *in* the political hierarchizations that part Mediterranean shores as very distant poles, i.e., the distant poles that some people—some specific groups of people—can cross only at the risk of their lives. Migration is in fact a vantage on the polarization of Mediterranean shores and the politics that underpins it, i.e., on the Mediterranean as a “postcolonial sea” (Chambers, 2008), in which narratives of modernity/development and practices of profit making/value extraction are allocated along a North-South divide. Migrants are the “abject cosmopolitans” (Nyers, 2003) upon which this polarization exercises its necropolitical hold, most often fatally (Mbembe, 2003).

But the predicament of a “humanitarian crisis” in reference to these Mediterranean border-deaths brushes off this Mediterranean historical and political context as well the recent upheavals that have characterized it—from the Arab Uprisings and the politics they set in motion, to the Eurozone crisis with the

violence of austerity politics, and, finally, to increasing warfare scenarios in the countries in and around the Mediterranean region.

This dissertation is an epistemic intervention that moves toward a political articulation of the Mediterranean of migrants and its borders. More precisely, it is an analytical inquiry in which the struggle of migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean is not left to the waters, so to speak—to the humanitarian predicament of a crisis and fatalities at sea—but is instead situated in its imbrications with the politics of the land.

To this end, I engage the central Mediterranean space of mobility through a *spatial inquiry* of the sites of migration management that have been undergoing profound transformation in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings and in the midst of the economic crisis in the region. My main preoccupation is to document how migration management, of which border-deaths are a part, is profoundly integrated with the politics of nation-states and with the increasingly internationalized sovereignty that pertains to the government of migration, particularly in the Mediterranean region.

1.1.2 Context: Border-Deaths and Solid Sea

On September 15, 2012, the feminist collective Leventicinqueundici scattered downtown Milan with contesting toponyms, such as “via dei Cimiteri Marini” (Marine Cemeteries Avenue) and “piazza Basta Morti nel Mediterraneo” (Stop Deaths in the Mediterranean Square), literally taking to the streets of the

Italian economic capital the tragedy of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean Sea (see also: Garelli, 2014: 141).¹ The political statement was clear: migrants' deaths at sea are no natural calamity or accident. Taking a chance on overcrowded small boats is the only chance left to those fleeing war, political unrest, persecution, and famine, *as they are also* targeted for the hardest possible escape away from these geographies by the Schengen visa regime, with its "color line" fencing up exactly for citizens of countries undergoing political and social unrest (Van Houtum, 2010). The Milanese day of action and its contesting street signs also pointed to another important element: in a heavily surveilled, intensely trafficked, and hyper-militarized sea such as the Mediterranean, border-deaths are hardly a fatality. They are the outcome of a precise politics.

The Mediterranean where more than 20,000 migrants have been reported dead² in the last twenty years and over 900 only in the first months of 2015, is a *solid sea*.³ It is a sea literally "solid": a sea whose depths are filled by people's remnants and whose bottoms are crowded with shipwrecks. But it is also a "solid

¹ This section draws from a short essay I published in 2012 in the context of a book presenting the English translation of a remarkable Italian screenplay on migrant shipwrecks, *Rumore di Acque / Noise in the Waters* (Garelli, 2012). I thank my high school history professor Franco Nasi (now at Università di Modena e Reggio) and his colleague Tom Simpson at Northwestern for giving me the opportunity to write about this topic for a non-specialist audience. It was from this experience of turning the "research problem" into "postcards" that this dissertation project gained focus.

² Figures documenting migrants' deaths in the Mediterranean are underestimates, which account only for those who have been reported dead (Source: Fortress Europe, <http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it>, last accessed May 15, 2015).

³ Stefano Boeri and the group Multiplicity first used this expression at the 2002 Documenta in Kassel, in the context of an exhibition on a 1996 shipwreck by the Sicilian coast. (Source: <http://stefanoboeri.net/?p=2432>, last accessed May 15, 2015).

sea” from a governmental standpoint: the Mediterranean Sea is a policy region held together by the interests of its surrounding lands, interests which—as I shall illustrate—come directly to bear on migrants’ bodies.

The solidity of this policy region that is built across the Mediterranean Sea may go unnoticed until it begins to break apart, as it did in March 2011 for instance. As European countries were embarking in the “Coalition of the Willing”—the NATO intervention in the Libyan civil war—Muammar Gaddafi spelled out some of the deals of this migration management region:

I want to make myself understood: if one threatens Libya, [...] you will have immigration, thousands of people will invade Europe from Libya. And there will no longer be anyone to stop them. (Speech reported: Frenzen, 2011)

How Gaddafi moves from words to action in this statement has been widely documented in journalistic reports and fieldwork accounts (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2012), where it’s also been highlighted that the “human bomb”—another way in which Gaddafi allegedly referred to migrants—was a heavily racialized one: those targeted to invade Europe were not Libyan nationals but third country nationals living in Libya, and mainly black Sub-Saharan migrants. These militia raids toward “forced migration” to Europe were not the only way Gaddafi followed up on his threat. Gaddafi, in fact, allowed for a European invasion of migrants also by simply suspending his role as the EU preventative frontier agent, i.e., suspending his allegiance to European politics and particularly to his bilateral

agreement with Italy to contain out-migration to Europe and accept deportations of African migrants in exchange for economic investments.

While between the Libyan Colonel and the Italian Prime Minister at the time, Silvio Berlusconi, there was certainly a political and personal friendship, these bilateral agreements between European countries and Northern African dictators have been the staple of Mediterranean management. Throughout the 90s and 00s, in fact, Northern African dictators such as Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni El Sayed Mubarak in Egypt, and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya took on the chore to combat migration to Europe in exchange for economic investment in their countries, enforcing border operations for the EU and/or accepting mass deportations of undocumented African migrants. As I have noted elsewhere (Garelli, 2013) this is the “migration management region” that was organized across the Mediterranean, casting away migrants and refugees on the southern shore of the Mediterranean through atrocious spatial fixes for “abject cosmopolitans” (Nyers, 2003; on this topic, see also: Breckenridge et al, 2002) and through policy traffic and political deals struck on expendable lives.

Whereas anti-immigration sentiment in Europe crystallizes around the trope of nation-state border-crossing and results in calls to stop immigrants at entry-points, the EU is at the vanguard of experiments of “externalization” of its frontier: the delocalization of border-work away from the European borderline—i.e., away from the country of destination and to countries of departure or transit. That is, the EU purchases the services of bad cops from the other shore to

contain out-migrations. But as European borders ‘migrated’ to the African continent, protocols for border operations and migrant rights did not travel with them. As a result, this *war on migrants*, conveniently conducted away from Europe, resulted in an escalation of violations, abuses and violence.

So, for instance, by 2009-2010 the Lampedusa⁴ route into Europe had been closed off as a result of EU and Italian agreements with Northern African countries. Whereas in 2008 over 30,000 migrants had arrived at Lampedusa Island, numbers fell sharply in 2009 and 2010⁵ after the signing of the Friendship Treaty between Italy and Libya in 2008, a colonial reparation of \$5 billion for the damages inflicted by Italy on Libya. In exchange for the reparation, Libya granted Italy privileged access to the oil and large-scale infrastructure sectors, and also promised to prevent so called “illegal” immigration to Italy. “We will get more oil and fewer illegal migrants,” Prime Minister Berlusconi triumphantly declared at the signing of the treaty. The flagship of this border-work was the pushback policy: upon interception at sea, migrants of any nationality were returned to Libya and locked up in Libyan detention centers whose inhumane conditions were well known. It was also a known fact that Libya is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and has no asylum system in place.⁶ Eritrean migrants

⁴ Lampedusa Island is the southernmost tip of Italy, south of Sicily, serving as a maritime entry into Europe for migrants from other Mediterranean shores.

⁵ Numbers fell to 2,947 in 2009 and to 459 in 2010 (Source: http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2011/amahlarg03_REV2_2011.pdf).

⁶ The European Court of Human Rights condemned Italy for the pushback policy in 2012.

intercepted by Libyan forces while trying to reach Europe to seek asylum
describe conditions in these Libyan centers:

78 people were housed in a 19x26 feet cell...sleeping on the floor, our head by someone else's feet. They starved us, at times eight of us had to share one plate of rice....Policemen would get in the cell, take a woman and abuse her in front of everybody. (Del Grande, 2009)

Proxies and practices to enforce the EU border abroad change according to the country and the terms of bilateral agreements. In Tunisia, for instance, the focus is on the regulatory side, with draconian penalties for those helping people migrate and very strict visa requirements for leaving the country, with a provision breaching the fundamental right of any person "to leave any country, including his own" (UN General Assembly, 1948). The short stretch of sea between Italy and Tunisia has been turned into an insurmountable barrier, locking Tunisians up in a Euro-Med captivity, both under Ben Ali and afterwards.⁷

Smugglers profit on these policies and lives are lost at sea. There is nothing natural about this marine tragedy and Mediterranean graveyard, as the sign 'Stop Deaths in the Mediterranean *Square*' suggested, land-marking with such a protest the European city of Milan. Any call for saving lives in the Mediterranean that does not deal with the politics of the European border is, at best, shortsighted, albeit in a humanitarian disguise.

⁷ After the fall of Ben Ali, Italy and Tunisia signed new agreements covering immigration issues in 2011 and 2012.

1.1.3 Research Questions: Spacing Mediterranean Border Politics

The research question underpinning this work is: What is the human geography of migration in the central Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, at the intersection of border struggles, enforcement, and profit-making practices? I have operationalized this question along three axes—space, time, and articulation—and their respective discursive correlates—maps, narratives, and interventions.

1. *Maps*: How is the management of migrants' mobility spatialized: which paths, transit stops, entry ways, and stalling stations are migrants and refugees channeled through as their mobility is governed across the central Mediterranean route into Europe? And, in turn, what are the spaces, the improvised refuges, the re-routed paths that migrants and refugees enact as they move across the governed space of mobility in the Mediterranean? In other words, how does the political space of mobility and immobility along the central Mediterranean route look cartographically: which borders and ways through and out are encountered in it by migrants and refugees; which routes, territories, and lines of escape open up or close down upon migrants' and refugees' crossings?

2. *Narratives*: What are the diachronic borders through which migrants and refugees are governed, i.e., the regulatory frames through which specific practices of migration as well as the phenomenon of migration more generally are “timed” as objects of government? In particular:

2.1 What are the regulatory frames that govern the temporality of migrants' and refugees' situatedness (from visa duration, to date of entry into a country, to length of stay, etc.)? What political space do these temporal inscriptions of migrant presence actually produce?

2.2 How do the dominant framings of the Mediterranean region impact migration management and how does their temporal predicament operate? I am thinking particularly of three frames: first, "development," with its colonial legacy and narrative partitions across shores; and second and third, "emergency" and "crisis"—humanitarian, economic, and political—which contribute to the institutionalization of the "moment" as a frame for political action. How do these temporal predicaments of "development," "emergency," and "crisis" become part of the government of migrants and refugees?

3. *Intervention*: What are some terrains of epistemic intervention whereon the border struggles unfolding these days in the central Mediterranean region could be articulated within the normative frames available? And in turn, what are some of the normative instabilities—either normative cracks or normative openings, depending on the philosophy of law one abides with—that could be engaged to reconfigure mobility frameworks on contested geographies of people on the move these days?

1.2 Methodological Approach

1.2.1 Epistemology

What politics of knowledge does this project of spacing the Mediterranean border politics engage with and contribute to? The dilemma of “use” is necessarily at stake in the social sciences—be it in the governmental form of a policy contribution or in the radical-politics form of a de-stituent⁸ vision of the order of things. In migration studies particularly, however, it is overwhelmingly pressing, especially because of the growing deployment of “soft” modes of migration management (Hess, 2010; Geiger and Pécoud, 2010), and with the growing involvement of epistemic communities in “governing migration.”

The field of “migration studies” has been rapidly growing in these past few years. This expansion of knowledge-practices and research programs around issues of migration has certainly raised the currency of migration issues in the echelons of scholarly knowledge. However, this process of “becoming a discipline” also brought in “disciplining effects” on the types of knowledge produced in critical migration studies, resulting in the overall “governmentalization” of the epistemic field of migration knowledge (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013b). As a result, the epistemic instruments of migration governance have progressively been incorporated as the assets of scholarly knowledge about migration, as well as having been naturalized in public discourse as facts—e.g.,

⁸As opposed to the “constituent” process whereby a polity is instituted and reproduced, a “destituent” process has to deal with an irruption of social justice stances that forces the borders upon which the polity was constituted.

the notion that migration is a “security” issue for national governments. In this context, the question of which “politics of knowledge” one engages with when doing research about migration is fundamental.

The qualifier “critical”—which used to be a helpful compass for situating migration scholars’ research agendas within *critical* migration studies—has increasingly lost analytical specificity and epistemic salience and is now associated with any topical area of migration research, e.g., “critical” border studies, security studies, international relations, etc. What’s mainly lost is the sense of an epistemological project behind the use of the qualifier “critical” in migration studies scholarship.

The philosophical path along which the notion of “critique” entered the social sciences, however, is one part of a larger radical project, a project where the study of power was rooted in the epistemic premise of the *unacceptability* of power’s captures. It was, in other words, a project where the study of power’s subjectivation practices was rooted in the search for paths to de-subjectivation—or at least for interruptions of certain particular ways of being “subject to.” In an original interpretation of Kant’s criticism, for instance, Foucault understands the philosophical enterprise of mapping the boundaries of knowing (the limits or the borders of knowledge production), as being one with the project of experimenting with the possibility of going beyond them (Foucault, 2003: 319).⁹ And such a “beyond” is not just a visionary horizon—even if political theory is of course ripe

⁹ In terms of “critical” migration studies, for instance, this would mean: mapping the normative boundaries through which movement is regulated (i.e., statuses) in order to move beyond their epistemological essentialization and their political fixes.

with such messianic gestures of “trespassing” the limits of *the* political. The “beyond” to which this Foucauldian reading of Kant refers is instead the conceptual work of identifying the “lines of friability” (Revel, 2012) of certain assemblages of power-knowledge.

Yet the “beyond” component of this critical enterprise has dissipated also in the most philosophically minded analysis of power, like “governmentality studies,” for instance. Ending up being “mesmerized by that which they attempt to explain” (Papadopolous et al, 2006: xv)—and hence transgressing Foucault’s own indication to “not become enamored of power” while analyzing it (Foucault, 1988: iv)—governmentality studies tend to produce very detailed cartographies of power captures. This exercise, however, ends there, i.e., it ends with a “cartographic reason” (Pickles, 2004)—“unpacked” if you will in its power effects but fundamentally unchallenged and reiterated in its discursive tenets and “holds.” It is in other words an exercise that deserts the task of thinking “how not to be governed *like that*” (Foucault, 1977: 44, emphasis added) or, in more proper epistemological terms, that retreats from a “sagittal relation” with our present (Foucault, 2010: 14). As Foucault puts it in closing *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*: “Le savoir n’est pas fait pour comprendre, il est fait pour trancher” (Knowledge is not for understanding, it is for cutting, 1984: 88).

Such “militancy of theory” (Hardt, 2011)—the role of critique as I illustrated it in its genealogy—is the epistemological compass that my research deploys and by which it proceeds. But what does this action of “cutting” and

“cutting through” amount to in current migration research?¹⁰ What does it mean in terms of the current state of migration epistemology? It means first of all positioning one’s research in relation to the epistemic turn in migration management that I described in the opening. One manifestation of this is the growing trend toward a declaration of “engagement” as part of one’s methodology in migration research. Starting from the late 00s and early 10s, in fact, the literalization of the involvement of the researcher in migration studies as a migration activist became an epistemological stance—e.g., “scholar activist research” and “militant investigation” (Colectivo Situaciones, 2007; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014; Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013c; DeGenova, 2013b; Kasperek and Speer, 2013; Sossi, 2013a; Scheel, 2013; Pezzani and Heller, 2013; Mezzadra, Garelli, and Tazzioli, 2013b, 2013c; Grappi, 2013)—in relation to the project of creating “a practice capable of co-articulating involvement and thought” (Shukaitis and Graeber: 82) or to what we most recently have called a “political epistemology of migration” as part of conversations about migration and border struggles across the Mediterranean (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013a; Mezzadra and Ricciardi, 2013; Garelli, Mezzadra, Tazzioli, Peano, Kasperek, 2014). In these contexts, the figure of the researcher and the activist merge, with

¹⁰ As knowledge/power assemblages are historically determined and contingent, fields of epistemic struggle are also situated. As noted elsewhere (Scheel, Garelli, Tazzioli 2013: 70-73), for instance, contesting the partition between asylum seekers and economic migrants had a political meaning in the 90s and 00s, which is increasingly challenged by the current geopolitical landscape in the Mediterranean region.

precise epistemic outcome:¹¹ the researcher is featured as someone whose commitment to knowledge production is rooted in migration advocacy and, most importantly, as someone whose research aim and questions emerge from the ground of situated mobility struggles¹² (instead of from the stakes of governmental policy frameworks).

While such a contribution to a “political epistemology of migration” has been enacted in different research programs in recent years, there is one tenet that remains constant and that also grounds this dissertation project, i.e., the understanding of migration as a social movement (Bojdziejew and Karakayaly, 2007; Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2008; Mezzadra, 2011), as the constitutive “outside” that productively challenges the borders of the polity, intruding social justice¹³ stances toward the reconfiguration of these borders. From this vantage point, the politics of migration is seen as something that exceeds sovereignty, institutional (and institutionalized)¹⁴ political actors, and normative frames.

¹¹ The *political* outcomes that such positionality encompasses are problematically un-interrogated.

¹² As the Colectivo Situaciones eloquently put it: “research militancy takes an immanent commitment to the situation....The working hypotheses of research militants are direct elaborations on the exigencies of the situation. In contrast with the academic researcher, [who is extra-situational]...the militant researcher thinks and acts in the situation” (2005: 78).

¹³ Some critics frame this in terms of the “democratization” of the borders of the polity. Since the political project of liberal democracies is rooted in territoriality of borders, I prefer to talk about “social justice” in reference to the political contribution of migration as a social movement.

¹⁴ With this expression I refer to those who are recognized as legitimate political actors, those whose struggles and practices of claim-making are either ruled out as “im-political” (non-political/pre-political) or do not even register within the regimes of visibility and the perceptibility of representative politics (Papadopolous et al, 2008).

I want to be clear about this. Migration policies are certainly part of the epistemic, social, and political field of migration: they structure, they b-order, and attempt to govern migration flows. And this is a big part of what migration research needs to attend to, to map the terrain so to speak. But there are also other venues and forces of migration politics, i.e., the politics that people set in motion as they move across borders and as they try to organize their life in-between the spatio-temporalities of governmental b-orders. This is an antagonist politics—even if not necessarily openly and deliberately so. It is this “antagonism” in relation to nation state b-orders and its citizen politics that the epistemological approach that I am describing is after.

This interest in antagonism and “destituent”¹⁵ power has recently entered the market of academic methods, branded as “Italian theory” (Esposito, 2010). Against this trend and its viral hegemony in critically minded academic debates, it is important to state that the nationalization (as in “*Italian* theory”) of a critical approach to sovereign power is clearly a contradiction in terms: the supposed Italian-ness of an epistemological approach—if such thing can even exist—is the outcome of the “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002: 301; Glick Schiller, 2009; Kalir, 2013; De Genova, 2002, 2012; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014) and cultural essentialism that any critical approach to migration studies aims to undo. Historically, however, Esposito raises an important point, which helps situate a non-statist approach to political science (not so much as a made-in-Italy but as the result of locally specific political

¹⁵ See footnote 8.

circumstances). Differently from a philosophical culture grounded in the thought of political institutions (e.g., England for Hobbes, or France for Descartes) or from philosophical traditions invested in producing a science of the state (e.g. Hegel and Germany), in fact the Italian tradition, Esposito contends, has thought of politics in its pre-statist dimension and very often as an act of resistance to the state (Esposito, 2010: 22), and this is rooted in historically fragmented Italian polity, from the Middle Ages onward. In this context, Italian political thought, Esposito underlines, is not grounded in the state and its institution; it is instead grounded in the immanence of antagonism, in an idea of conflict as constitutive to order, an idea that there is no order without conflict.¹⁶

My research on the Mediterranean of migrants takes the immanence of antagonism as its premise, draws from the post-workerist debate (as it originated in Italy and was reinvigorated by its Spanish and Latin-American resonances), and enlists migrants' struggles against any nationalist fix, whether political, culturalist, or epistemic (on the post-colonial and feminist studies' displacements of any supposed "Italian" theory, see: Mezzadra, 2015).

Research focus—It is at the *nexus of border policies and border struggles* that this research finds its "critical" ground. In particular, I am interested in holding onto the tension between governmental b-orders and the "turbulence" of

¹⁶ As Esposito underlines, this line of thought crisscrosses Italian political thought, from Machiavelli, to Vico, to Gramsci, and even Gentile.

migration practices (Papastergiadis, 2013). In order to analytically persist within this tension, I make two methodological choices.

First, I choose to study the Mediterranean of migrants and refugees from the vantage point of its *spatial politics*, interrogating the spatial process that is ignited as people move—a process where trans-Mediterranean movements (or desires and attempts to move), border technologies for migration control, and border struggles of migrants and refugees converge. In other words, it is a process of space-making in the central Mediterranean that I am after, a process ignited at the nexus of mobility and control.¹⁷

The focus on *spatial politics* is also an important methodological vantage point to study the dominant frameworks for migration across the Mediterranean—i.e., humanitarianism, securitarian-ism, emergency—without having to stand by their logic. In other words, I am interested in the spatial process through which the Mediterranean is produced and reproduced as the deadliest border in the world, as the “middle sea” connecting different dramatic scenarios of political and economic crisis, as the most heavily trafficked and militarized sea in the world. From this angle, I interrogate these policies and political frameworks’ productivity in terms of the Mediterranean border, as opposed to taking them at face value and reading the Mediterranean border in their terms. This dissertation is in fact a research project about the political space that develops around migration in times

¹⁷ In Chapter Four, I expand on the methodological challenges experienced at this nexus.

of political, economic, and social crisis. It is a *topology of migration politics* in the central Mediterranean.

Second, I adopt “*presence*” as my methodological vantage point on the nexus between mobility practices and control. This means engaging with migration policies “within and against” (Tronti, 1980; Alquati, 1993)¹⁸ their governmentally mandated political space, i.e., “within” the normative framework they design and enact for migrant presence but “against” the captures and fixes of migrant presence they enlist.

I adopt presence as a methodological vantage point, moreover, as a means to attend to an interest in the situatedness of migration at the nexus of practices and control: an ethnographic interest in the actually existing spaces of migration government and in the spatio-temporalities of normative “presencing” (Cintron, 2013), i.e., the possibility of being present in a desired place and at the time of one’s life project.

1.2.2 Research Aims

This dissertation project has two *aims*: analytically, it aims to produce a political ethnography of a contested space of migration, the central Mediterranean, in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings and in the midst of

¹⁸ The post-workerist focus on processes of subjectivation, within and against processes of being subject to, is key to my analysis.

increasing political and institutional¹⁹ violence in the region; diagnostically, it aims to contribute to the political articulation of migrant struggles within the normative terrain of migration policies but against their exclusionary borders at a time of intense migration management restructuring.

Analytics: A political ethnography of a contested space of migration. My research aims for a *granular* understanding of a space in the making at the nexus of mobility and control. I am interested in an ethnographic take on issues of sovereignty and a political take on the terrain of migrant practices. A political ethnography of the central Mediterranean of migrants, then, targets: first, the governmental phantasies²⁰ of migration management from the vantage point of the spaces they produce, encounter, and clash with (granularity here means the specific productivity and situated contingency of control); second, Mediterranean border regimes for how they cross people's lives,²¹ desires, and presence in space (granularity here means the specific holds on people's lives that borders exert); and, finally, migrant struggles for how they are structured by regulatory regimes, for the practices they enlist that exceed migration control while enacting

¹⁹ By "institutional violence," I mean both border-deaths at the Mediterranean border of the EU that are the outcomes of visa policies and the temporal borders through which migrants and refugees are governed and profited on (see Chapter Three, in this volume).

²⁰ I prefer the term "phantasy" over "vision" to suggest that any governmental mandate over a space encounters frictions at landing (the phantasy has to be confronted with a terrain) and that governmental understandings of a space are not necessarily rationally coherent and/or cohesive plans (they are most often very fragmented and at times contradictory projects of control, a state of affairs that the word "vision" disguises).

²¹ In the Schengen Chapter I explain this approach in terms of the Latino slogan "we did not cross the border, the border crossed us."

a contested politics of space (granularity here means a specificity about border effects and about how these effects are re-routed).

By “political ethnography,” I do not mean the ethnography of political institutions. Important work has been produced on the European border regime through “institutional ethnography” and “non-local ethnography” of its governing bodies and agencies. While my research is informed by this work (Feldman, 2011; Kuus, 2013), the ethnographic gaze I intend to deploy is not directed at political institutions or, more precisely, at the institutional craft²² of policies and modes of government. It is instead aimed at documenting the political space that emerges at the nexus of practices of mobility and policies aimed at governing them.

Diagnostics: For a political articulation of migrant struggles. By proposing a “political ethnography of a contested space of migration” I intend to lay out a research design that does not lose sight of what Sabine Hess calls the “macro-level” (Hess, 2012: 428, 431) in her “ethnographic regime analysis” of transit migration in the Eastern Mediterranean. What she means is a kind of fieldwork that, while engaging with the minutia of migration governance and border effects, is constantly reminded that the categorization of some modes of mobility as migration is part of a “political and scientific act of naming” (Hess, 2012, quoting Karakayali, 2008). As Nichoals De Genova powerfully put it: “After all, if there were no borders, there would be no migrants—only mobility” (2013: 253). The

²² As documented extensively (e.g., Geiger and Pecaude, 2010), this is not merely state-craft; it also includes an increasingly growing array of non-state actors such as IGOs, NGOs, and epistemic communities of policy experts.

ethnographic focus is key here: I am not interested in documenting this “macro-level” in the fashion of political theory and for the sake of an investigation of sovereignty. Instead, I am interested in documenting, through ethnographic detail, the hierarchization of mobility and the right to be in a particular space so that this hierarchization may become politically intelligible (not only in terms of border control but also in terms of border struggles) and actable upon. What I envision is an epistemic intervention in the political field and field-sites where these hierarchizations are produced, reproduced, and maintained.

1.2.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the central Mediterranean migration *route*, and particularly the route connecting Tunisia, Libya, and Italy, which I study from four border-sites over the period of 2011-14: the waters, the Schengen Area, the refugee camp, and the Euro-Med Neighborhood.

I focus on multiple sites in order to *track* two processes: on the one hand, migrants’ experience of crossing a space of migration control at different stations and moments; on the other hand, the production of a space of migration control, its layers and stages, and their of imbrication with local, state, and trans-regional governance.

This approach is in contrast with the methodological nationalism that still underpins migration research (see: Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002: 301; Glick

Schiller, 2009; De Genova, year; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2013) and that tends to a series of epistemic fixes along the axis of territoriality and population, speaking to the governmental frames through which migrations are governed. These epistemic borders are increasingly losing analytical grip. In the case of the central Mediterranean at this particular political time, they are even problematically flawed. As a matter of fact the Mediterranean space of mobility does not abide by the territory-population anchor. For instance, “leaving from” Libya/Tunisia rarely corresponds to “being from” these countries; similarly, “arriving to” does not correspond to a final destination when most migrants and refugees do not intend to settle in their countries of landing in Europe, e.g., Italy or Greece.²³

The growing conversation about “transit” migration (e.g., Boubakri, 2004; Cassarino, 2006; Collyer and Haas, 2012; Düvell, 2012) has certainly contributed to complicate the notion of migration as from-to movements, providing important ethnographic documentation about the many stations and extended temporalities of migration experiences across the Mediterranean. However, this important analytic engagement with “transit” tends to problematically focus *only* on the Southern Mediterranean shore and desert the complexities and fragmentation of the geography of “arrival,” resulting in a monolithic idea of the space of “landing” (i.e., an unspecified European Eldorado). This narrative supports the trope of a

²³ The same trespassing of national borders applies to migration governance: the borders encountered by migrants as they leave from a Northern African port and cross the Mediterranean sea into Europe pertain to an *international regime of migration governance*, which is particularly active in developing a transnational “policy region” in the Mediterranean.

migratory invasion of Europe, through a scholarly focus on the “border spectacle” (Cuttitta, 2012; De Genova, 2013c; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014; Sossi, 2006: 51-109) of specific crossing points, but is problematically out of sync with migrants’ approach to the European space. Migration has been recognized as a space-making project by scholars engaged in EU studies (Favell, 2009; Rumford, 2008); yet the specificities of this process tend to be lost in favor of a focus on crossing or landing, arrival or integration.

Instead, I am interested in *following* migrants and refugees along the route and in understanding how the route is produced and reproduced at the nexus of border policies and border struggles. Methodologically, I build on George Marcus’s ethnographic approach for tracing cross-border phenomena by “following” people, stories, and conflicts (1995); epistemologically, I draw from Federica Sossi’s un-disciplined politics of migration (2005; 2006; 2013), which “follows” the spaces that migrants set in motion as they claim a space to be—following these instantiations both literally (i.e., across space) and politically (in their outreach).

Speaking to the project of “following” a migration space, my research design targets four spaces along the central Mediterranean route of mobility, which I illustrate here below.

1. The *waters*—the natural frontier connecting and separating Mediterranean shores and the spatial technology through which the political and economic

polarization of the shores is organized. While waters have their own precise nautical coordinates and national borders, they feature in my research as a unit of analysis “at large,” a stretch of sea extending from Tunisia to Italy across the Sicily Channel. I will be paying close attention to the ways in which territorial waters²⁴ impact on migrants’ right to presence. It is however the ways in which *the stretch of sea* is both encountered as a space of crossing and dying and governed as a border in which I am interested here.

2. The *camp*—the refugee camp where asylum seekers are housed while their application for asylum is in processing and where migration management takes on the features of the humanitarian regime. I focus my analysis on the processing center of Mineo in Sicily (in the province of Catania), a site specifically opened at the outset of the Arab Uprisings and as part of the Italian “North Africa Emergency,” a policy packet Italy set in place to manage migration flows across the Mediterranean originating from the countries of the Arab Uprisings. Though the camp is still operating, my analysis focuses on 2011-14, with onsite fieldwork activities centered in 2011-13 and non-local fieldwork²⁵ and archival research stretching all throughout.

²⁴ The national borders along stretches of sea have powerful consequences on migrants’ lives, for instance in terms of where they can claim asylum and what their status ends up being upon interception or even rescue. For an illustration of the central Mediterranean territorial waters, see: <http://watchthemed.net> and select “territorial waters” on the right side of the menu.

²⁵ See the below section “Data Collection” for an illustration of the ways in which my fieldwork also continued off-site.

3. The *Schengen space*—the purportedly borderless European space which is intermittently and selectively fenced up along the internal borders of the EU. Focusing on Schengen when studying cross-Mediterranean migrations means following the multiple scales of borders that impinge on cross-Mediterranean migrants and also following migrants on their *desired* migratory project across Europe, a project that most often reaches far beyond the country of entry; this is especially true if they accessed the EU through its Mediterranean countries, which were most heavily hit by the economic crisis. I focus on a particular stretch of the Schengen space, the Italy-France border, during the first six months of 2011, in relation to a specific episode, i.e., the attempted crossing into France of Tunisian migrants who fled across the Mediterranean into Italy in the immediate aftermath of the revolution.
4. The *Euro-Med Neighborhood* of mobility control that has been implemented across the Mediterranean region as part of the mobility partnership between the EU and MENA region countries and that has witnessed its own “Spring”²⁶ in the aftermath of the Tunisian revolution and the spread of the Uprisings across the region. I particularly focus on the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership signed in 2013, which aims to govern mobility across the Mediterranean and particularly build Tunisia as a buffer zone for migration and refugee waves towards Europe. Focusing on the policy documents and the political

²⁶ The Euro-Med Neighborhood re-envisioned its priorities in the aftermath of the Tunisian Revolution with a four-year plan called SPIRNG (Support for Partnership, Reforms, and Inclusive Growth).

opposition that the partnership catalyzed in Europe and Tunisia, I chart the migratory routes it mandates along the Mediterranean and interrogate their neighboring territorialization, comparing and contrasting it with migrants' and refugees' practice (or desired practice) of the Mediterranean neighborhood.

The research itinerary of this dissertation is marked by a progressive displacement of the unit of analysis, resulting from the methodological decision to work with the turbulence that invested the Mediterranean, rather than deciding beforehand a field-site for its outcomes. As I was starting fieldwork activities, in fact, the Tunisian revolution broke out. While it was not clear then the extent to which this revolution would spread across the MENA region and the depth at which it would reconfigure migration challenges across the Mediterranean Sea, it was clear that the tenet of migration management in the region for the past decades, i.e., the off-shoring of the European border in Northern Africa, had to morph, in order to adapt to a changing political situation.

Well before these political developments, my research had originated as a border studies project, as a view on the European Union membership design from its Mediterranean borders, i.e., the borders that were crossed by, enforced upon, and contested by migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea into Europe. Fieldwork would be at Lampedusa Island, the southernmost tip of Europe facing Tunisia, where most migrants and refugees find their first-entry into Europe²⁷ and

²⁷ This is an intermittent entry point, however. As I started preliminary research to organize my fieldwork in 2009, I realized that Lampedusa—after having been the theater

where different strands of migration waves, as well as different modes of migration government, had been developing over the past twenty years, bringing this tiny island smack in the middle of the Mediterranean to global scholarly attention as part of a European “border spectacle” (Cuttitta, 2012; De Genova, 2013; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014; Sossi, 2006: 51-109) and “enforcement archipelago” (Mountz, 2011). It was the year 2010, which, retrospectively, was a rather stable time for migration across the area—a time of stable border arrangements and consolidated strands of border violence.

In the course of four turbulent years, from the end of 2010 when I started fieldwork activities to the end of 2014, the Arab Uprisings, escalating violence in some African and Middle-Eastern countries, and a growing economic crisis in the Euro-zone broke out, troubling the “calm geographies of area studies” (Chambers, 2008) that underpinned my research question on the European membership design. Federica Sossi intercepted this turbulence early on as she started to follow the politics of the collective of “Tunisians from Lampedusa in Paris” who occupied a building in Paris in 2011, claiming their right to presence in the European space as Tunisian revolutionaries and as migrants who arrived in Europe via Lampedusa Island.

I decided to persist in pursuing this turbulence and incorporate it into my research about “migration,” the “Mediterranean,” and “Europe.” As a result, the project expanded its spatial focus but acquired specificity in terms of its object. In

of the invasion for years—had been closed off, as a result of the Italy-Libya Friendship Agreement (See the section “The Context” in this chapter). This situation changed, however, as the Arab Uprisings broke out and re-opened this route into Europe.

other words, as its spatiality expanded from an island point of entry to a migration route (from Lampedusa to the central Mediterranean route of mobility into Europe), the research object moved away from the abstractions of the EU “membership design” and aligned with the situated border struggles and border technologies of a mobility route.

1.2.4 Data Collection

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, archival research, and on-site direct observation within a “distended case approach” (Peck and Theodore, 2012) that would account for the contested production of a space of migration in the Mediterranean.

Interviews – In order to gain a granular and situated understanding of the central Mediterranean space of mobility, I engaged in semi-structured interviews with 50 subjects, comprised of migrants and refugees, migration activists and lawyers, and individuals involved in crafting and implementing migration policies (border patrol agents, refugee centers’ staff, humanitarian agencies’ operators).

First contact was obtained through my affiliations (academic and activist), which each played pivotal roles with their distinct audiences. Being affiliated with a US university was particularly helpful in establishing first contact with institutions.²⁸ In Italy in particular the US academic affiliation was an important

²⁸ The US academic affiliation facilitated access to interviews with the Italian Ministry of the Interior, different Mayors, Civil Protection representatives; with Prefecture, Carabinieri and Coast Guard officials; and with representatives of the European Union Neighborhood Policy Initiative and the EU Delegation in Tunisia.

credential for access to sites and people for fieldwork activities. For instance, in 2011, I was allowed to enter the Mineo processing center for asylum seekers in Sicily, to collect direct information, and to conduct interviews despite the recent ban on journalists' access to all Italian facilities for migrants.

My affiliation with the activist website *Storie Migranti*—a web based archive of migrant stories (www.storiemigranti.org)—and particularly my long-time collaboration with its founder and coordinator Federica Sossi, was instrumental in obtaining quick and privileged access to time-pressed and over-committed activists, lawyers, and activist-journalists. In particular, the *Rete Antirazzista Catanese*—the organization which has been following migration and refugee issues in Sicily since the 90s—was instrumental in helping me situate the central Mediterranean landscape of migration in historical perspective and gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by migrants and activists in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings. The *Rete Antirazzista Catanese* also facilitated my contact with the first migrants and refugees I interviewed in Sicily and the lawyers working on their cases. Contact with other migrants and refugees happened through snowball sampling or by casual interactions during on-site observation. With most of the people I interviewed, I established long-term conversations that went beyond the moment and the scope of the interview, resulting in still ongoing email and text message conversations. This has allowed me to follow the developments in the sites I visited and in the life stories and bureaucratic paths of the people I first interviewed.

In what follows I provide an overview of the people I interviewed.

1. Sub-sample of *25 migrants and refugees* who arrived in Italy between January 2011 and August 2013,²⁹ having departed from a Northern African country. This sub-sample also included 6 Tunisian migrants who were deported to Tunisia after having accessed Europe through Italy.

I did not restrict the sample by interviewees' nationality; instead I restricted my sample by country of departure and means of travel towards Europe, i.e., focusing on the departure via informally organized boat rides from Tunisian and Libyan ports. This choice was meant to account for the complexities of intra-African mobility, an often overlooked phenomenon in research designs that prioritize nationality as a sampling criterion. All the 15 people I interviewed who departed from a Libyan port, for instance, were not Libyan nationals but Nigerians, Congolese, Somalians, Eritreans, and Sierra Leon nationals who were living in Libya as migrants (see also "Unit of Analysis," in this volume).

However, nationality partially indirectly affected my sample of interviews due to language barriers. Since I had no resources for a translator and I can only speak English, French, and Italian, I ended up recruiting migrants and refugees who were fluent in these languages. However, the linguistic cosmopolitanism of migrants and refugees from the MENA region, compensated for this potential flaw in my research design and I ended up being able to interview nationals of the following countries: Congo, Cameroon, Eritrea, Tunisia, Nigeria, Pakistan,

²⁹ This time-frame automatically selects for people who moved in the context of the Arab Uprisings, either because of the migration paths they opened or because they were forcefully displaced by the Libyan conflict (and more recently by the Syrian one).

Sierra Leon, Somalia, and Sri Lanka. Interviews were conducted in places of the interviewees' choice and usually resulted in a two-hour, in-person dialogue followed up on through continuing conversation over the phone, through text message, or by email.

2. Sub-sample of *15 activists and lawyers* involved with migration issues in Italy (13) and Tunisia (2). For Italian activists and lawyers, I recruited people who had been involved with migration across the Mediterranean for at least five years and who had been involved with migrants who arrived from Tunisia and Libya starting in 2011. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the reality faced by migrants and refugees on the terrain upon their European landing and of activists' challenges, providing both ethnographic detail on the current state of migration struggles in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings and a longitudinal understanding of the changes in practices of migration crossing, governing, and advocacy that characterize this phase. For Tunisian activists I interviewed people who had been involved in migration issues for at least one year and who had either followed the case of Libyan war refugees displaced in Tunisia or the case of Tunisian migrants who left to Europe in the aftermath of the revolution and were either repatriated or went missing.

3. Sub-sample of *10 Italian and EU migration policy experts*, including Italian border enforcement officials, migrant facilities' managers and staff, humanitarian agencies' operators: and EU policymakers involved in external borders, and immigration and refugee issues.

I used triangulation and comparison as approaches to data validation. Triangulation was particularly effective when interviews with different sub-samples happened at short distance from one another and allowed me to deploy collected information as prompt for a subsequent interview, hence enabling not only validation of the content but also collection of the spectrum of a conversation about a given new source of data. Comparison provided a particularly powerful validation instrument for understanding policy-frameworks in their specific instantiations, beyond the homogenous idiolects of the policy experts interviewed. Being able to compare how a given policy to govern refugees, for instance, was implemented at different sites, by different actors, and/or at different moments in the 2011-2014 period, facilitated an ethnographic approach to policy effects.

Archival Research – The archive of migration research in the Mediterranean has dramatically expanded in the past few years, as a result of the epistemic turn in migration management (see also “Epistemology” section, this volume) and the deployment of macro-regional frameworks of control grounded in expert knowledge. I approached this body of ever-growing epistemic production around migration issues through three strategies.

First, I approached the study of policy frameworks by relying on primary sources (policy texts or, if not yet available, press releases and parliamentary discussions’ transcripts about them) and the conversations they gave rise to in two specific epistemic communities, i.e., policy think-tanks and activist groups.

The policy pieces at the center of my study are: the Italian “North Africa Emergency” policy packet (2011, with 2012 and 2013 addenda and closing phase documents); the Italian Civil Protection and Prefecture’s regulations for managing immigrant and refugees’ facilities; the Schengen Border Code and the regulatory clarification notes that were published in the aftermath of the Italy-France 2011 controversy; the contract for the management of the refugee camp of Mineo; the “EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership” provisional text; and UNHCR statistics about refugees in Tunisia.

Second, I relied on selected and accredited resources of migration news digest, drawing in particular from activist websites’ newsletters (Migrants at Sea, Migreurop, Sicilia Migranti, and Melting Pot)³⁰ and email conversations among scholars involved in particular migration struggles and their documentation (Storie Migranti and Alarm Phone).³¹ Moreover, I relied on the close reading of the policy pieces at the center of my analysis and of the parliamentary or other institutional body’s discussion about them, which I have tended to find online posted verbatim.

Third, I relied on information and conversations about migration policies in the central Mediterranean that originated from the research networks I am part of and particularly Storie Migranti and MobLab.

³⁰ See: Migrants at Sea, <http://migrantsatsea.org> (last accessed, May 19, 2015); Migreurop, <http://www.migreurop.org/?lang=fr> (last accessed, May 19, 2015); Sicilia Migranti, <http://siciliamigranti.blogspot.com> (last accessed, May 19, 2015); and Melting Pot, <http://www.meltingpot.org> (last accessed, May 19, 2015); Storie Migranti, <http://www.storiemigranti.org> (last accessed, May 19, 2015);

³¹ See: Storie Migranti, <http://www.storiemigranti.org> (last accessed, May 19, 2015); Watch the Med Alarm Phone, <http://watchthemed.net> (last accessed, May 19, 2015).

1.3 Research Itinerary Across the Chapters

I organized the manuscript as a series of “stops” along the central Mediterranean space of migration.

Spatially, each chapter focuses on one “site” of the experience of crossing (or trying to cross) the central Mediterranean route into Europe, as experienced in leaving from Northern African countries. Whereas the waters constitute the background for the entire dissertation’s itinerary, the three core chapters focus on the Schengen area, the refugee camp, and the Euro-Med neighborhood. The closing chapter provides an overview of the arguments and the research program that originate from these sites engaging in a discussion about migrant “presence” and migration “routing.”

Temporally, the chapters focus on different moments of the post-Arab Uprisings’ restructuring of migration governance across the Mediterranean: the Schengen chapter is centered on the immediate aftermath of the Tunisian revolution; the camp chapter focuses on the entire duration of the temporal unit of analysis, 2011-14; and the neighborhood chapter reflects on the future directions of border struggles and migration management that result from the undergoing re-organization of the externalized border of the EU in Northern African countries.

I organized the sequence of the chapters in the manuscript according to a diachronic principle, opening with the arrival of Tunisians (and of the Tunisian

revolution) in Schengen-land in 2011, then moving to the scene of the refugee camp that opened in Italy in 2011 to host Libyan war refugees and the evolution of which (in terms of arrivals and business model) I followed throughout 2014, and finally closing with the policy vision of a Euro-Med Tunisian neighborhood for migration management.

The decision to organize the chapters temporally is also a modest compositional gesture against the governmental script of migration, i.e., an abstract representation of migration that brushes off the temporal borders looming over migrants' travels as from-to movements and event-moments in border-line crossing. Against this representational erasure of the temporalities of migration, I wanted to avoid a chapter articulation that would read like the staging of a migration flow, stop after stop, dot on the map after dot on the map of a governmental route. The story I tell in this manuscript about the bind between border struggle and enforcement is the story of a process of space-making across the Mediterranean, with its landmarks and specific times, but also—and most importantly—with zig-zags, re-routings, and interruptions that fall off its cartographic representation and that my inquiry and narrative seek to document.

(May 2013 and March 2015)

CHAPTER 2

A TUNISIAN REVOLUTION ACROSS SCHENGEN

2.1 Introduction

This chapter engages with an astonishing outcome of the Tunisian revolution in Europe: the crisis it triggered at the heart of Europe, in the EU borderless region, when just 5,000 Tunisian migrants crossed into Italy at the outset of the Arab Spring. In the first months of 2011, in fact, as these Tunisian citizens started to migrate northward and leave the southern shores of Italy where they had landed, the mechanism of “free circulation”—the spatial ontology underpinning the internal market of the EU—cracked. More precisely, the Schengen Area—the integrated region of twenty-six European nations sealed together by the removal of checks at their borders—took center-stage in a heated political controversy. An institutional crisis opened up, opposing member states and EU institutions, in *a litigious yet shared goal to send these few thousands Tunisian migrants away*. Italy went so far to grant these Tunisians a temporary legal status on humanitarian basis and travel documents, thus strongly promoting the right to free circulation across Schengen for lawful residents. As a response, France fenced up, reintroducing border checks at the frontier with Italy and organizing raids that pushed Tunisians back to Italy, returning Europe to its Westphalian order of national perimeters and intra-European border-checks and

frontiers. At the same time, the executive body of the EU, the European Commission, embarked on a long and troubled push for a revision of the Schengen Border Code in the name of that “European spirit” which, it claimed, was hurt by the Italo-French Schengen dispute.

In public debate and within EU studies, this episode gave rise to quibbling debates about the territoriality of free circulation within Schengen, the letter of the Schengen Border Code, the “national prerogative” of member states,³² and the hierarchy of the many scales of governance and jurisdictions that criss-cross the European Union and the Schengen Area. This crisis of the free circulation regime was so destabilizing – also in its intersection with the economic crisis³³ – that it led to calls for the end of the European project as a whole: “the beginning of the end for Europe” (*Ricochet*, May 18, 2011), “dividing forces are mounting in Europe” (*Spiegel*, May 13, 2011), “Berlusconi and Sarkozy want to scrap Europe’s open borders” (*Time*, April 26, 2011), “Senseless push-pull with Paris ... if that’s how it is better to end Schengen.” (*La Repubblica*, April 18, 2011, quoting Italian Minister Franco Frattini).

Commenting on this episode, critics focused on the French reintroduction of border checks at the Menton-Ventimiglia post where, starting in February 2011, harsh police enforcement was enlisted to prevent the entry of Tunisian migrants into France. Critics underlined how this measure brought the European

³² Immigration issues are largely handled at the national level. A move toward the Europeanization of labor migration and refugee issues is underway.

³³ On the nexus of migration and crisis, see *The New Abduction of Europe*, a collective effort to re-think politics in the wake of the European crisis (Source: http://nuevoraptodeeuropa.net/?page_id=1089).

Union to a collapse, interrupting its geopolitical identity – the removal of checks at internal borders – or, less emphatically, interrupting the most cherished European accomplishment even among EU skeptics, i.e. the “freedom of movement” across intra-European borders. It is certainly true that raids and targeted checks performed quite a “border spectacle” (Cuttitta, 2012; De Genova, 2013; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014; Sossi, 2006: 51-109) while also staging the panic that the outbreak of the Arab revolutions caused on the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, especially for those European countries with strong ties to North African dictators. Also within EU studies, then, this 2011 Schengen crisis was studied and addressed like a crisis of the EU rule and a threat to its governing mechanisms.

Instead, I engage with this episode *as illustrative of the functioning of spaces of free circulation*, rather than as a problematic exception to the rule of free circulation. The market predicament and practice of free circulation across Schengen, I contend, rests on the borderology (Van Houtum, 2010: 595), the persistent border-work and the intermittent and mobile borderlines that are at play in this response to the presence of Tunisians in Schengenland at the beginning of 2011. The chapter builds this argument along two routes:

1. First, I trace a *map of the crossing practices and contrasting border regimes* that Italy, France and the European Commission enacted in the name of Schengen during this 2011 crisis. My engagement with these contrasting border practices and interpretations calls analytical attention to their *outcomes rather*

than their adjudication, how they ‘landed’ on the Schengen Area rather than how they executed normative provisions. In other words, instead of establishing the proper territorial rule over Schengen, I am interested in tracing the Schengen space that this normative disagreement enacts and mapping migrants’ lived experience of this troubled space. Methodologically, this focus corresponds to an attempt to de-border the study of EU policies onto the terrain of existences, to investigate how this Schengen disagreement ‘landed’ on migrants’ lives and the *traversability* it produced and prevented.

2. The chapter closes with an engagement with *the frontiers of freedom and circulation* of Schengen, deploying a cross-Mediterranean gaze on this 2011 Schengen affair. The overlaps and the differences between free circulation and freedom of movement are often overlooked both in EU lingo and in advocacy language. In this section, I reflect on their different paths and politics.

2.2 Notes on Methods: Schengen Inside-Out and Outside-In

In their critique of state-centered accounts of the border, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson suggest “seeing like a migrant” (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 166)³⁴ as an approach to understanding border-work productivity and the struggles that criss-cross borders. In this chapter I work towards this *‘migrantization’ of the analytical gaze* on Schengen with the aim of re-focusing

³⁴ Playing with the title of James C. Scott’s 1998 book, *Seeing Like a State*, Mezzadra and Neilson’s claim to “seeing like a migrant” gestures toward an epistemic turn—i.e., understanding sovereignty through mobility (rather than the other way around).

scholarly attention toward the *social and material outcomes* that emerged in this controversy over Schengen borders' territoriality.

When engaging with a normative controversy (over the framework for reintroducing internal border checks) one has to work with the minutia of policy and legal provisions in order to map the terrain of the disagreement. However, “the map is not the territory,” as philosopher Alfred Korzybski eloquently put it, and the map of a normative controversy does not account for the terrain where the controversy lands. “Seeing like a migrant” is exactly an indication to move beyond the abstract space of the map, to carry the analysis further in order to account for the social articulations and empirical manifestations of the normative controversy. It means directing analytical attention toward how this policy controversy ‘*landed*’ on people’s lives – those very people about whom the controversy emerged. In other words, it means studying the productivity – what they do on the terrain of their application – of a set of conflicting border regimes, rather than closing their conflict with an adjudicating move (or, as in this case: rather than looking for the border enforcement response that supposedly correctly interprets the Schengen Border Code or the Schengen spirit). To “see like a migrant” is, in this sense, a methodological indication about the aim of the research: an *empirical materialism of policies* (rather than an adjudicating hermeneutics of their frameworks). It is, in other words, an indication of the *location* of the political stake of the research: “seeing like a migrant” in this Schengen conflict means engaging with Schengen politics on the terrain of its

outcomes on migrants' lives rather than on the terrain of conflicting institutional actors' interests or, to put it more precisely, it means to map how these institutional interests organize, disorganize, fragment and fracture migrants' lives.

The scholarship on this Schengen episode focused instead on the abstract space of border rules and on a merely institutional and EU-centric side of the 2011 episode: which actors implemented the Schengen Border Code correctly and how is the “national prerogative” to be interpreted in this case (Carrera et al., 2011)? Is Schengen “doomed” or simply reproducing itself through a “punctuated gradualism” (Zaiotti, 2006)? Is this episode illustrative of nation-states' practice of “narrative identity boundaries” within a transnational area of circulation? (Scuzzarello and Kinnvall, 2013). These normative concerns certainly helped clarifying the Schengen Border Code's multiple jurisdictions about “third-country nationals” and provided a contextualization of other instances of border suspensions in the history of the Schengen Area. However, these accounts *abstract away* from Tunisian migrants through moves of methodological nationalism and “seeing like a state” (Scott, 1998) which, in this context, are simply rescaled to the EU Area but not undone in their logic. What this produces is a sort of analytical circularity on the EU and its *EU-rope* (Jones, 2006; Bialasiewicz et al, 2013: 61-2), an analysis of a contested crossing of the EU that ends with the EU itself: what I could call, playing with the literature so far invoked, a ‘methodological *EU-rope*-centrism’ and “seeing like an Area.” The borders that criss-crossed Tunisian migrants' presence in Schengenland and the place they

ended up finding within this Schengen controversy are stripped away from the conversation in these scholarly accounts. Analytically they fail to interrogate *why* these few Tunisian migrants caused all this *border trouble* within the order of Schengen and what happened to them within this Schengen controversy.

“Seeing like a migrant,” instead, means holding on – analytically and politically – to the fact that these divergent border provisions *all* ‘landed’ on migrants’ lives and that on this terrain there is no epistemological filter, distilling a supposed correct practice from the litigious and heavily politicized ground of policy application. I propose to account for this terrain where conflicting policies landed not only from an institutional standpoint, but “seeing like a migrant”; not just, as most commentators have done, accounting for the conflicting institutional interests on the table of this controversy but also accounting for the conflicting existential paths they channeled for migrants.

“We didn’t cross the border. The border crossed us” is the compelling chant of the immigrant rights movement in the US. While the statement refers to a precise historical moment of Mexico-US history, it also works as a powerful statement about border politics throughout the world: borders cross migrants’ lives, cutting through and cutting off existential paths. When studying this Schengen controversy, “seeing like a migrant” means accounting for the very many borders that crossed Tunisian migrants’ lives in the days of this controversy and for the conflicting spatio-temporalities that landed on top of their

lives. Finally, it means to look for the existential outcomes of this normative disagreement.

In order to hold on to the Schengen *traversability* that emerged within this very normative disagreement, I ask: Which spaces and times of circulation were produced by Tunisian migrants crossing Europe and by member states responding to this crossing? And more specifically, what are the spatio-temporal coordinates along which Tunisian migrants' crossing of Schengenland get organized (and disorganized)? With these questions, my aim is to de-border critical policy studies, shifting it onto the terrain of "existence strategies" (Sossi, 2006), a de-bordering of the study of policies concerning the always-contested terrain of existences, existences which organize themselves from within the very tangles produced by such policies.

What I would like to develop is a way to study a space of free circulation produced by policy, as Schengen is, from the vantage point of its migrant crossings. My aim is to move beyond the mere scrutiny of migratory policies' captures which, as it often happens in the tradition of governmentality studies, ends up distancing these very crossings and the contested politics they put in motion. At the same time, I would like to avoid producing an apology for crossing, as certain contributions to border studies and frontier ethnographies tend to do, fixing migrants to their encounter with transnational borders. Finally, the choice to focus on spatio-temporal coordinates is an attempt to account for the enduring production and reproduction of the Schengen Area without reducing this process

to the institutional discourse of EU enlargement,³⁵ focusing instead on *intermittent and moving borders that cross migrants' lives within Schengen and its policy controversies*. This approach forces the temporalities and spatialities of migration – those that migrants take, enact, receive, and mobilize while crossing the Area – into the frictionless space and instantaneous time of the EU single market (Pullano, 2009).

2.3 Schengen Traversability and the Tunisian Revolution³⁶

2.3.1 The Schengen Space of Tunisian Migrants

“Schengen?” asked a young Tunisian man, interrogating the Italian researcher interviewing him in Ventimiglia, at Italy’s border with France (Sossi, 2011). It was April 9, 2011 and they were talking about the temporary residence permit awarded on grounds of humanitarian protection that he and his friends would be entitled to as they were “coming from countries of North Africa” torn apart “by events of a particularly serious nature” and because they had entered

³⁵ The topic of EU enlargement dominates spatial approaches to the study of the EU. An interesting exception to this exclusive focus on enlargement processes is proposed by Claudia Aradau, Jeff Huysmans and Vicky Squire (2010: 953): building on the tensions that crisscross mobility in the EU (nation-states’ sovereignty and EU’s claim to free movement across the regional bloc), the authors propose to study European citizenship from the angle of mobility instead of integration. Drawing from the work of Georg Simmel, they contend that migrants are mobile not because they cross borders but because they act as agents in the circulation of services and goods and in the production of social relations of exchange.

³⁶ This section draws from an essay I wrote for the edited volume *Spaces in migration. Postcards of a revolution* (Garelli, 2013: 74-79).

Italy before midnight on April 5, 2011 in accordance with the Decree declared by the Italian Prime Minister (Consiglio dei Ministri, 2011a). The young man came from the city of Gabès, which he had left on a boat directed to Lampedusa Island, which he then left for Crotone, proceeding to Rome, from Rome to Milan, and from Milan to Ventimiglia, which was not his final destination. As a cosmopolitan of the two shores he knew perfectly well how to perimeter the European “space of free circulation”: he knew its extension, its borders, and its traversability. But he also knew this European space as a social space, as the space inhabited by some of his friends, relatives, friends of friends and also as a space rich with possible chance encounters to come. When he was asked why he left Milan to come to Ventimiglia, he explained that he was actually headed to France, that it was France where he wanted to go. And when the interview touched on the residence permit he would be eligible for in Italy, he promptly asked his interviewer: “Schengen?”, probing the European traversability that the permit would ultimately either facilitate or preclude for him.

These stories of migration to France or Northern Europe told by Tunisian migrants always come with a long list of Italian names, indicating the detours and forced stops of cross-Schengen mobility that are standard for Tunisian migrants: “Lampedusa, Catania, Crotone, Sicily-Milan, Milan-Vardello, Vardello-Milan, Milan-Ventimiglia to go to France” (Ronzani, 2011). Ventimiglia was also the destination of a group of three young Tunisians whom a radio-journalist interviewed on an intercity train from Milan at the end of March 2011. “They want

to know,” the journalist tells listeners, “where they may find a Western Union in Ventimiglia and how late it will be open as they hope to get there in time to get cash. They have family in France. Yousef’s father is in Lyon but Yousef prefers to join his friends in Paris.” The journalist asked where in Paris he would go and he answered: “I don’t know but I have the phone number. My friends will come pick us up” (Giacomini, 2011). At the Ventimiglia station another young Tunisian man was very clear on where he did not want to go: “Pas la France, je n’aime pas ... Italie, Germany, España mais pas la France, je n’aime pas” (Sossi, 2011).

This ‘traversed’ Europe has been well-illustrated in Lucio Guarinoni’s interviews with Tunisian migrants in Bergamo (Guarinoni, 2012: 97-125): Italy as the European docking place after days at sea taking wrong routes; the dream to end up in Belgium or in France; the friends one makes en route; the unexpected offers of hospitality; the offers for jobs in France that don’t come through; the return to Bergamo, Italy, to renew the residence permit; the idea of one day “making a film about this,” “a film about what one thinks when dreaming of going to Europe from Tunisia” (Guarinoni, 2012: 120).

It is these social spaces, these travel desires, these careful assessments about the radius of one’s options, the ground beneath one’s feet one starts to feel (or not), the choices as to who to join in Europe, and evaluations on where one may or may not cross that I take as the vantage point from which to study the reorganization of the space and time of “free circulation” in the Schengen Area in 2011 and 2012.

2.3.2 Schengen Intermittences

Within Schengen, instead, this freedom to leave through which some migrants enacted their revolution, produced a tumultuous dispute with regards to the jurisdiction and the boundaries of their arrival. Where could they stay in Europe? What would be their appropriate status? For how long should they stay? How could they be returned to Tunisia? While Tunisian migrants were engaging with Europe as a regional bloc, and, upon arrival at Lampedusa and Linosa Islands, imagining a European city—a French, Belgian, or German city—as their final destination, the Schengen Area was rapidly being deregionalized by the contrasting territorialities that Italy, France, and the European Commission were invoking and by the restructuring of Schengen's spatial dispositives upon Tunisian migrants' mobility across it.

Italy-Schengen: The Mobility of the Humanitarian

In Italy, the Berlusconi government deployed Schengen territoriality as a “move away from” territoriality, as the order to “keep moving!” for Tunisian migrants, and as an injunction of mobility. It did so in two ways: mobilizing humanitarian and securitarian instruments, directly implementing their brotherhood, and staging both the temporary international protection instrument

(ex Articolo 20' of the 'Testo unico sull'immigrazione') and the expulsion provision of repatriation agreements.

The context: Tunisian migrants had been arriving at Lampedusa Island for weeks after the outbreak of the Tunisian revolution at the end of December 2010. Most of them fled Lampedusa as well as the various Italian reception sites where they were originally "hosted" (Manduria tent camps, detention centers in Bologna, Turin, and Rome, the mega processing center for asylum seekers in Mineo in the province of Catania, to name just a few). They left Italy for other Schengen countries, France in particular – and most had planned Italy as only a transitional place in their travels. As it turned out member states³⁷ were not going to respond to the call for "burden sharing"³⁸ that former Italian Minister of the Interior Maroni and former Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi directed to Schengen signatories on multiple occasions.³⁹ The Minister of the Interior even invoked candidate

³⁷ The only positive answer to Minister Roberto Maroni's request for "burden sharing" issued to all EU member states came from Romania. On April 17, 2011, Romanian Prime Minister, Traian Basescu, offered to take up to two hundred Tunisian migrants. This offer marks an uncanny geometry of solidarity in the Schengen Area: the only country attending to the Schengen "burden sharing" principle is the country who, despite being a EU member state, has not been promoted to Schengen membership yet.

³⁸ Article 80 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* sets forth the "principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member States" in regard to border checks, asylum, and immigration issues.

³⁹ A transnational perspective helps to understand the "migratory pressure" Italy was allegedly under. While in February 2011 the Italian government called for EU help when faced with the arrival of 5,000 Tunisian migrants at Lampedusa Island and declared a state of humanitarian emergency on the national territory, Tunisia had instead opened its border with Libya to grant access to Libyan war refugees. On February 27, 2011, for instance, within only 24 hours, 10,000 people entered Tunisia from Libya at the Ras Ajdir border-post.

countries, saying: “some countries of the OCSE area like Turkey expect to enter Europe but are not doing anything about these matters.”⁴⁰ With this declaration, the Minister attempted to deploy the externalization of European functions to candidate countries as an entry token – this deep-rooted EU practice of externalizing border functions was here being extended to ‘humanitarian’ reception. The argument soliciting “burden sharing” from candidate countries was built not only along meritocratic coordinates, i.e. earning entry in the European Union, but also along the usual coordinates of population and “culture.”⁴¹

These calls for European cooperation by Italian institutions were supported by careful orchestration, with the staging of dramatic images and alarming statistics, the same *docufiction* which has been narrating Italy to Italians for so many years but that had never caught on outside of Italy. And nor did it this time: the image of a Lampedusa island “invaded” by migrants was quickly deconstructed by international media which constantly pointed to the smallness of the island (“little tiny island” was the common expression), focusing instead on the reception numbers of other member states at the time of the ex-Yugoslavia wars. When, during a meeting of Mediterranean countries on February 23, 2011, former Foreign Affairs Minister Franco Frattini projected, within the “North Africa Emergency,” arrivals between 200,000 and 300,000 and spoke of “a biblical

⁴⁰ Chamber of Deputies Meeting, March 16, 2011.

⁴¹ Answering a Lega Nord interrogation on the arrival of Tunisian migrants in Italy, Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni stated that Turkey should take in Tunisian migrants and refugees as it is a sparsely-populated country, unlike Italy, “which is instead densely populated, especially in Padania,” and as Turkey has a “cultural proximity” with the countries of origin of these migrants (March 16, 2011).

exodus [sic!], 10 times bigger than the one from Albania in the 1990s,” European reproaches quickly came in response. Belgium dismissed the numbers as absurd, whereas Austria and Germany hastily concluded that Italy could and must manage the arrival of 5,000 Tunisian migrants without European intervention. Also the International Organization of Migrations (IOM) invited the Italian government to stop using scare tactics and to put these figures in context when, in February 2011, it provided data from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean speaking of 30,000 Libyan war refugees who had been received in Tunisia and Egypt (Storie Migranti, 2011).

It is in this the context that Italy – after a series of heightened negotiations⁴² with Tunisia – granted temporary humanitarian protection to some Tunisian migrants. As per Prime Minister’s Decree dated April 5, 2011, citizens from “Northern African countries” who landed in Italy between January 1, 2011 and midnight of April 5, 2011 were eligible for a six months residence permit on humanitarian grounds distributed free of charge.⁴³ Article 3 of the Decree presented a ‘made in Italy’ declination of the Schengen humanitarian, mobility, and cooperation nexus: “the residence permit...permits its holder’s free

⁴² Leading up to the agreement’s signing, Italian politicians’ visits to Tunis intensified, suggesting a difficult negotiation among Tunisia and Italy: two times for Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (in official visit), two times for Foreign Affair Minister Franco Frattini and three times for Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni.

⁴³ Exclusion criteria are stated in Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Prime Minister Decree dated April 5, 2011. Not eligible for the permit are those “citizens of North African countries” who: entered Italy before January 1 or after April 5, 2011; belong to one of the categories considered socially dangerous; have previously been notified of an expulsion order before January 1, 2011; who have been sued or sentenced for a specific set of crimes.

circulation...in the countries of the European Union in accordance with the Schengen Acquis and...with the communitarian law.” The point about “free circulation being allowed” was juridically redundant⁴⁴ but it is politically crucial, as it clarifies that these permits for Tunisian migrants are in fact “humanitarian permits to take a hike” (Sossi, 2011b), permits to please go!

In a way, these permits are the Italian edition of that *mobility of the humanitarian regime* which, in the name of the European space of Freedom, Security, and Justice, produces normative concepts (first asylum country, third safe country, safe origin country, European safe third country), humanitarian military interventions, and “humanitarian zones” in the countries of the “neighborhood,” as EU policymakers call the regions at the southern and eastern borders of the EU. I will return to this last practice towards the end of the essay. But here we see Italy playing out the spatial logic of the humanitarian regime in full force, issuing a residence permit that in fact forces the Europeanization of reception and puts “protection” in motion, linking asylum status to an erratic figure. This humanitarian territoriality is also inscribed in the appointment of the Civil Protection as managing unit for asylum seekers coming from Magrheb and Mashreq countries, a decision that overlooked the competence of the Agency for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR). Among the many embarrassing

⁴⁴ The temporary residence permit for humanitarian protection comes with travel documents (“titolo di viaggio”): as per Schengen norms, third country nationals may freely circulate for three months across the Schengen Area if they hold a valid travel document, if they can prove the purpose and conditions of their travel and have sufficient means of support, and if they have not been prohibited to enter through the Schengen Information System (SIS) and if they are not considered to be a threat to national security.

definitions Italian ministers deployed to name migrations from the countries of the Arab Uprisings, the expression “human tsunami” indeed spells out a very precise governmental tactic.

France-Schengen: Free Circulation Suspended

The suspension of the Schengen free circulation regime that France deployed in 2011 pushing back Tunisian migrants has been at the center of numerous debates about the reintroduction of internal border checks. The *Treaty on the Functioning of the Union* grants this reintroduction as a temporary measure “in the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterized by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries.”⁴⁵ The measure has been enforced by different Member States in cases such as marches, political summits and counter-summits, large-scale political and sport events, and in the context of new immigration legislation introduced by a particular member state.⁴⁶

In this section I focus on two instruments pertaining to the Schengen border regime that France deployed in 2011 toward Tunisian migrants: a normative instrument and an economic one. On the normative front, French politicians engaged early on in profiling Tunisian migrants as “economic

⁴⁵ Article 78, point 3 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*.

⁴⁶ Accurate public records of the reintroductions of border checks at internal borders are not available. A careful reconstruction can be found in Sergio Carrera et al report *A Race against Solidarity*, cit., pp. 23-24. The French situation is interesting: in March 1999, France reintroduced border checks at the frontier with Italy in the context of an undocumented migrants march in Paris, preventing several Albanian migrants and militants from taking part in it.

migrants,” thus deriving the illegality of their crossing into France from their migration status. In an informal note dating February 2011, the French Police demanded agents to stop “irregular foreigners of Tunisian nationality,”⁴⁷ performing a nationalization of “irregularity.”⁴⁸ In fact, as soon as Italy “regularized” Tunisian migrants arriving before April 5 2011, making them eligible for a temporary residence permit, France implemented yet another mechanism to reject these “regular” migrants, finally revealing that the free circulation of Tunisian migrants was not problematic for lack of proper documentation. The new mechanism preventing Tunisian migrants from entering France was an economic one. The French government issued a circular letter to prefects to remind them of the standards third-country nationals need to meet to be granted access to the Schengen free circulation area.⁴⁹ The letter particularly insists on checking that third-country nationals should have “sufficient funds” for their stay, i.e. 62 EUR a day (or 31 EUR a day should one be granted free hospitality).

What France finally staged for Tunisian migrants in those first months of 2011 is a highly securitarian regime, both when it rushed their profiling as irregular economic migrants and when it monetized access into France for those

⁴⁷ This is an informal note of the French police addressing Cannes’ security forces and was publicly circulated by the police union “SGP Police-Force Ouvrière.” The note is available on the website *Davduf*.

<http://www.davduf.net/La-chasse-officielle-aux-Tunisiens,497.html>.

⁴⁸ On the mechanism of irregularization and its politics, see: De Genova (2002), Mezzadra and Neilson (2003, 2012), Squire (2011).

⁴⁹ France specifies the following Schengen normative provisions: foreigners may access the Schengen area for a period of three months if they hold a valid travel document, if they hold a valid residence permit, if they have enough financial means, if they have not entered France in the previous three years, and if they are not perceived as a threat for public order.

holding humanitarian permits. It is variegated space, that of Schengen, where the same people are given international protection on juridical grounds of their vulnerable subjectivity and then pushed back on grounds of their economic vulnerability.

However, this exclusion performed by France, this *financial push-back*, is in line with the Schengen normative framework: if the Schengen Border Code establishes the removal of border checks for anyone “irrespective of their nationality,”⁵⁰ it also establishes the possibility for member states to verify that third country nationals have “sufficient means of subsistence, both for the duration of the intended stay and for the return to their country of origin or transit to a third country.”⁵¹

In fact it was not the first time that France interrupted the Schengen free circulation regime. Here I want to focus on a somewhat theatrical precedent. In 2010, France expelled almost 1,000 Roma people: EU citizens from Romania and Bulgaria. In that case, the motivation supporting the expulsion revolved around the irregularity of their housing settlements. When, in July 2010, the French Interior Minister mandated evictions for illegal settlements, he also demanded efficiency and indicated a specific target, i.e. Roma people in illegal settlements. The motivation was somehow an all Schengen-riddle, whereby the Schengen free circulation regime was being interrupted in the name of Schengen: those who live in illegal settlements, French politicians contended, are

⁵⁰ Article 20, *Schengen Border Code*, (CE) n. 562/2006.

⁵¹ Article 4, *Schengen Border Code*.

abusing European free circulation and have to be removed. To this end, France allocated a voucher to disperse to those who would “voluntarily” return or, to put it more directly, those who would self-deport: 300 Euros for adults and 100 Euros for children. In order to cash in the sum, Roma people would need to register in the *Tool for Repatriation Aid Statistics and Control database* (OSCAR, *Outil de Statistiques et de Contrôle de l'Aide au Retour*).

This episode from 2010 helps situate Tunisian migrants’ push-backs in the context of those peripatetic borders through which EU Member States have been following migrants within their national territories over the past few decades: performing ad hoc banishments; switching border dispositives on and off; moving them away from the external perimeter and instead prismatically multiplying them within cities – in public parks, on buses, in money order operator stores...even in hospitals at times. The raids and evictions in Roma camps in France in 2010 as well as the 2011 Tunisian push-back operations speak to this “urbanization of borders.” Also in the case of Tunisian migrants in 2011, in fact, push-back operations didn’t only happen at the Mentone-Ventimiglia borderline but also in French cities away from the frontier, producing securitarian raids as well as active resistances (Sossi, 2013b) across France.

These French enforcement interpretations of the Schengen Border Code produce a segmentation on an economic basis of the right to free circulation across the Schengen Area. Tunisians are irregular migrants with no means of subsistence and Roma people are public land squatters. In both cases, French

raids are performed with a rule of efficiency. In 2010, the police were asked to evict 100 camps a month (giving priority to those sheltering Roma people) and in 2011, Foreign Affairs Minister Claude Guéant fixed a minimum target of 28,000 for that year's expulsions, prompting security forces to focus on Tunisian migrants. Whereas in Italy, the mode of circulation imposed on Tunisian migrants was disguised as a humanitarian measure, in France it was presented as sheer economic rationality.

EU-Schengen: Force and Control over Space

The European Union responded to this controversy over free circulation inaugurated by Tunisian migrants in the Schengen Area with replies of force. On a regional and trans-regional scale, at a European and Mediterranean level, the EU staged a force principle in relation to its control over migrant mobility.

Internally, at the EU-level, the European Commission proposed a modification to the Schengen Border Code and presented it as a way to “strengthen the Schengen area” (European Commission, 2011d), stating that during hard times, when Europe has been hit by an economic and financial crisis “this is not a moment to compromise on our values but rather to strengthen the institutional, political and legal underpinnings of the Schengen system,” said Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström (2012).

This strengthening consists first of all in the Europeanization of the decision to temporarily reintroduce internal border controls. Introducing the draft,

Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, pointed to the inter-governmentality mechanism as the weak spot of “a key achievement” for European integration, namely free circulation within Schengen. In the proposed change, in fact, the protection of this “key achievement” was predicated on the centralization of the mechanism for temporarily reintroducing checks at internal borders, hence marginalizing the national prerogative to cases of serious threat to public policy or internal security requiring “immediate action” and even then for a period not exceeding 5 days, after which the Member State should follow European institutions’ lead on how to manage the internal border.⁵² While the Commission presented this modification as the response to the Italy-France quarrel over the mobility of Tunisian migrants, the Commission had all along been cultivating the idea of taking on the jurisdiction of temporary interruptions of free circulation at internal borders (Pallister-Wilkins, 2011).

In the context of the Arab Uprisings where the cooperation of EU Member States crystallized in the Southern shore of the Mediterranean (staging “willing” combatants and, as I shall illustrate, also numerous neighborhood policies) while it was crushed on the Northern shore, the Commission’s intervention also reads as a sort of last-ditch effort toward Schengen cooperation. In this last ditch call, however, cooperation is restored only on the securitarian front.

⁵² The draft allows for a temporary decision to reintroduce border checks at internal borders in the case of a large number of arrivals of third-country-nationals through the external frontier of one of the Schengen signatory states, if this arrival is considered a threat for public order and internal security. States have the prerogative to reintroduce border checks for a maximum of five days and, after that, they have to obtain an extension from the European Commission.

Moreover, the Europeanization of the free circulation control mechanism also intervened on the external border system. The political document⁵³ accompanying the proposal for change introduces the issue of interventions on external borders to strengthen, along with free circulation, the compensation game on which Schengen is based, which has been eloquently defined as “policing in the name of freedom” (Bigo and Guild, 2005). In the document “Schengen Governance: Strengthening the Area Without Internal Border Control” (European Commission, 2011), the European Commission envisions visits, with or without warning, to border zones in order to verify that the Schengen *acquis* is properly applied. The Modification Draft also mentions the institution of a European-level control mechanism on the workings of single Member States. Moreover, the document expands the role and jurisdiction of the external border agency Frontex, also granting the agency leeway from Member States’ control.⁵⁴ And the response the EU provided to the Italian invocation of the “burden sharing” principle in the face of the arrival of Tunisian migrants, was also merely securitarian and resulted in both the deployment of the Frontex mission “Hermes 2011” to patrol the external border along the Sicilian channel and in a financial contribution to the EU External Borders Fund of 52 million Euros for 2012 (against €32 million for the previous year).

⁵³ Here I refer to the European Commission’s document: COM (2011) 561 final, September 16, 2011.

⁵⁴ This is what Ilkka Laitinen, the Director of the European Border Agency Frontex, requested on February 21, 2011. Talking about the Hermes 2011 mission at Lampedusa Island, he demanded for more decisional autonomy for Frontex.

But it is on a trans-regional scale that Europe most vehemently expressed its strength, forcing a *Euro-Mediterranean* appropriation of the developments of the Tunisian revolution and of the Arab Uprisings. In a press release, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, said: “Without Europe, there would have been an Arab Spring, but without us there will be no Arab summer!” (European Council, 2011). In 2011, in fact, EU policy initiatives and policy mobility heavily targeted the southern Mediterranean shores, pushing the envelope of neighborhood initiatives and policy mobility well beyond the externalization of border enforcement and humanitarian regimes that had been rooting European migration management for years. What started in 2011 is a battle to gain control over the economic space opened up by the Arab revolutions. It was this southern shore of the European single market that the EU started to explicitly articulate as one of the key battlegrounds for European economic prosperity when the Arab Uprisings put in motion the reconfiguration of that economic space and its markups.

This attempt by the EU to appropriate the (economic) spaces put in motion by the Uprisings is an uncanny re-edition of the colonial modernity & development nexus. The Commission intervened in the neighborhood of the Arab Uprisings with a “SPRING Programme,” putting its signature on that Spring which, in the EU acronym, becomes: Support for Partnership, Reform, and Inclusive Growth. The “SPRING Programme” is a policy packet aimed at providing support for the Southern Neighborhood countries toward democratic

transformation, institution building and economic growth in the wake of the Arab Spring” (European Neighborhood Policy, 2011). The Program consisted of 350 million Euros, which, between 2011 and 2012, supported mobility partnerships for “selective migrations” (e.g. accelerated visas for students, researchers, managers), cultural activities and civil society organizations. The European Commission’s communications on the neighborhood were on the same page, and possibly even clearer as they framed a “partnership for democracy and shared prosperity” with the Southern shore (European Commission, 2011b) and posited a series of EU responses to the neighborhood’s evolutions (European Commission, 2011c). And the European Union even erased the southern shore when, presenting initiatives aimed at reorganizing the mobility of people and capitals in the countries of the Arab revolutions, posited a “*Euro-Mediterranean*”: Euro-Med Partnership, Euro-Med Youth Platform, Euro-Med Industrial Cooperation, Euro-Med Higher Education ... These attempts to re-structure Tunisia, Egypt and Libya as Euro-Med spaces via European partnership projects clearly demonstrate the European attempt to forcefully re-claim its dominant role in a neighborhood which changed at lightning speed, taking both its neighbors and international observers by surprise.

2.4 Clockwork Schengen

Presenting their documentary *Our best years*, Matteo Calore and Stefano Collizzolli illustrate “what is left of the Tunisian revolution in the lives of those who have traversed it.”⁵⁵ The “best years” of the documentary’s title refer to four temporalities: the time when life was suspended under Ben Ali regime, the time Tunisians participated in the revolution, the time they set about leaving for Europe and, finally, the time during which Europe managed their existences when it “received” them in 2011.

In the closing section of this chapter I focus on the time of departure, reflecting on its hyper-velocity and putting this speed in context of the “best years” of many people’s lives “locked up” under Ben Ali. In this paragraph instead I focus on the temporality that was impressed onto Tunisians’ lives once they landed in Schengen-land. As a matter of fact the swift temporality they enacted at departure was decisively slowed down once these young Tunisians landed in Europe where, following disembarkation at Lampedusa Island, they had intended to leave Italy right away. In this case it was European countries who acted fast, adopting various measures to implement a sort of centrifugal circulation of Tunisian migrants *away from* their territories. Away from Italy, away from France, away from Europe.

And velocity is indeed the temporal paradigm of the single market, the objective of the two standardization mechanisms upon which the market is

⁵⁵ From the film’s presentation, available at: <http://inostrianimigliori.wordpress.com/>.

rooted, namely the common currency and the removal of checks at internal borders. But in the same way as the space of free circulation is subject to what in EU policy lingo is called “a logic of compensation” (compensation between internal free circulation and external border *enforcement* at the outer EU perimeter), a similar logic also underpins the temporal dimension of Schengen. Alongside the velocity marking the rhythms of internal markets, other temporalities have been multiplying for migrants in the Schengen Area with the suspension mechanisms, diachronic confinements, and the deceleration of crossings⁵⁶.

Alongside this bordering rhythm of temporal suspension, there is another rhythm through which Schengen governed Tunisian migrants’ mobility across its space in 2011-12. While equally ripe with bordering effects, this rhythm is of a different nature: it is a syncopated rhythm, a time made of interruptions, a time in which duration is marked by expiration dates, a time of *from ... to* temporal segments. This is an endlessly interrupted time to the extent that for Tunisian migrants it became impossible to count on any duration beyond that of waiting.

⁵⁶ Federica Sossi speaks of “biographies at the border” (2006: 34) to describe how Schengen norms’ obsession with borders erases a significant part of migrants’ existences through different forms of confinement, control, and suspension. Enrica Rigo devotes a chapter to the “diachronic borders of Europe” (2007: 150-5) and analyzes the “indefinite temporality” of European migrants’ juridical subjectivity within Schengen, their being suspended to *pro tempore* rights. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2003) talk of a “decompression chamber” mechanism at the borders of Europe, performing a deceleration and a selection of migrations and performing the differential inclusion of migrant labor in the single market.

2.4.1 Humanitarianism with an Expiration Date

The first dispositive of this syncopated sequencing of Tunisian migrants' temporality in Schengenland is the temporary residence permit granted on humanitarian grounds. Above I discussed the spatial outcomes of this permit and the contrasting territorialities it staged and solicited. Here I want to discuss its temporal dimension and argue that it works as a kaleidoscope producing diachronic borders (Rigo, 2007).

It is first of all definition of the permit as part of “humanitarian measures for temporary protection” which inserts a paradoxical temporality into the existences that this document *permits* to stay. On the one hand, eligibility is positioned on the supra-temporal dimension of the humanitarian but on the other hand the practice of dispensing protection is defined as temporary. While the juridical logic is clear (a six-months residence permit on humanitarian grounds), the existential articulation that this “protection”s may produce is not: Which time could this temporary protection on humanitarian grounds open? What might the temporal nature of this expiring protection enable its beneficiaries to build?

Access and eligibility criteria for this permit were all clearly defined temporally: vis-à-vis an uncanny vagueness about the spatiality of eligibility (“citizens of Northern Africa countries”), the temporality of eligibility was instead made chronometrically clear. One may have been able to apply for the permit if, coming from a vaguely defined and exoticized “North Africa,” one had arrived on the Italian national territory within a very precise timeframe, i.e “from January 1,

2011 to midnight of April 5, 2011” (Consiglio dei Ministri, 2011b). Further stopwatches are mobilized with regards to the permit’s application timeframe and release times. Applications were due to the Questura within eight days from the publication in Parliament’s *Official Journal (Gazzetta Ufficiale)* of the Prime Minister’s decree instantiating the protection. These were very improbable deadlines to meet, especially for their addressees. How could Tunisian migrants ever come to know about a publication in the *Journal* and how could they ever file within such a short timeframe? Why, then, should the sheer possibility to even apply be temporally circumscribed? Finally, why such a short interval of only eight days? It is highly unlikely that those who were eligible for protection, even if they had somehow become aware of the publication, would be able to mobilize so quickly.

As a matter of fact, among the group of about 24,000 who arrived in Italy by April 5 2011, only 11,006 permits were issued and, six months later, when the possibility to file for an extension was granted, only 3,052 were prorated and 3,510 converted into work-based residence permits.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Figuring out the exact number of the humanitarian temporary residence permits issued in relation to the Prime Minister’s Decree of June 5, 2011 proved very difficult. Statements by newspapers and politicians made reference to a rounded-up figure (11,800). The Ministry of the Interior and the state police ignored my requests for clarification. The Civil Protection Press Office, on the other hand, provided helpful insights and precise figures, drawing from governmental data: “The residence permits released for humanitarian reasons, in line with the Prime Minister’s Decree of 05/04/2011...are a total of 11,006; the renewals approved are 3,052; the conversions into work permits are 3,510” (February 15, 2012).

But this chronometric precision through which the decree partitions, on the stroke of midnight, deportability from the right to stay is also not in line with the workings of Italian institutions. The identification of Tunisian migrants, the “evidence” documenting when they entered Italy has not always been conducted at the moment of arrival and/or in the place of landing, resulting in misrepresentations of the time of entry for potentially eligible beneficiaries.

However, with regards to the moment of release of the permit, the Italian government granted high priority status or “maximum speed” (“massima celerità”), four days to be precise. It is worth quoting the paragraph on the timing of the permit’s dispensation featured on the circular letter sent out by the Interior Ministry aimed at clarifying the implementation standards of the decree. It is the “urgency” with which mechanisms were implemented in order to make Tunisians circulate that I find interesting here: “In the perspective of granting maximum rapidity...measures have been perfected with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finances and with the Italian Mail System so that the residence titles will be delivered to the Questure from the State Polygraphic and Mint Institute (Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca di stato) within 4 days from the authorization date, via the Postal System special delivery with packages marked with the writing “PSE URGENTE PT”⁵⁸ (my translation).

If, here, we saw a “clockwork” temporal schema with provisions for “maximum rapidity”, temporal approximation dominated the deportations regime,

⁵⁸ Ministry of the Interior circular letter, no. 2990, April 8, 2011, available at: <http://www.meltingpot.org/articolo16699.html>.

namely the measure imposed upon all Tunisian migrants who entered Italy after April 5 without a residence and work permit. This *institutional tempo* for deportations was actually very elusive and, as was denounced by associations for the rights of migrants (Paleologo, 2011), abuses were perpetrated as non-compliances with the timeline for expulsion orders' notifications that both European and Italian normative systems mandate.

An example. During the first repatriation of Tunisian migrants in 2011, Italian authorities deported forty Tunisian migrants who would actually have been eligible for temporary protection. Their arrival was in fact recorded on Lampedusa island at 12:25am on April 6, indicating their arrival in Italian territorial waters by midnight on April 5th.⁵⁹ The humanitarian regime under which Italy operated in 2011 was rooted in expirations: very short application time-frames for temporary rights and deportations enforced on the basis of temporal vagueness or even lies.

2.4.2 Short-Term States

But this spatial temporality, this deadline-centered right to space, was most clearly expressed by the Italian declarations of states of humanitarian

⁵⁹ See the document by the association "Fédération des tunisiens pour une citoyenneté des deux rives". Source: http://www.citoyensdesdeuxrives.eu/better/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2178%3Aftcr-accord-tuniso-italien-sur-les-harragas&catid=102%3Atous-nos-communiqués&Itemid=1 (last accessed May 2015).

emergency – three in less than six months⁶⁰ – another migration governance instrument deployed in 2011. The word “state” clearly describes the multiple ways in which space and time were put to play in these states of humanitarian emergency. Let me start with the asset of time: on the one hand, the emergency becomes the temporal yardstick with which to plot a new territory; on the other hand, a sequence is established, made up of successive “states of emergency” and their durations (starting day, expiration day, extensions).

But the word “state” also has a spatial dimension, as it indicates the “where” of a declared state of humanitarian emergency while, at the same time, also referring to that state’s jurisdiction, to that political and normative nexus expressed as territoriality (De Genova and Peutz, 2010), in this case the territoriality of the humanitarian regime.

I have named these declarations of the state of emergency ‘short-term states’ with the specific intention of indicating the layers woven together in the word “state” and in order to underline the emergency temporality they instantiated and the governmental leeway this supported. Under a regime of emergency and in temporary sites, governance is conducted under a regime of exception and with expiring, always renewable and seldom rearticulated, agendas.

In the first declaration of February 12, 2011, when Italy entered a “state of humanitarian emergency...in relation to the exceptional influx of citizens of

⁶⁰ On February 12, 2011, Italy declared a state of humanitarian emergency in Italy; on April 7th, it did the same thing “on the territory of Northern Africa”; on August 3, it extended it to “the other countries of the African continent,” each time working through Prime Minister decrees.

Northern Africa countries,” for instance, Civil Protection was designated as the unit in charge of the emergency. With this designation, political and social events (such as the upheavals of the Arab Revolutions) are profiled as a natural cataclysm. An uncanny *humanitarian trespassing* is legitimized by the same logic: the “state of humanitarian emergency in the territory of North Africa” that Italy subsequently declared on April 6, was in fact hardly rooted in a humanitarian justification. The state of emergency (declared by Italy in “North Africa”) was in fact aimed at “allowing to efficiently counter the exceptional influx of extracommunitarian citizens on national territory.” With such spatial deferral and jurisdictional hubris, the principle of causality of this declaration vacillates too. The state of humanitarian emergency was declared in Italy, situated in “North Africa” (first spatial deferral) and aimed to contrast immigration to Italy (second spatial deferral). It is really hard to grasp which causality this humanitarian regime is predicated on: if indeed there is a humanitarian emergency in “Northern Africa”, why should the country of Italy declare it? Based on which jurisdiction is Rome mandating “states of emergency” abroad and hence also instantiating intervention zones both at home and abroad under the nominal label of humanitarian intervention? What is the humanitarian content of the attempt to “efficiently counter the exceptional influx of extracommunitarian citizens?”

In this *Italian* “North Africa Emergency” the humanitarian and the securitarian are intertwined intervention principles, deployed in mobile, interchangeable and even invented geographies. The goal that grounded these

complicated humanitarian geographies seemed to be that those “thousands of citizens from Tunisia,”⁶¹ as the decree reads, could indeed be made to circulate swiftly away from Italy: either elsewhere in Europe with a temporary residence permit, or in “Northern Africa” with exceptional measures implemented to prevent their arrival on the Italian shore, or, should they have in fact landed, to push them back.

In this first section of the chapter, I unpacked the politics of migration underpinning the Schengen institutional crisis, engaging with the Schengen Border Code from the terrain of the *borderlands* and *the temporal captures* that the Schengen border management enacts in the region and over migrant lives, as physical as well as diachronic borders. The chapter shows how the controversy between Italy and France is illustrative of what I called “Schengen borderology,” i.e. the multiple, overlapping, and at times contrasting, borders at the heart of the Schengen internal space of free circulation.

What then are the spatio-temporal coordinates along which Europe governed the crossings of Tunisian migrants in 2011, in the immediate aftermath of the Tunisian revolution? The analysis carried out in this section points to a sort of condensation mechanism enacting a claustrophobic and impossible space-time: a space so intensely punctured by temporal deadlines that its ground - the crossing ground - crumbles, and a time that, as continuously syncopated, can be articulated only in the form of an expiration date or, ultimately, a time that, as

⁶¹ February 12, 2011.

indefinitely suspended, looms over as peremptory capture. This is in Europe. But Euro-Med spatio-temporal coordinates were also mandated in the countries of the Arab Uprisings, with humanitarian states rooted in deferral and in externalization and building on the long-established paradigm of “development,” staged in this case as the narrative for reorganizing a neighborhood that the Arab Revolutions put in motion. As such, it is important to keep following Tunisians on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean as well as Tunisian migrants in Europe, following the spaces and the times through which they articulate the neighborhood and following the interruptions of that Italian or Euro-Mediterranean space-time that they manage to force within its tangles - in parallel, in contraposition, in flight or as a displacement.

2.5 The Frontiers of Freedom

In this section I would like to take a look at Schengen from the southern shore of the Mediterranean, away from Tunisians’ presence at the Menton-Ventimiglia intermittent border and from within the turbulent geographies of the Tunisian revolution and the spaces that the political change opened up. Among them, I focus on the Mediterranean space of circulation which encapsulates the politics, economics, and social issues of many other spaces.

Why did so many Tunisians leave at the outbreak of their revolution, in the heyday of their country's liberation, and after having successfully overthrown a regime? Among some progressive commentators this migration path registered as a betrayal of the revolution, the desertion of a democratic scene so hardly conquered, and a sort of flight from the terrain of political transition the country was entering. In sum, *it registered as the unpolitical move* in the aftermath of the archetypical and quintessential political moment, i.e. the revolutionary moment. This desertion of the scene of politics (on the part of those who left in the aftermath of the revolution) broke the teleology of citizenship and its national confinement, crossing the national borders of politics ... trespassing, so to speak, what – within a Euro-Atlantic imaginary – registers as “political.” It did so in two ways: first, by leaving Tunisia and crossing the Mediterranean, these Tunisians/migrants crossed the frontier of their liberated nation outward; second, with their decision to migrate they interrupted the scene of politics or, more precisely, a scene of politics, i.e. the scene of politics of “Western eyes...and explanatory frames.”⁶²

Against this foil, this section argues that this decision to leave (the migratory path) was in fact a political practice, a practice of freedom indeed,

⁶² The idea for this section originated after the reading of a short and highly political intervention by Iain Chambers for the website Uninomade. Chambers explains that when mass protests and regime changes swept across North Africa in the Spring of 2011, Western commentators were taken by surprise by this seemingly overnight crumbling of regimes. However, Chambers underlines, this disorientation was eventually and quickly re-oriented and: “brought into perspective under western eyes through a series of explanatory frames – educated unemployed youth, the new social media, state oppression, lack of democracy – that responded to Occidental criteria of analysis.”

which acted on the reconfigurations of the space of circulation across the Mediterranean that the revolutions ignited.

2.5.1 The Politics of Leaving

In the first months of 2011, Tunisians were immersed in a fast-paced political and social change, with the electric excitement about the times and spaces the revolution suddenly made available, including those across the Mediterranean. With Ben Ali's fall, in fact, also the Schengen mechanism of migration containment fell, unbridling – albeit only momentarily⁶³ – the *EU-rope* (Jones, 2006; Bialasiewicz, 2011; Bialasiewicz et al., 2013: 61-2), of border externalization in North Africa. What was (momentarily) interrupted by the revolution was the Schengen borderzone (Walters, 2006) in North Africa, the maritime border intended to enforce visa requirements sealed by political agreements, the joint operations (bringing together EU and Northern African forces) to stop people on the move before they even crossed any border, to prevent the influx in the EU of migrants leaving from Northern African states.

One lesser known Schengen story behind this Mediterranean equilibrium (which the Tunisian revolution momentarily interrupted) is that of Italy's twelve year "detainment" in the waiting room of Schengen, before it was finally considered ready for graduation into Schengen membership. As a matter of fact

⁶³ Tunisians' urgency to leave turned out to be forward-looking, if one measures the rapid re-establishment of migration bilateral agreements between Italy and the Tunisian transitional government already signed in April 2011 with provisions for migration containment out of Tunisia.

when, in 1985, the Schengen Agreement was signed, Italy, one of the founding member states of the EU, was kept out of the Schengen Area. While this outcome reflects the variable geographies and “discontinuous geometry” (Walters, 2004a) of Europe, it was still a source of political controversy and embarrassment. At the center of Italy’s long exclusion from membership in the Schengen Area was exactly the migration from North Africa: Schengen members – and especially France and Germany – contended that Italy⁶⁴ could not be trusted to enforce border patrols at the outer borders, by granting that “tough outside” enforcement the Schengen free circulation relies on.

What finally provided the credentials for Italy’s graduation into Schengen was the approval and implementation of an immigration reform⁶⁵ which included the introduction of visa requirements for countries that were the primary source of immigration in Europe through Italy.⁶⁶ In other words, Italy instituted a migration control infrastructure of “policing at distance” (Bigo and Guild, 2005) (visa mechanism) that would link up to the Schengen Information System (SIS),⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Greece was also at the center of this controversy.

⁶⁵ Martelli Laws, 1990, (Legge n 39 del 28 febbraio 1990). As Mario Fridegotto underlines “the price” Italy had to pay consisted of several things: visa requirements for Northern Africa countries and Turkey, new immigration laws, giving up the “geographic reserve” on asylum (which limited to Europeans the recognition of asylum in Italy, the signing of the agreement with France to accept the provision that France would push back to Italy third country nationals entered in France from Italy without papers, and the acquisition of the *acquis*, (Fridegotto, 1992: 59, my translation).

⁶⁶ Another important normative change that Italy was requested to implement in order to gain Schengen membership was the dropping of the “geographical reservation on asylum” (the change was implemented by the Martelli Laws).

⁶⁷ The Schengen Information System was initially presented as a tool in the fight against crime (especially drug dealing due to fears about the Netherlands). However, the overriding majority of reports on the SIS concerning individuals relate to immigration and border controls, not crime (Helen Staples, 2003: 221).

hence joining one of the main instruments of Schengen border enforcement, i.e. preventative border mechanisms for selecting “desirable” migrants and rejecting “undesirable” flows, to quote the policy language.⁶⁸

Back to Italy’s graduation into Schengen membership. Italy did not only introduce visa requirements for migrants coming from Northern African states. It also introduced migration clauses in its bilateral agreements with Northern African countries, i.e. Italian investments in exchange for enforcing out-migration control. In the case of Tunisia, for instance, this ‘migration clause’ resulted in an sort of e-migration ban, i.e., making sure that those visa applications would not be granted a green flag (regular migration paths) and that migrant boats would not set sail for Italy from the Tunisian coast-line (irregular migration paths). The story of Italy’s introduction as a member of Schengen is the story of a troubled accession, which Ruben Zaiotti figuratively expresses in terms of Italy representing “Europe’s soft underbelly” (Zaiotti, 2013). In 2005 Schengen reinforced these nation-states’ visa provisions with a unified system,⁶⁹ the Schengen Visa System, where the Schengen partition of the world between visa-required and visa-free countries clearly drew a “global color line”⁷⁰ across the

⁶⁸ Data show that this mechanism did not work to contain migrations or even to select “desirable” flows; instead, it resulted in more deaths at sea, forcing people to turn to smugglers to pursue their desire to visit a Schengen state, as any carrier traveling to a Schengen state is requested by law to verify that travelers are in possession of Schengen Visas.

⁶⁹ While Italy introduced visa requirements as part of the Martelli laws in 1990, other member-states had introduced visa requirements prior to the Schengen provision, e.g., Germany (Bigo and Guild, 2005: 233-263).

⁷⁰ W.E.B Du Bois’ famous definition is particularly appropriate here, since Schengen visa provisions partition access to the Schengen territory through a color-coded

planet with visa requirements primarily applying “to poor and Muslim countries” (Guild, 2007).

What this EU-*rope* produced was a tremendous social pressure, with people forcefully held in their country in the name of European security and against international laws⁷¹ and human rights provisions. In other words: to ensure freedom of movement within the Schengen Area a very short stretch of sea was turned into an insurmountable barrier by these Schengen policy provisions. The Tunisian revolution has often been portrayed as a young people’s revolution. One component of this age bracket was definitely this life-long captivity under a de facto ban to leave the country. From the southern shore of the Mediterranean, then, it is not hard to understand how political freedom came to correspond with the desire to cross the Mediterranean.

2.5.2 The Partitions of Freedom

Yet this context was completely left out of the picture in political discussions about the incoming migration from Tunisia in 2011, at the time of the Schengen controversy spurred by Tunisian migrants’ arrival. In a speech at Harvard University, Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, gestured with a certain honesty – albeit in very generalist terms – to a failure of the EU in the wake of the Arab Springs:

classification system: a “black list” for countries requiring visa and a “white list” for countries not requiring visas. The names of these lists was subsequently changed but the racialization of visa requirements persisted (Van Houtum, 2010: 957).

⁷¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

In 2011 the EU missed the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to its foundations. It is as if we'd said to them: "it's wonderful that you make a revolution and want to embrace democracy but, by all means possible, stay where you are. (Malmström, 2012)

The failure of the EU that Malmström so openly deplores has to deal with the democratic culture that supposedly underpins the European region and which EU and Schengen policies implement as an "Area of freedom, security, and justice." What this democratic triad provides for is a balance between the removal of borders and its security and justice components (the issues it raises, the benefits it brings in terms of both security and justice).

Now, the internal tension that characterizes the concept of "freedom" tends to be replicated and further distended in the case of the Schengen where the deployment of freedom as an instrument of government takes several paths: economic rationality, securitarian concerns, and citizenship. Let me start from the first: technically, Schengen is not about freedom (the tenet of social justice and political visions) but about free circulation of persons, goods, and services. This free circulation, in other words, is a market mechanism and pertains to the creation of a regional economic space (Walters, 2004b: 567), a smooth space of economic transactions. In other words: the Area this freedom underpins is an "internal regional market" (Zaiotti, 2007; Wilson, 1996). In terms of security, moreover, EU scholars have long underlined how Schengen epitomizes a reformulation of the freedom and security nexus (Zaiotti, 2011) along the morphology of a Moebius Ribbon (Bigo, 2001: 90) merging internal (state affairs)

with external (defense) concerns. This morphology sits on an emergency framework where security is conceived as a collective European common (the first freedom so to speak) whose protection comes to justify “the unfreedomization of others” (Bigo, 2006). This “freedom” à la Schengen reproduces that *apartheid* that first Etienne Balibar (2009) and then many others identified as the mechanism embedded in European citizenship, a mechanism which excludes lawful EU residents who are third-country nationals from membership in the EU citizenship. As a matter of fact, many commentators intervening on this 2011 Schengen controversy underlined, with technocratic frown, how freedom of circulation within Schengen is granted only to EU passport holders, not to third-country nationals, even if lawful residents. However, this is a contested issue both in technical terms and in political ones.⁷²

Yet, “seeing like a migrant” – the methodological approach to Schengen that I set out in the opening by building on Mezzadra and Neilson’s contribution – may contribute to “provincializing” Schengen, to looking at Schengen and its free circulation from the outside, from the “constitutive outside” that migrants represent. In the case of the 2011 episode, for instance, this indication means to pay analytical attention to how Schengen free circulation is contested in the aftermath of the Tunisian revolution and through Tunisian migrations. On the one hand, it is contested in its “spatio-temporal fixes” (Jessop, 2006) the mechanism of visas I explained above; on the other hand, it is also contested in its

⁷² While originally conceived as a market technology, “free circulation” is increasingly becoming part of the EU political project (Maas, 2005).

governmentalization of freedom (as a freedom of / as a right to). What Tunisian migrants staged, when leaving in the aftermath of their revolution, is an act of freedom, a political practice of acting on a conquered freedom. A very different political construct than the policy provision of free circulation. As De Genova puts it in a recent address about the freedom of movement:

Freedom is not given, it is taken. Freedom is not a ‘right’ stipulated by state powers on dry parchment and allocated fastidiously by bureaucrats or border policemen.” (De Genova, 2013a, added emphasis).

So approaching this Schengen episode, “seeing like a migrant” means calling attention to how freedoms are taken, within/against/across the Schengen space, by those whose “life against the edge” (Rosas, 2014) leads to practices of freedom appropriation, like Tunisian migrants in this case. In other words, it means to look for an understanding of political practices of freedom in the constitutive and constituent, migrantized spaces of Schengen. In the last decade Schengen has been at the center of scholars’ interest in relation to the multiple borders it enacts towards third-country nationals, the “tough outside” of the internally borderless regime. These contributions have illuminated the external dimension of Schengen border-work, the dematerialization and multiplication of borders through biometric information technologies (Scheel, 2013), the system of preemptive borders implemented through bilateral agreement and joint patrolling, the “global color line” imposed by the Schengen visa requirement ... This conversation has importantly contributed to “de-provincialize” (Chakrabarty,

2009; Balibar, 2009) Schengen epistemologies and to illuminate the multiple borders the internal market relies on.

However, this de-provincialization of our understanding of Schengen and the tensions it enlists could also come as an indication to look at the political spaces that migrants trouble and set in motion. In terms of free circulation, this means looking at Schengen with the lens of an act of freedom and liberation from Schengen like the one staged by Tunisian migrants in their setting sail to Europe. Mobility is the mantra of market efficiency and liberal economies and is epitomized by the securitization of freedom of movement as velocity; this is where the EU comes together but also where it is ending, in its economic crisis. The freedom of movement Tunisian migrants set in motion across the Mediterranean tells us a lot about the fixes this mobility relies on.

My attempt in this chapter has been to gain a granular understanding of the Schengen borderology and its landing on peoples' lives (opening/closing/closing-opening spaces and times, sites and durations, cracks and interruptions) and to look at the politics of Tunisians' migration by both unpacking the Schengen fixes it contested and looking at the practice of freedom it sets in motion across the Mediterranean.

(June 2014)

CHAPTER 3

THE COMMODIFICATION OF VULNERABILITY AT THE REFUGEE CAMP

3.1 Introduction: Asylum, Crisis, and the Vulnerable Commodity

“What does Italy want from us, keeping us stranded like this here?”
(A., Mineo refugee camp vicinity, December 2011)

A. is a Libyan war refugee⁷³ who at the time of our first meeting was pending asylum processing⁷⁴ at the Mineo camp, the biggest European refugee center opened at the outbreak of the Arab Uprisings in Sicily. During a long interview, walking up and down the Catania-Gela highway with him and three other refugees, A.’s question kept resurfacing. With the question, its radically displacing strength kept coming back too. Enlisting the situatedness of presence—being kept “stranded like this here”—A.’s question reverses the moral economy of hospitality embedded in international protection, i.e., the giving-host/receiving-guest framework that underpins asylum. Or, phrasing A.’s question

⁷³ *Terminology.* In this chapter I use the term “refugees” to indicate the people who were displaced by the Libyan war to Italy, regardless of their status (i.e., “asylum seekers,” “rejected refugees,” “status refugees”). For a discussion on the politics of naming, see the special issue on “Migration and Militant Research” that I edited with Martina Tazzioli for *Postcolonial Studies* (2013).

⁷⁴ A. received a rejection of his asylum claim, filed an appeal, and decided to leave the camp taking a bus to Turin, “closer to Chicago,” as he put it laughingly the last time I was able to reach him on his cell phone.

reversal in refugee nomenclature: on the one hand, the “host state” is posited as the receiver of something from refugees; on the other hand, asylum seekers’ residence at the camp is framed as a “strandedness” produced by Italy for some kind of self-interested return.

In this chapter I ask a question similar to A.’s, focusing on the economies binding hosts and guests in refugee camps and tracing international protection’s produced spaces, economic transactions, and territorial conflicts. In particular, I am interested in tracing the spatial politics that institute a housing complex of 404 units in the outskirts of a remote Sicilian village used as a refugee camp⁷⁵ during the so-called “North Africa Emergency”—the migration management policy initiative Italy mobilized in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings.

My aim is twofold in this engagement with the refugee camp of Mineo from the vantage point of its economic spaces. First, I want to contribute empirical evidence to counter anti-refugee rhetoric and “protection-lite” policies (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011) that frame refugees as a financial burden⁷⁶ for host societies. While the concept of “burden” has been part of refugee normativity from the outset (UNHCR, 1951, Preamble, paragraph 4; see also: Gottwald,

⁷⁵ *Terminology.* My use of the term “camp” to name the Mineo processing center for asylum seekers reflects the nomenclature used by the people that I interviewed there, who called the place where they were living the “camp” and corrected me when I would talk about the “processing center.” I should underline the following: that this is a governmentally run area, that refugees are free to come and go from, and that informality is not the governing logic—at least on paper, since my analysis will show that the camp of Mineo is very much embedded in Italian informality. For a topology of refugee camps, see: Ramadan, 2013a; Sanyal, 2012.

⁷⁶ The notion of “burden” is introduced by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee in opposite terms, i.e., to call for a internationalization of the “unduly heavy burden on certain countries” posed by refugee flows (Preamble, Paragraph 4).

2014; Edwards, 2012; Schuck, 1997, 2014), recently it has taken on a dominantly economic connotation, which anti-immigrant and -refugee policymaking latched onto in the European context of the financial crisis. Looking at the Italian migration management plan for the so-called “North Africa Emergency” and focusing on three years of research on the Mineo processing camp—a housing complex turned into a governmental processing center for asylum seekers in the Catania plain in Eastern Sicily—I am interested in investigating the economy of hosting and processing refugees. Within mainstream refugee studies, a conversation has developed documenting refugees’ contribution to host societies (Betts, Bloom, Kaplan et al, 2014). These works, however, build on an understanding of the national economy as a stable order and as a fixed border, to which the contribution of new economic members could be eventually added—i.e., as long their profile stays within the boundaries of a pre-given subjectivity of the hard-working, self-promoting, technologically literate economic contributor.

This chapter intervenes in this debate but takes a different approach, focusing on the ways in which refugee management becomes a source of revenue for the instable economy of the country of destination. I understand the notion of instability as both historical and spatial: historically, as the financial crisis that characterizes Italy and the overall Euro-zone at the time of the study and, spatially, as the reconfiguration of the borders of profit-making of a struggling local economy “through” the logistics of international protection, i.e., the spatial process of receiving, hosting, and processing asylum seekers. I am interested in

the nexus where the national economy and the institution of asylum's respective "crises"—financial crisis on the one hand and epistemic and political crisis on the other—converge, intertwine, and reconfigure their boundaries (of legality and illegality in profit making; and of protection and harm in refuge giving, for instance).

My second aim is to contribute to a political articulation of these new spaces of humanitarian and financial crisis and of their emerging economic geographies. In other words, I am interested in understanding how the nexus between refugees' presence and the national economy that this chapter documents could be used to support refugees' advocacy. To this end, I seek to map: the political space that this economy of refuge builds on, the situated struggles it produces in the space of the Mineo camp, and how these new geographies of crisis could impact the political imaginary and the political space outside the borders of the camp.

I pursue these two aims by engaging in a spatial analysis of the vulnerabilities that crisscross the Mineo camp and asking two main questions. First: Where is vulnerability localized at the camp, in the name of the so-called "North Africa Emergency," and in turn, which spaces of refuge, sites of protection, and territories of asylum are actually enlisted through the refugee camp of Mineo? Second: How do economic and humanitarian issues intersect at Mineo camp and which crisis do they respond to at this juncture?

Let me briefly illustrate the epistemological approach of these questions by clarifying the notions of “vulnerability” and “crisis” that are at their center.

Vulnerability. On the one hand, I use the notion of “vulnerability” technically to indicate the juridical subjectivity underpinning the institution of asylum and the target of the provision of international protection on the part of host states. This technical focus on the normative and policy terrain of vulnerability allows me to parse out the two poles of the relationship of asylum—i.e., the actors claiming and those managing international protection, the vulnerable claimants and the supposedly stable providers, refugees as the bearer of vulnerability and the humanitarian regime as the supposedly stable provider of care—that comprise the Italian state at its different scales but also the various IGOs and NGOs that increasingly govern migrants and refugees (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010) as the supposed stable providers of care. On the other hand, I deploy the notion of vulnerability in its semantic breadth—focusing in particular on recent discussions in economic geography and political theory—where vulnerability is thought of as a socio-economic and political process of precarization and as a political subjectivity (Butler, 2014; Casas-Cortés, 2014; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008). From these vantage points, then, it becomes possible to study the vulnerabilities that invest both poles of international protection’s relation individually—the refuge and the refugee, or, in other words, the humanitarian government and the humanitarian subject—but also as an

enmeshed nexus where these vulnerabilities come to feed on one another in a series of humanitarian topologies that this chapter will document.

Crisis. The notion of “crisis” qualifies the relational space that this chapter aims at documenting, as it refers to asylum’s normative regulations, socio-spatial processes, and economic spaces. Normatively, a crisis in an individual’s country of origin is the issue to which international protection responds. Moreover, the notion of “crisis” is widely deployed to describe the institution of asylum’s present moment (Dauvergne 2013) and its epistemological, political, and regulatory impasse. A problematic mismatch between asylum’s outdated regulatory framework (which refers to a World War II atlas of displacement⁷⁷) and the new geographies of forced mobility is in fact documented ubiquitously across different actors and scholarly domains. In these conversations “crisis” also describes the situation where a staggering expansion of forced migration—pushed by growing disparities across world regions—is met by a global “protection-lite” politics (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2011) imposing growing restrictions to international protection’s access. In academic and policy advising circles, the suggestion has been to “expand” the borders of asylum beyond the framework of individualized persecution of the 1951 Refugee Convention in order to incorporate new profiles of vulnerability. This “regime stretching” (Betts, 2014: 363) of asylum has been identified through different but equally expansive terms: “survival migration”

⁷⁷ Coming from the context of the World Wars, the international protection sanctioned by the Convention assumes a from-to trajectory of displacement: from one’s country of birth to one’s country of refuge. Such a linear atlas does not match the present landscape of forced migration where refugees are forcefully displaced multiple times and through multiple countries.

(Betts 2010; Betts 2013: 4-6, 10-28), “vulnerable irregular migrants” (Betts 2010), “externally displaced people” (e.g., Ghosh, 2000a, 2000b), and “people in distress.”

Looking at the refugee camp of Mineo, this chapter argues that the borders of asylum have already been radically stretched on the ground of migration management and that this reconfiguration has not resulted in expanded forms of protection for refugees.

Instead, the vulnerability of the receiving country has become an integral part of international protection and the way it is governed and administered on the ground. Humanitarian and economic crises, in other words, are increasingly blurred: in these new configurations, their jurisdictions and referents, as well as the interventions and protections enlisted, become problematic to distill. In this chapter, I unpack the vulnerabilities of the camp of Mineo, reflect on the outcomes of the regime stretching of asylum at play in the Italian “North Africa Emergency,” and reflect on a political articulation of such re-direction on the terrain of struggle that these governmentalized vulnerabilities maintain, if not expand.

The chapter opens with a methodological note and then moves to analyze the vulnerabilities of the camp of Mineo, focusing on territorial vulnerability, refugees’ vulnerability, and vulnerability as an instrument of government.

3.2 Notes on Methods: Access and the Political Economy of Human

Rights

This chapter works within the activist-scholar mode of inquiry that characterizes the dissertation (Colectivo Situaciones, 2004; 2007: 73–94; Toret and Sguiglia, 2006; De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2013: 63-64). In the context of this approach, the chapter negotiates one methodological challenge that is specific to the topic of asylum: what is the role of critical scholarship when it studies normative frames that compensate for, but do not challenge, spatial injustices?

The unequal distribution of access to human rights, for instance, certainly goes uncontested—if not being reinforced—by the juridical institute of international protection and the humanitarian regime of asylum. With Stephan Scheel, Martina Tazzioli, and the Keyworders Group,⁷⁸ I have equated asylum to citizenship in terms of producing the exclusion of many while granting rights to a select group (De Genova, Mezzadra, Pickles, 2014: 70-73).

My spatial approach to the study of the Mineo processing center is meant to intervene in the debate about the juridical framework of asylum by breaking away from the regulatory ontology of statuses and bringing analytical attention to

⁷⁸ A group of scholars who convened in London in 2012 for the “Migration and Research Methods” conference and “The European Question” workshop, both held at Goldsmiths, University of London. In these contexts a group of 17 decided to collaborate on a project concerning the keywords “migration” and “borders” for *Cultural Studies*: Maribel Casas-Cortes, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Nicholas De Genova, Giorgio Grappi, Charles Heller, Sabine Hess, Bernd Kasperek, Sandro Mezzadra, Brett Neilson, Irene Peano, Lorenzo Pezzani, John Pickles, Federico Rahola, Lisa Riedner, Stephan Scheel, Martina Tazzioli, and the author.

the economic geography of which statuses are a part—i.e., pointing to the chain of value and economic profits produced through refugees’ presence at the Mineo camp, by “keeping us stranded like this here,” as A. would put it. In terms of research design, this means a focus on the logistics of hosting—from the institution of the refugee center (e.g., the land-use negotiations through which a residential complex for military personnel was turned into a processing center for refugees and the conflicts across different scales of territorial governance this originated), to the management of refugees at the center (e.g., the tender contract for the managing unit and the rationale and operating practices of the camp’s governance). Through such focus on the territory of the camp—the value as well as the conflicts that accrue from it—my hope is to contribute to a de-essentialization of statuses (asylum seeker, refugee, rejected refugee, etc.), at least insofar as I contextualize them as part of a commodity chain that feeds the local economy and that restructures national and local territorialities.

The study spans over the course of three years, from the processing center’s opening at Mineo in 2011 up to the moment of revising this chapter in December 2014. Early in the discussion about the “North Africa Emergency”—the policy packet at the center of this chapter—it was clear that the approach to refugee management that Italy had planned to implement was tailored to the country’s purported fear of an invasion from refugees. I was interested in following how this policy packet aligned with and/or broke away from existing policy frameworks for refugee management in Italy. The Mineo camp allows for

the study of this intersection: on the one hand, it is the largest processing center opened as part of the “North Africa Emergency” and the intended flagship of its infrastructure; on the other hand, its location in Sicily facilitates observing how the newly established policy intersects with consolidated practices of migration governance as they have been consolidated in the region of first landing for most migrants and refugees.⁷⁹

The chapter is based on 20 in-depth interviews of about 2 hours each (13 interviews with refugees residing at the camp, 2 with camp management operators, 3 with activists and lawyers, and 2 with public officials) spanning 2011-14⁸⁰. First access to interviewees was facilitated by my activist and academic affiliations. My work for the website *Storie Migranti* (www.storiemigranti.org), coordinated by Federica Sossi, provided contact with the Rete Antirazzista Catanese, the activist group that has engaged with the Mineo processing center since its opening and with immigration issues in Southern Italy⁸¹ for the past twenty years. I participated in three of the Rete Antirazzista Catanese’s meetings, during which they discussed the situation at Mineo and organized days of action.

The Rete Antirazzista Catanese also facilitated contact with my first group of interviewees, including refugees living at the camp, lawyers who were following the appeals of rejected refugees, and an activist-journalist who covers

⁷⁹ After Italy announced the end of the “North Africa Emergency,” the Mineo camp continued to operate as a governmental refugee center.

⁸⁰ Since this chapter relies on extensive ethnographic work, I detail interview and access data (I cover some of these issues also in the First Chapter as I illustrate the methodology adopted for this dissertation’s research).

⁸¹ Rete Antirazzista Catanese is part of a larger network, Rete Antirazzista, with groups in different Italian cities.

migration and military issues in Sicily. Interviews with refugees were conducted at sites of their choice away from the premises of the camp. Further contacts for interviews originated spontaneously outside the camp. I have been keeping in contact with five refugees I interviewed in 2012, mainly via text message and at times through phone conversations; while these exchanges are no longer driven by my research questions, they certainly helped me gain perspective on the living conditions and struggles at the camp.

For interviews with public officials and the camp management, however, my academic rather than activist affiliation facilitated initial contact. I had been advised by senior immigration researchers that academics tend to be welcomed by public officials—unlike journalists, for instance. My US affiliation added to this overall favorable evaluation, turning my UIC student ID into a key to otherwise closed doors. For instance, at the time of my second visit, in December 2011, journalists had been banned from all Italian centers for migrants and refugees in a repressive move by the Berlusconi government. This ban on immigration-issues research and coverage, however, did not seem to apply to academics—or maybe not to foreign academics: upon showing my student ID and passport, I was allowed in after a two-hour background check that the Italian police stationed at Mineo carried out with officials in Rome. The same was true for the colleague who was with me, Martina Tazzioli, affiliated with Goldsmiths, University of London. We were given a full tour of the camp's premises and the opportunity to interview operators during their breaks—which ended up resulting in a lot of time

to look around and engage in casual conversation with the people who were in charge of escorting us from one interview to another.

I also engaged in archival research on the so-called “North Africa Emergency” policy packet—including governmental decrees and implementation plans, documents and articles about the Mineo camp tender, minutes of parliamentary discussions about the “North Africa Emergency,” and the regulatory frameworks that inform refugee management in Italy and in the EU. Deploying a critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodology, I tried to understand the framing of vulnerability and protection emerging from these policies and institutional discourses in order to compare and contrast it with the situation I encountered on the terrain. This source of data collection has been fruitful throughout these three years: while originally conceived as a preliminary fieldwork activity, interviews and fieldwork observations pointed to new directions for archival research.

Finally, I engaged in media coverage of the Mineo refugee center. From the opening of the camp to this day, I have been receiving news updates on articles published in Italian and in English on the Mineo camp through several Google alerts (the most recurrent media sources are “La Sicilia,” “Catania Today,” “Messina Ora,” “Adnkronos,” “L’Espresso,” “Il Corriere della Sera,” “La Repubblica”). Moreover, I have been receiving media updates about the center through the e-newsletters, digests, and activist networks of which I am a part and that cover immigration issues in Italy (Amisnet, Asilo in Europa, Antonio Mazzeo

Blog, Migrants at Sea, Sicilia Migranti, Progetto Melting Pot, Rete Antirazzista Catanese newsletter, and Terre Libere).⁸²

3.3 Vulnerable Geographies of the Economic Crisis

3.3.1 Refugees “Caught in Crisis”

The representation of immigrants and refugees as outsiders to the national order of citizenship that destabilize this order’s assumed stability (Bialasiewicz, 2006: 704–713; DeGenova, 2010b: 405–419; Magnani, 2012: 657) and represent a burden for the host society’s economy is a long-standing tenet of anti-immigration discourse. This representation supports criminalization of this type of mobility and profiling the destination country as a land under attack, so to speak, because of migrants’ and refugees’ presence. In parallel, the “environment” is increasingly associated with global displacement, not only as a possible cause of forced mobility (i.e., environmental refugees) but also as the habitat threatened by refugees’ arrivals (IOM 2007).

The Italian policy initiative of the “North Africa Emergency” represents a further step in this profiling of migrants and refugees as attacking, with their mobility, their country of destination. In the context of this policy packet, in fact,

⁸² See: Amisnet, <http://amisnet.org>; Asilo in Europa, <http://asiloineuropa.blogspot.com>; Antonio Mazzeo Blog, <http://antoniomazzeoblog.blogspot.com>; Migrants at Sea, <http://migrantsatsea.org>; Sicilia Migranti, <http://siciliamigranti.blogspot.it>; Progetto Melting Pot, <http://www.meltingpot.org>; Terre Libere, <http://www.terrelibere.org>.

the Italian territory becomes the target of a series of formal and informal reparation policies whereby the government somehow compensates for the “damage” induced by the arrival of migrants and refugees. The displacement of people from Tunisia and Libya to Italy in the aftermath of the Uprisings was framed by Italian authorities as a “humanitarian emergency.” The subject for which this emergency was advocating protection, however, was first and foremost the Italian territory, posited as vulnerable because of the influx of migrants and refugees. Both the “humanitarian” and the “emergency” sites were situated in Italy, on the land of the receiving country, allegedly rendered vulnerable by the prospected influx of refugees.

In this section, I map how such territorialization of vulnerability is normatively produced and how, within this framework, national investments for protecting refugees are re-purposed to cure the vulnerability of the national economy. This is hardly a “win-win” situation, to use a common policy framework in developmental discourse, where each actor—refugees on the one hand and the national economy on the other—gets its own share. Instead, a predatory logic of extraction is at work here in which the processing of asylum seekers becomes a national business, to the detriment of its international protection mission. In what follows I illustrate the process whereby the juridical subjectivity of vulnerability is turned into a profitable national commodity, using the Mineo refugee camp as my case study.

3.3.2 Vulnerability and the Italian Territory

The inscription of vulnerability in the national territory in the face of a refugee influx comes first of all by governmental decree, in the context of what the Italian government calls the “North Africa Emergency.” On February 12, 2011, the first of the many decrees through which this humanitarian crisis is handled⁸³ institutes “a state of humanitarian emergency on the national territory in relation to the exceptional influx of citizens belonging to North Africa countries” (Consiglio dei Ministri, 2011a), hence presenting the Italian territory as the bearer of a vulnerability threat, i.e., the threat caused by an “exceptional” influx of refugees. Moreover, less than a month later, another Italian “North Africa Emergency” decree declares “a state of humanitarian emergency in the North Africa territory”⁸⁴ in order to allow for an effective contrast to the exceptional influx of non-EU citizens on the national soil” (Servizio Centrale, 2011).

Elsewhere I have commented on the uncanny humanitarian logics underpinning this decree (Garelli, 2013: 79-88), in which a sheer securitarian border enforcement goal is predicated on humanitarianism and on the colonial legacy of such a self-proclaimed Italian sovereignty on “the North Africa territory.” Here, my interest is in how these decrees reframe the relationship between care-giver and care-taker of a humanitarian provision of asylum.

⁸³ The “decreto legge” is an executive order issued by the Italian Cabinet and approved by the President of the Republic, which becomes law without first having to be approved by parliament.

⁸⁴ For a detailed analysis of the sovereignty issues associated with these decrees, see Chapter Two (Schengen chapter) in this volume.

I want to focus on the relational geography of vulnerability⁸⁵ that these decrees enact (Darling, 2010; Hyndman, 2004) when they frame the Italian territory as the site of a humanitarian emergency in a policy packet for refugee management. The territorialization of vulnerability that is at stake in this Italian “North Africa Emergency”⁸⁶ reshuffles the function of care across space: on the one hand, the country of refuge (allegedly the care-giver) becomes the recipient of care when it is posited as vulnerable because of refugees’ influx; on the other hand, refugees (by definition the recipient of care) at the very least have their potential for receiving care decreased when another actor claims for the same humanitarian cure. To put it more directly: when asylum seekers displaced by the Libyan conflict make it to a possible refuge in Italy, the Italian government mobilizes its emergency framework to protect its own territory against these very refugees’ purported invasion.

Italian political discourse is possibly even more explicit in placing the vulnerability at stake in this North Africa Emergency on the Italian territory and somehow deflecting it away from refugees. In several public declarations, Interior Minister Roberto Maroni frames migrations originating from the countries of the Arab Springs as a “human tsunami” hitting the Italian territory and promising to

⁸⁵ *Terminology.* I use ‘vulnerability’ in a technical sense, to refer to the juridical subjectivity that is at the basis of the relationship between seeking asylum and giving refuge.

⁸⁶ The policy packet’s name is “North Africa Emergency.” The addition of the qualifier “Italian” is mine. So far, with the expression “Italian North Africa Emergency,” I have meant to suggest the Italian production of a supposed “North Africa Emergency.” In this paragraph, “Italian” also indicates the localization of the emergency, i.e., an emergency related to “North Africa” but situated in Italy.

introduce long-lasting devastation. And the anti-tsunami political response arrives when the Italian government nominates the National Civil Protection Guard as the managing unit for the refugee crisis, leaving the Italian refugee system (SPRAR) completely out of the picture.

At that point, in April 2011⁸⁷, the so-called “North Africa Emergency” had clearly taken on the features of an international protection issue—to use language of migration management—given the transformation of the Libyan Uprising into a civil war and the persecution of black migrants living in Libya by Ghaddafi’s militia. Yet the Civil Protection’s competence in handling natural catastrophes—to be clear: in floods, volcano eruptions, earthquakes—is chosen over SPRAR’s competence in aiding refugees. This clearly shows how Minister Maroni’s definition of the refugees’ inflow as a “human tsunami” was in fact a precise political vision, where Italy was posited as the receiving country in need of a protectionist plan against the arrival of refugees.

The territorialization of vulnerability at play in this “North Africa Emergency” comes also in the guise of a sort of medicalization, which literally institutes the territory as a vulnerable national body in need of statist care. A sort of vaccination logic rules the planning of the “first hosting phase” (*prima accoglienza*), where the spread of refugees on the national territory is planned with a distillation logic. Population size and modularity⁸⁸ are the rules of this slow

⁸⁷ In the first months of 2011, Tunisian citizens composed most of those arriving in Italy from the countries of the Arab Uprisings. By April 2011, however, this demographic had shifted to mainly people forcefully displaced from Libya.

⁸⁸ The planning documents talk about a “fairness” and “modularity” in the “distribution” of

and gradual release logic: every six months 10,000 people are distributed across the Italian regions in numbers that are calculated as a ratio of the regional population density (Protezione Civile, 2011: 6-7). Such precision in refugees' dispersal was not matched by an equally controlled landscape of hosting facilities, which ranged both in form—from a housing complex like the Mineo center that I talk about in this chapter to public buildings and hotels, to tent camps, container camps, and even tank camps—and, most importantly, in hosting conditions offered. But the “human tsunami” on a vulnerable national territory was actually envisioned to follow such mathematical equations in the abstract space of the Italian government's planning, to use Henri Lefebvre's famous expression (1991 [1974]). At the political level⁸⁹ of planning frameworks, the Italian “North Africa Emergency” is hence produced as the management plan for a sort of refugee-induced disease through the resources, logistics, and tools allocated for refugees' protection.

If one looks at the dispersal of Libyan war refugees by country of destination, however, the “humanitarian burden” on Italy is remarkably low, showing how the territorialization of the “responsibility to protect” is in itself

refugees across Italy, mandating that the intake of refugees for each Italian region—excluding Abruzzo which had been hit by an earthquake—had to be scaled to the size of the residential population (“fairness”) and mandated waves of 10,000 people at a time to be progressively transferred from first-aid centers to the regions where they would reside both in processing and when acknowledged status (“modularity”).

⁸⁹ Here I am referring to the political vision that mandated a North Africa Emergency via governmental decrees and other planning documents. On the terrain of implementation, however, this vision was often counterbalanced by the work of activists and organizations engaged in assisting refugees.

differentially allocated according to a markedly Eurocentric geopolitics. Let me provide some data to situate the Italian “North Africa Emergency” in a regional context. When Italy issued the state of emergency on its soil in February 2011, the purported “extraordinary influx” of refugees from “the countries of North Africa” (Consiglio dei Ministri, 2011a) amounted to 5,000 people. Around the same time, in March 2011, Libyan war refugees were fleeing to Tunisia in massively larger numbers, reaching peaks of 10,000 people a day (Garelli, Sossi, Tazzioli, 2013: 189-194).

In what follows, I argue that the source of vulnerability Italy is protecting from is not at all the threat coming from a supposed refugees’ invasion but a financial vulnerability instead—the national economic crisis—which refugees are enlisted to cure.

3.4 Refugee Economies: Migration Management, Value Extraction, and the National Economy

In a recent contribution, Alex Betts, one of the most prolific and innovative voices in mainstream refugee studies, argues that “refugee economies remain under-researched and poorly understood” (Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, and Omata 2014: 4)⁹⁰. Betts’s important remark is limited, however, to the notion of

⁹⁰ Betts importantly underlines how refugees are erroneously but persistently portrayed in public discourse as a “burden” to receiving states. In European normative language, this attribution is even part of standard policy language and normativity, e.g., the “burden sharing” provision in regards to humanitarian emergencies.

contribution, focusing on the labor, social capital, and technical literacy that refugees embody and contribute. My study of the Italian “North Africa Emergency” takes on this call to look at refugee economies but instead focuses on the host society’s predatory economies of value extraction from refugees’ presence on their territory. Let me show how this plays out at the local level through the case study of the biggest refugee center in Italy, opened in 2011 to host asylum seekers from the countries of the Arab Uprisings: the Mineo refugee center in the province of Catania.

3.4.1 Land Value Through Refugees

Mineo is a village of 5,000 inhabitants on the Catania plain in Eastern Sicily with a struggling economy that relies mainly on agriculture—and particularly on the “Arancia Rossa di Sicilia.” Since 2001, the village’s economy expanded to include the business brought when the US Navy began renting the Residence degli Aranci, a housing complex built by the Pizzarotti Group, a private investor and one of the main Italian contractors for the US Navy in Italy (Mazzeo 2010). The Residence degli Aranci is located a few kilometers from Mineo center and about twelve miles from the US Naval and Air Station of Sigonella. The ten year contract that the US Navy signed with Pizzarotti Group did not only grant the owner’s income. It also produced income for the municipality, which benefited both from increased business brought by the

families of US soldiers and, most importantly, a yearly property tax of 70,000 Euros, as former mayor Giuseppe Castania assessed it to be during our interview (Interview, December 15, 2011). The Pizzarotti Group paid this tax to the Mineo municipality for a total of nine years.

In March 2010, the US Navy announced they would not renew their expiring rent contract in 2011, breaking what the Pizzarotti Group had intended as a silent but strict gentlemen's agreement, i.e., that after the first ten years of the contract another 5 year rent contract, with a possible 5 year renewal, would be signed. This would have allowed the Pizzarotti Group to at least break even—or so a Pizzarotti manager assessed during our interview—and pay back the Banca d'Intesa loan, which was contracted by the Group to offset construction costs (interview, January 3, 2012). The decision about the Mineo housing complex was part of a larger US Navy restructuring plan, targeting expenses for personnel abroad by encouraging market rentals for sites—like Sicily—where low occupancy rates had been registered at government-leased complexes (Beardsley 2014; Jontz 2011).

When the unexpected termination of the contract was announced, the rescue plan to fill the financial void immediately resorted to the third sector, with conversations about “social housing projects” and a prospected governmental investment of 38 million euros for Sicily only confirming that, as a Pizzarotti engineer put it during an interview, “the business is in social housing” (interview, January 2012). The move from “social housing” to “humanitarian processing

center” was fast, pushed by the Italian government’s urgency to respond to its perceived “exceptional influx” (Consiglio dei Ministri, 2011a) of refugees and to respond by first of all providing so called “prima accoglienza” (first hosting), i.e., housing⁹¹.

While it moved fast, this was not a frictionless process. In fact, it came into harsh conflict with the different scales of territorial governance on that very piece of land, now worth volumes of Euros, as the financial void left by the US military was going to be filled by humanitarian, asylum, and emergency funds.

In the re-purposing of the US Navy housing complex as a humanitarian venue for asylum seekers, in fact, the income arising from that piece of land was not just the rent (to the owner), the income tax (to the municipality—see later in this chapter for how this prospective income was taken away and then refunded), and the overall business arising from thousands of people inhabiting the site (to the local economy). As a processing center for asylum seekers—and not just any center but one opened under a “state of emergency on the national territory” to confront an “exceptional influx” and one that the national government wanted to flaunt as the “Italian” best practice in humanitarian hosting—the Mineo village could attract funds for humanitarian, securitarian, and defense purposes.⁹²

⁹¹ “Prima accoglienza” would also legally include other fundamental services to protect asylum seekers’ rights but in the Italian “North Africa Emergency” it mainly consisted in housing and feeding people—often in very minimal ways, e.g. housing refugees in tent camps and feeding them rotten food.

⁹² Under a regime of emergency funds are allocated with less scrutiny and drawing from other resources that are not specific to immigration and refugee issues.

Let me account for some of these frictions, which speak to the fact that this chapter's focus is frictions between different scales of territorial governance. On February 15, 2011, the mayor of Mineo is serving in his private citizen's job at the Catania hospital. He is notified at 10am of a traffic block ordered by the Mineo Prefecture⁹³ to grant the security of the unannounced but incumbent visit of the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Interior Minister Maroni to the Residence degli Aranci, soon to be renamed Villaggio della Solidarieta' (Solidarity Village), reflecting national authorities' decision on the site after their visit.

When the mayor reaches the housing complex that day, he is prevented access by security—his “own” municipal police, enforcing national security over local authority. According to the mayor's story, it is during that morning's meeting—which the Mayor managed to attend clandestinely, using local wisdom over national authority—that he first hears about the possibility of a refugee center in “his” jurisdiction, as he put it (interview, December 2011). The incognito mayor reported the following about that morning's meeting between the highest authorities of the Italian government and the residence's property:

Berlusconi said that there will be a “biblical exodus” [sic] [from North African countries to Italy] and said he wanted to launch a pilot project to show the European Union how Italy hosts poor people [sic].⁹⁴

⁹³ The Prefecture is the representative of the national government at the local level, with enforcement purposes.

⁹⁴ This uncanny *gaffe* makes the statement sadly realistic: “biblical exodus” is an expression that often got mobilized in the context of this North Africa Emergency, where intra-African migrants are bundled up in such a historically inaccurate qualifier. Likewise, the confusion between refugees and economic migrants is common currency in Italian public debate.

The representatives of the Pizzarotti Group at the meeting embraced the governmental plan—which grants payment of the rent—and even scaled up the structure’s capacity, allegedly suggesting, according to the mayor, that if with the US Navy the village hosted 1,200 people, it could actually host up to even 5,000 migrants [sic] (interview, December 2011). According to the mayor, that morning’s deal closed on a capacity of 6,000 people—the structure is estimated to have a 2,000 people capacity maximum (Camera dei Deputati, 2014). Thus, the Italian entrepreneur company was returned its income of 6 million Euros a year (Camera dei Deputati, 2014) and the Italian government gained a “five-star hotel for refugees” as the EU commissioner for human rights put it after a short visit (which clearly included the site’s infrastructure but did not engage with how refugees were managed in this seemingly “five-star” refugee center—see next section).

The Mineo municipality has been the missing actor in negotiations about the use of this site as a refugee center though the site is within its jurisdiction. The way the municipality lost and then regained its share in this refugee business is indicative of the contested politics that characterize the territorialization of vulnerability and refugee economies. As the mayor put it:

It is a matter of equilibrium. Mineo has about 5,000 residents. You can’t allocate the same number of refugees here. There won’t be any chance of integration. (interview, December 2011)

The creation of a mega-processing center in a remote countryside outpost on the outskirts of a little town on the island of Sicily is certainly part of a

migration management strategy, where spectacles of invasion (Cutitta, 2014; DeGenova, 2013c; Sicurba, 2009; Sossi 2006) are produced by spatially fixing arriving migrants to a highly mediatizable space, be it the residential complex of the Mineo camp or the “little tiny island” of Lampedusa in the middle of the central Mediterranean. These highly mediatizable spatial fixes have long been the supporting icons for public discourse about migrants’ invasion in Italy, for soliciting a public sentiment of threat in relation to migration, and for supporting emergency policy-frameworks about migrations.

The Mineo camp was often made the icon of the Italian “North Africa Emergency” in news reportage on Italian TV. In particular, it was one of the key images associated with news updates on the distribution of refugees in the Italian territory. This is particularly interesting since the Mineo camp is the exception to the rule⁹⁵ applied to the Italian territory, yet it kept serving as its media icon. As a matter of fact, while the national plan for refugees’ distribution adopted the vaccination logic I illustrated above, distilling the refugee-disease in small doses and controlled cycles across the territory of the Italian peninsula, the distribution logic applied at Mineo was rather different: refugees were sent there en masse from the island of Lampedusa and even from other refugee centers.⁹⁶ This indicates a differential distribution of vulnerability across the Italian territory where

⁹⁵ The CARA Mineo is the exception in the exception. As a matter of fact it was the only Italian North Africa emergency venue not to be managed by the Civil Protection but by the Catania Province.

⁹⁶ Another Mineo exception: it did not host “North Africa Emergency” refugees only, but also refugees from other Italian centers who were transferred there during the center’s the first year, disrupting the integration processes that had already been established for these refugees elsewhere.

the remote municipality of Mineo is made the target of a governmentally mandated invasion, which is exactly what the governmental plan tries to prevent elsewhere in Italy.

The Mineo mayor tried to advocate use of the very same scaling logic that the government applies to the rest of the Italian territory for land under his jurisdiction, objecting to the governmentally mandated invasion of Mineo by competent authorities representing the regional and the national territoriality over Mineo's municipality.⁹⁷ And Mineo's territorial vulnerability is at the center of the mayor's arguments, which underline how an already struggling economy of 5,000 inhabitants cannot possibly "absorb," as he put it (interview, December 2011), large numbers of refugees.

When the regional and national governments ignored the mayor's opposition, the mayor then resorted to his own territorial power, i.e., land-use regulations. At the land register, the mayor informed national and regional authorities that the housing complex is filed as a military complex with the denomination of "NATO village":⁹⁸ should the national government decide on a use other than a military one for this piece of land, the mayor states, a variance approval would be needed. With this move the mayor reasserts his sovereignty over this piece of land under his jurisdiction.

⁹⁷ These are: the Region's President—the "soggetto attuatore" for Mineo, another exception in the exception—and the Catania Prefect, i.e., the institution in charge of Mineo CARRA and the representative of the national government in the province of Catania, where Mineo is located.

⁹⁸ The housing complex was built with the US Navy in mind.

The many Italian scales of territoriality, while producing multiple and often contrasting regulatory frameworks, are however hierarchically rigid. So at the national level, the reply to the mayor's reassertion of sovereignty is an even harsher and this time irrevocable sovereign act, i.e., eminent domain for humanitarian purposes. With this executive act, the land whereon the housing complex sits becomes the jurisdiction of the national government, overruling the mayor's power. With this national appropriation the property tax to be paid to the Mineo municipality is also canceled, since the site will now be used for humanitarian rather than commercial purposes.⁹⁹

But "in the end we were all awarded our token," reports Mayor Castania at the end of our interview. In the end, this national act of sovereign territoriality also paid back at the local level, on the territory that seemed initially sacrificed to national interest. For Mineo, the "token" the national government ended up allocating amounted to about 500,000 Euro: quite a gain in comparison with the property tax loss—estimated by Mayor Castania as 70,000 Euros a year and amounting to a total of 210,000 Euros in the unconfirmed hypothesis that the city lost the property tax for the entire duration of the so-called North Africa Emergency. The token was dispersed by the Italian government to the Mineo municipality in 2012-13 to pay for the construction of a video-surveillance system

⁹⁹ The story about the housing complex property tax is one of the mysteries yet to be uncovered that compose the refugee economies of the CARA Mineo, which both the former mayor and the Prefect suggested would be worth a parliamentary interrogation.

(37 cameras in the municipality of Mineo, for a total of 349,000 Euros) and a sports center, which the mayor assessed at about 300,000 Euros.¹⁰⁰

These funds for Mineo are part of a larger allocation for a host of 14 municipalities (including Mineo) in the vicinity of the center, which the central government compensated for carrying the burden of refugees' presence. The money was drawn from the national security fund "PON Sicurezza" (Ministero Interno 2007 – Obiettivo Operativo 1.1, article 13,) that intends to reinforce the security of Italian municipalities, funding surveillance technologies systems and strengthening police activities—in other words, a funding line for fencing up the national territory against migrants and refugees. On March 20, 2011, the Prefecture of Catania and the mayors of the municipalities in the center's premises—so the national and the local scales of governance—signed a "Security Pact" to improve the security of the area,¹⁰¹ prioritizing immigration as a source of threat (Comune Mineo 2011). The Pact provides for a fast track ("procedura agevolata") and priority line ("diritto di priorita") for the adjudication of PON Sicurezza funds for the signatories of the Security Plan. What this means in concrete terms is that, in the context of a national call for applications to this funding line, the municipalities in the vicinity of the Mineo camp will be favored over other national applicants.

¹⁰⁰ A piece of data from an interview; not confirmed in any public document I could research.

¹⁰¹ Catania, Caltagirone, Castel di Juidica, Grammichele, Licodia Eubea, Mazzarrone, Militello Val di Catania, Mineo, Mrabella Imbaccari, Raddusa, Ramacca, San Cono, San Michele di Ganzaria, Scordia, Vizzini.

The site and the premises of the Italian government's border spectacle—or, in other words, the territorialized externalities of such spectacle—all got their share of refugee economies. In the face of the governmentally produced vulnerabilization of the Calatino territory with the implantation of a mega-center for refugees (versus the option of refugees' dispersal across the Sicilian territory), these municipalities ended up benefiting from the extraction of value that refugees' presence allowed.

3.4.2 The Humanitarian Business and the National Economy

As I revise this chapter (December 2014), the judiciary inquiry “Mondo di Mezzo” (Land In-Between) is unearthing the scale and the workings of the Italian humanitarian business that I have begun to describe above, focusing on its territoriality. The inquiry shows that migration management is one of the strongest and most prolific assets of the national economy. In the wire-tapped words of one of the people arrested as responsible for the mafia business behind migration:

Do you have any idea how much I make on these immigrants? Drug trafficking is less profitable. (Salvatore Buzzi, wire-tapping, Tribunale di Roma 2014)

An immense amount of money, indeed, if one considers that the underestimates of the drug industry's contribution to the Italian economy amount to 15.5 million Euros a year, i.e. 0.9% of the Italian gross domestic product.

Based on wire-tapped accounts, the migration industry amounted to 40 million Euros in 2013. Migrants and refugees have been incorporated as assets of revenue in the Italian economy. In this section I document this economic incorporation as it pertains to refugees and as it works through refugee management, focusing in particular on the daily practices of value extraction that I observed at the Mineo camp.

The deep-rooted and systemic connection between mafia, politics, and business in Italy is documented by decades of judicial activity—“Mondo di Mezzo” is only the last episode of this judicial activity. In interviews with migrant activists working on the Mineo camp (and, to my surprise, even with a representative of the Catania Prefecture), I often registered bitter comments about the lack of controls on how money was spent at Mineo. Interviewees protested that the government never allowed a customary monitoring system to check on the implementation stage of the “North Africa Emergency,” despite recurrent requests.

During my fieldwork at the Mineo camp, I observed several practices which would have in fact raised the concerns of a monitoring system, from sheer illegality to nuanced irregularity. Let me provide some examples of these institutional practices of value extraction from the refugee camp of Mineo before moving to document how they relate to a larger national economy—and hence

were allowed and actually protected by the national government—as the “Mondo di Mezzo” inquiry has extensively documented.¹⁰²

One income opportunity in managing refugees at Mineo deals with the housing complex’s capacity.¹⁰³ The contract for using the site as a refugee center fixes the site’s capacity at a maximum of 2,000 people (Camera dei Deputati, 2014). However, the number of people hosted there since the opening of the Villaggio della Solidarieta’ was most often close to 4,000 (Camera dei Deputati, 2014). At 45 Euros a day per refugee, paid by the Italian government to the consortia¹⁰⁴ managing the Mineo camp and with no economy-of-scale planning of any sort, it is easy to understand how boosting up occupants’ numbers meant income for the managers of the camp. It surely meant big volumes of income if one looks at the meager and low-quality services that camp managers offered to refugees out of that governmental payment (see, for instance, the next section on food and lack of other services).

Moreover, a phenomenon of double dipping was at play at Mineo, at least until my last visit there in 2013, in relation to the housing complex’s occupancy.

¹⁰² News about this national judiciary process came as I was revising this chapter for submission to my Adviser, Dr. David Perry. On the one hand, the judiciary inquiry offers evidence to sanction the framework I have been developing over the course of these past three years of fieldwork and archival research related to Mineo, i.e. a national practice of predatory extraction from refugees’ economies. On the other hand, the scale of the predatory practices the judiciary inquiry documents casts the one I am accounting for as seemingly irrelevant in relation to the much bigger abuses and volumes documented there. I decided to hold on to the interpretative framework developed here and to use my fieldwork evidence as a synecdoche of a larger problem, the one recently unfolded by the inquiry. I plan to further my engagement with the judiciary process as part of my postdoctoral research.

¹⁰³ This issue was allegedly already at the center of the transition from US Navy complex to refugee center, as the former mayor suggested in our interview.

¹⁰⁴ The Sisifo Consortium first and the Coop later.

Records of presence were inflated to profit on presence, i.e., to produce a constantly high governmental per diem allocation to the camp even in the face of decreasing arrivals of asylum seekers and/or close to the termination of the so-called “North Africa Emergency” and its funding lines. Such double dipping was performed in several ways, e.g. maintaining status refugees¹⁰⁵ as residents despite the obligation to provide for their safe exit from the center (interviews, 2011 and 2012); delaying to report to the government the voluntary departure from the center of those asylum seekers who preferred to give up this Italian “protection” in a deserted place to go look for work in urban areas; or allowing intermittent presences of those who had their base at the center but left for periods of time to go elsewhere, without reporting absences to the governmental unit paying the per diem.

The extractive logic on refugees’ economies at Mineo camp goes on further to target asylum seekers more directly, investing the daily contribution for personal expenses that camp managers should pay out of the 45 Euro per diem they receive from the government, i.e., a stipend of 3.5 Euros a day per refugee.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Rejected refugees could also be included, but since most of them may filed a petition (or manifested the intention to do so) and hence gained a legal right to extend their stay at the center, I am not listing them here.

¹⁰⁶ The governmental stipend for personal expenses (3.50 euros a day), started to be distributed only in October 2011 with no retroactive compensation for the previous seven months.

As documented elsewhere (Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013, 2011), the sum was dispersed weekly in the form of a credit¹⁰⁷ charged to the camp residents' identification card. This credit can only be spent in the store inside the camp. The store offers only a very small range of products, which refugees are forced to resell on the black market if they want to cash their credit, causing of course a loss of value (Garelli and Tazzioli 2013: 1010). The range of products speaks of an uncanny assessment of refugees' needs: Marlboro cigarettes—which actually end up being the most profitable source of cash; Telecom calling cards that are not convenient for refugees' cell phones;¹⁰⁸ food vouchers to shop at local grocery stores;¹⁰⁹ and tax stamps that legalize the passport released to status refugee within the Italian bureaucracy system.

The passport tax stamp is an important component of this extractive economy that profits on refugees' presence. The status refugees I talked with at Mineo told me they were still residing at the camp (despite having received the proper documentation to reside legally in Italy as refugees) while trying to collect

¹⁰⁷ This provision changed in 2012, when food vouchers were added to the pocket money options (dispersed by the Milanese Edenred business). See: <http://www.ilsettemezzomagazine.it/le-tante-verita-del-cara-di-mineo/> (last accessed, November 2014). The director of the center explained this decision in security issues, i.e., having loads of cash arriving at the camp weekly to pay stipends would pose security threats. What's interesting though is that again it is refugees who are penalized by such territorialized security concerns.

¹⁰⁸ The Telecom Welcome Card offers very limited access to the cheap contracts that all asylum seekers I met had, i.e., Wind contracts. Example: "X: I'll give you an example with a 5 euros Wind phone card I can talk with Ghana for 23-24 minutes; with the Telecom one only 8 minutes." (Interview, December 2011)

¹⁰⁹ This is clearly the most helpful of the items. However it was only introduced after several protests on the poor quality of the food and episodes of food poisoning at the camp.

70 Euros to pay for their passport's stamps.¹¹⁰ Since consists of the laborious transactions with their daily stipends detailed above, it probably takes them months¹¹¹ to collect the sum. This time lag, in turn, means extending each of their per diem incomes for the camp's management cooperative. The stamp duty charge contributes to the temporal and financial captivity of asylum seekers and to the "enduring liminality" (Ramadan 2013a: 67, 72) that, in this case, the Italian government—and more generally the refugee management regime—imposes on them. In fact, the 70 Euro fee for a refugee passport is an embedded revenue that the government extracts from refugees within the bureaucracy of regularization.¹¹²

The camp's management defended their convoluted credit system for refugees' stipends with the argument of security: having cash at the camp and having exchanges of cash between the management and the "guests"—as he put it—is dangerous (interview, December 2011). The judiciary inquiry may shed some light on the value such protection (from the danger of having cash at the camp) resulted in for the camp's management—data about Mineo-specific crimes is currently starting to emerge. In what follows, I document how the funds directed to manage the Mineo camp did not result in services for refugees, while

¹¹⁰ Costs for processing fees add up, i.e., 35 Euros as a postal fee, bringing the cost for one passport up to 105.16EUR.

¹¹¹ In December 2011, the following rates applied: Marlboro cigarettes resold at 2.50–3 euros (loss: 2.40– 1.90 euros), calling cards resold at 2 euros (3 euros loss).

¹¹² It is important to underline that this financial penalization of refugees at the moment of regularization was overcome by some cooperatives in other centers by providing the funds for refugees to pay the fee out of their operating funds (e.g. Dimora di Adamo, Reggio Emilia, interview December 2011).

of course being cashed in on by the tertiary-sector “migration industry” (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Soresen 2013, Hernandez-Leon 2005) running the camp.

3.4.3 Refugee Economies: Follow the Money

Beneficiaries of the so-called “North Africa Emergency” funding lines are to be found not only in the Italian third sector or in the local public sector of Mineo and its surroundings, but also at the very heart of the domains of Italian defense and military. In a special audit at the Senate, the head of National Civil Protection points to the many different uses that were made of the 1.2 billion Euros allocated for the “North Africa Emergency”:

[The government] allocated 797,487,063 Euros in 2011 and 495 million in 2012, reaching a bit more than 1.2 billion Euros. In order to understand this sum, however, we need to break it apart because only a scarce 600 million Euros have been devoted to [refugees’] assistance and hosting; the rest was used by the Government in relation to other voices like, for instance, to fund agreements with Tunisia and Libya, to pay for the military forces deployed, and as a contribution to the Ministry of the Interior. (Camera dei Senatori 2012, emphasis added)¹¹³

In this statement the head of Civil Protection decries the securitarian and military use of the “humanitarian” funds allocated for the “North Africa Emergency.” Even his 50% assessment is actually an underestimate since it does not include the budget allocated for the closing stage of the “North Africa Emergency” in 2013:

¹¹³ The figures are actually even bigger if one adds the funds that were subsequently allocated to “close” the Italian “North Africa Emergency.” The association and research center Lunaria documents the following allocations in relation to closing the state of humanitarian emergency issued in Italy in 2011: data from report.

an extra 1.5 billion Euros, about 60% of which was devoted to border-work operations, preventative frontier policy schemes, and detention (Lunaria, 2013: 93). These figures speak of the territorialization of vulnerability at stake in this situation, when more than 50% of the vast resources¹¹⁴ Italy mobilized to confront the “humanitarian emergency” was actually deployed in border-work operations.

This exercise in “following the money” allocated under the rubric of the “North Africa Emergency” helps situate the study of the Mineo camp within the context the Italian management model for the refugee crisis in 2011-13. So far, I have documented the value extraction that applied to the humanitarian funds of the “North Africa Emergency.” I approached this value extraction spatially: tracing the territoriality that underpins this governing model, following the spatial outcomes and the re-routings that were made of these humanitarian funds at the camp, in its vicinity, on the national territory and even abroad.

With this context in mind, I want to move back inside the refugee camp of Mineo in order to “follow the money” of the “North Africa Emergency” to document how it was spent and, most importantly, not spent. I’ll start with the latter. The camp’s management did not allocate any resources to securing a safe transition into Italian society for status refugees, which is technically called “seconda accoglienza” (second hosting) and a fundamental step toward integration for those whom Italy recognizes as in need of protection and takes under its statist

¹¹⁴ As many critics underlined, the financial deploy is made bigger by the fact that the so-called “North Africa Emergency” mobilized special lines of intervention, not relying on the already existing structures and modes of operations (Giovannetti, 2013: p. 14).

care.¹¹⁵ Upon being recognized as entitled to international protection, refugees were simply driven to the city of Catania to regularize their passport. At the time of my fieldwork visits in 2011 and 2012, no support was offered to refugees by the camp management to find a home or a job (not to mention psychological or legal counseling or counseling of other types), in derogation with the indications¹¹⁶ of the “Italian Refugee Central Service” and with the commonsense logic of refugee management.

I first learned about the lack of transitional services from refugees themselves who, when I visited the camp the first time, had all sort of questions for me about their options: Could they move to another European country with that refugee passport? How much was a train ticket to Rome? Could I help them get in touch with someone in Torino? Where could they sleep once out of the camp and before finding a job to pay rent? How could they find a job in Italy “if an Italian like you had to move to Chicago?” (interviews, December 2012). When I asked the camp management about this lack of services, I learned that support for transitioning into Italian society was not part of their contract (“contratto di comodato”), i.e., none of the 45 Euros per day per refugee that they received were meant to facilitate integration. When I kept pushing the issue, I was finally cut short by an irritated comment:

¹¹⁵ Towards the end of the so-called North Africa Emergency—and in coincidence with the center’s promotional campaign “FactsNoWords”—a job center was instituted to help refugees draft their CVs.

¹¹⁶ The Italian Central Service for Refugees, while excluded from managing the so-called “North Africa Emergency,” was however part of the advisory board for it.

You shouldn't worry about this. They have their personal networks and their national communities spread all across Italy. (interview, December 2012)

It has often been noted that the so-called "North Africa Emergency" ended up providing non-professional assistance to refugees by putting in charge, as managing units for refugee centers, associations that had no specific competence in asylum issues (Giovannetti, 2013: 14-15). The above statement by a senior manager at the Mineo camp is a testimony to this de-professionalization of refugee assistance, when it suggests that integration in the country of refuge should be facilitated by the national communities these refugees run away from. The fact that refugees often have to resort to their national communities for support when in Italy—as the activists Rete Antirazzista catanese also confirmed (interview, January 2012)—is only a dysfunctional outcome of this managerial logic.

One of the women I interviewed several times during my visits to the camp was always very careful in making sure that our conversations were private. She was afraid about possible retaliations from her fellow displaced compatriots, and worried that the reason she could not go back to her country of birth (having married across the rigid caste system of her country) could also result in problems with her national community here in Italy.

She did, however, put me in touch with another woman she became friends with after sharing the experience of miscarriage at the camp. In both cases the miscarriage happened after they had received medical treatment at the

camp's medical unit where they reported to have gone for a headache or food poisoning and received a shot which, they believe, caused a medically induced miscarriage they did not consent to. They found nobody to listen to their story at the camp. My own efforts to talk with the medical staff at the camp and to collect stories of other women whom, according my two interviewees, had similar experiences similarly failed.

Reports of the Mineo camp being used as a laboratory for experimenting drugs have sadly characterized the life of the site without ever resulting in a judiciary investigation. For instance, in March 2014, 4,000 typhoid fever vaccinations were administered on the entire camp's population at no cost to the management, since the doses were shipped to the camp free of charge by the European pharmaceutical group Sanofi Pasteur MSD (which holds a monopoly on the vaccine business in Europe). While mass vaccination of this type has proven to be medically inefficient, it nonetheless resonates with the history of many other camps in the history of Europe where Jewish or Roma people were the target of similar treatments. A few months earlier, in December 2013, a news agency's video revealed a group of migrants being held naked in the courtyard of the hosting center at Lampedusa and being sprayed with disinfectant. During the so-called "North Africa Emergency," the Mineo camp was a 4 million Euros a month business for the company managing the camp¹¹⁷ when the refugee

¹¹⁷ Not to mention the spin-off economy which I documented above, the commercial benefit for local stores, and the employment opportunities for Italian residents and businesses (the people employed permanently at the camp and many more doing business with the camp, from the owner of the housing complex—Pizzarotti SpA from

presence was boosted to 4,000 despite the fact that the governmental contract was for only 2,000. This chapter maps the routing and re-routing of this “humanitarian capital,” focusing both on its routing inside the camps and the re-routings outside of it. Migration “routes” are a continuously growing area of epistemic and governmental investment in the discipline of migration and its expanding governmentalization (Geiger and Pecaud, 2013; Garelli and Tazzioli, 2013; De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles, 2014).¹¹⁸ Instead, in this section, “routes” are the methodological tool that I deploy to study refugees’ economies: their from-to direction of capitalization; their circuits of value extraction; and the destination of these economies—who they benefit and where the benefit lands. My study is by no means exhaustive—such overarching engagement is an important task to come, especially in light of the “Land In-Between” judiciary inquiry, beginning in earnest when all of its documents are accessible. Here I develop a spatial approach to the study of refugee economies and call attention to the geographies of value extraction that are enlisted through Mineo camp—both at the camp and “by means of” the camp. In the concluding section, I try to work toward a political articulation of this approach.

Parma—to the food stamps company from Milan, and the local business providing food, gardening, security, and other services).

¹¹⁸ I mean “discipline” exactly as the nexus of these two practices, i.e. as the governmentalization of knowledge production about migration where the notion of “routes” plays an important component.

3.5 Epilogue: Predatory Integration Through the Camp

This chapter has mapped the integration of the Mineo refugee camp in the Italian economy, documenting how refugee flows are capitalized on in Italy through a series of predatory practices that further vulnerabilize refugees while producing profits for their host communities. I proposed the notion of “value extraction” to describe one of the functions of the refugee camp as a site of territorialized financial speculation, where profits are dug out of the space of the camp to benefit the land of refuge more than refugees and where funds for hosting refugees are turned into income for local territories. I documented how the refugee camp became a technology for extracting value and repurposing funds looking at a series of spatial processes and territorial sovereignties: property tax and land value; eminent domain and jurisdiction; hosting capacity and overcrowding; food delivery and tender fraud; compensatory benefits and scales of governance.

Against the background of growing forced-displacement, scholars have been discussing ways to re-think the humanitarian regime and the provision of international protection. This chapter argues that “refugee management” has already been radically restructured in Italy becoming a “new frontier of capital” (Fisher & Downey 2006; Mezzadra & Neilson 2015: 9). In other words, a humanitarian enterprise has long been established in Italy, where business activities, mafia maneuvering, and political consent heavily restructured the refugee hosting sector at the center of this chapter. Empirically, I documented

how the Italian economy, local territories, and even international interests become beneficiaries of aid and how the refugee camp is the space through which such appropriations and re-routings of resources become possible. Theoretically, I identify the notions of “crisis” and “vulnerability” as the discursive terrains whereon the redirection of humanitarian funds is produced, building on the permutation of the address—where the humanitarian crisis of refugees displaced by the Libyan war is turned into the crisis of Italy receiving them; where the juridical subjectivity of vulnerability in reference to asylum seekers is territorialized and redirected toward the receiving land. In this context the refugee camp is the operator of the differential inclusion and predatory appropriation of refugees’ economies into the national order of governing profit.

Recently, spatial approaches to the study of refugee camps have been providing empirically rich and theoretically solid arguments against the analytic of “exception” that, loosely building on Giorgio Agamben’s work (Agamben 1995), has been dominating refugee studies for the past ten years. Taking this dominant discourse as its foil, this emerging spatial engagement with refugee camps instead counters that camps are to be seen as urban spaces (Agier 2002; Malkki 1995; Grbac 2013; Ramadan 2013b), as sites of urbanization through informality (based on Roy and AlSayyad, 2004), and as sites of political struggle and rights-claiming (Sigona, 2015; Grbac, 2013; Puggioni, 2013; Ramadan, 2013b; Redclift, 2013; Sanyal, 2012; Rygiel, 2011; Andrijasevic, 2010; Diken and Lausten, 2005; Walters, 2002; Bauman, 2004; Boano and Floris, 2005; Isin and Rygiel, 2007).

In this concluding section I want to highlight how my analysis so far has contributed to this conversation and indicate a political articulation of such a contribution.

Mobility is a pursued opportunity of value extraction from the fabric of the city as urban scholars engaged in the study of real estate obsolescence (see in particular: Weber, 2002), gentrification, and the urban economies of diaspora have demonstrated. This chapter has documented how the camp of Mineo is an integral part of this urban economy of value extraction, where predatory practices of profit-making are woven to the Sicilian local context as well as to the Italian national economy and politics. In this sense, I argue, refugee economies are integrated as full-fledged contributors in the Italian system where refugees' presence is profited from while their "presencing" (Cintron, 2013)—as bearer of rights at the camp and outside the camp—is dismissed. This, I argue, is the struggle-line that stands as political terrain for mobilization.

On Saturday, December 13, 2014, the "Right to the City Network" took it to the streets in Rome to protest against the austerity-politics-mafia nexus that had been building illegal profits through the economic crisis and was finally revealed by the judiciary inquiries "Mafia Capital" and "World In-Between."¹¹⁹ The closing paragraph of the flyer that launched the protest reads:

Right to the city: the real urban decay is the existential precarity they [the powers at the center of the judiciary inquiry] want to subject us to.

¹¹⁹ "Capital Rome" is the larger judiciary inquiry on the stratified corruption system that invests trash collection, municipal services, and immigration and refugee centers.

Refugees at the camp of Mineo have consistently and vocally organized against this “urban decay” way of managing their presence in Italy and against the further precaritization of their existential condition that they found at the camp. The judicial inquiry “Land In-Between,” I argue, opens a political terrain for these right-to-the-city claims to become part of institutional politics or, at least, public discourse. My next engagement with the Mineo camp—as a post-doctoral endeavor—will be a study of the avenues along which this could be pursued, building on the notion of “refugee economies” and looking at work conditions “at” and “through” the camp for temp workers employed as part of the camp management, mainly Sicilian youth; and for the agricultural day-laborer hired by Sicilian farmers from the refugee population at the camp.

(December 2014)

CHAPTER 4
A MEDITERRANEAN NEIGHBORHOOD?
POLICY CIRCULATION AND BORDER STRUGGLES ACROSS SHORES

4.1 Introduction

So far the Mediterranean has been the background of my inquiry as a site for border patrolling activities, migrant crossings, and border deaths. In this chapter, it takes center stage as a migration *neighborhood*, i.e., a space of mobility that is governed and contested, built on a neighborhood imaginary. What does it mean to enlist the urban unit of cohabitation on a transnational scale and in relation to the international mobility of migrants and refugees? What does the “neighborhood” framework encompass both as a planning instrument to govern mobility and as an activist vision to advocate for the rights of people on the move? And, particularly, what is the spatial politics enlisted in this governmental and advocacy “neighbor-ing” of the Mediterranean? These are the questions at the center of this chapter. I focus on neighboring initiatives—policy and advocacy initiatives—which target the Mediterranean route of migration from Tunisia to the EU,¹²⁰ looking at the Mobility Partnership that was signed between the EU and

¹²⁰ While the space of mobility between Tunisia and the EU is complex and multi-dimensional, here I am just interested in migrants and refugees’ mobility by sea.

Tunisia in March of 2014 as part of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), with two aims.

The first aim is to map the routes through which migrations are channeled via such a neighborhood governmentalization of a space of mobility, i.e.: how is the crossing of migrants and refugees regulated under the predication of a neighborhood that spans the Mediterranean from Tunisia to the EU? What space does this foreign-policy-driven neighborhood enact for migrants and refugees? I am interested in unpacking the abstract space¹²¹ of the planned neighborhood mandated through the Partnership: how is access regulated through a neighborhood design of the central Mediterranean space of mobility, and what type of neighborhood do these migration routes enact? In recent years, the policy conversation about migrations to the EU via the Mediterranean Sea has become increasingly regionalized, aligning with global convergence trends and building on the “migration management” turn promoted by think tanks and policy institutes (Betts, 2011; Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). Policy mobility and bilateral agreements are the building blocks of such a managerial turn in migration governance. In this chapter I am interested in unpacking how the Partnership routes¹²² migrants and refugees’ movements in the region.

¹²¹ Here I mean it philologically, referring to Lefebvre’s description of the planned spaces of policy frameworks; but also etymologically, in the sense of a space abstracted from its grounding.

¹²² While the notion of “routes” is naturalized in policy conversation, I use the term to build on the contributions of critical migration studies (e.g., Hess 2010), which point to the “production” of migratory routes in the interplay between people’s movements and mechanisms that control these movements. In particular, I refer to the channeling of migration through bureaucratization (e.g., visa requirements), preventative frontier

My second aim is to test if and how the “neighborhood”—both as political imagery and as the actual ENP policy packet—can contribute to enriching critical migration studies’ toolbox for thinking about migrants’ and refugees’ contested politics of mobility across the Mediterranean (De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles, 2014). What political epistemology and forms of intervention may arise from thinking about migrants’ and refugees’ struggles across the Mediterranean in the terms of the neighborhood and in neighboring terms? What does it mean to think about transnational migration in urban terms, enlisting the rich urban repertoire of claiming and appropriating space in the high echelons of international relations and geopolitics? In the present conjuncture, when the Mediterranean is the stage of a politics of death rooted on a radical essentialization of its shores—as cultural, political, and religious poles—can the imagery of the Mediterranean neighborhood be deployed as a political intervention? Can the urban political repertoire of claiming neighborhoods be deployed against the geopolitics of distance that produces the Mediterranean as the marine landmark of division across its shores? And finally: Can the regulatory framework of the Euro-Med Neighborhood be “put to use,” so to speak, to enlist migrants’ and refugees’ struggles within but against the governmental discipline of mobility?

With the aim and ambition of this chapter laid out, let me now contextualize the two neighborhoods that I am trying to bring to bear on one

operations (e.g., the externalization of border-work in third countries), and the streamlining of complex types of mobility into from-to movements—a streamlining that erases the complexity of intra-African migration, for instance, to portray migration flows as “invading” Europe from African countries.

another in my analysis—the one designed by policy, and the one envisioned by activists. The *neighborhood by policy* is the “Euro-Med Neighborhood” stemming from the EU Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and pertaining to the larger EU program of stabilizing the 16 countries at its doorstep¹²³ on the Eastern Bloc and on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. In such context, the notion of “neighborhood” stands for a very dense intersection of interests, where international relations, migration governance, security, and developmental aid come together. The “neighborhood” is, in fact, the planning technology aimed at binding countries in the EU vicinity into partnerships with the EU and producing policy and political convergence in exchange for economic investment¹²⁴—i.e., the EU offers privileged commercial partnerships in exchange for the neighbors’ policy and political alignment with the EU vision for the region.

This amounts to a refashioning of “neighborhood unit”: scaled up from the urban sphere and stretched across nations, regions, and macro-regions. A reconfiguration which nonetheless maintains the *neighborhood’s role as a planning instrument for stabilization*: in the European Policy Initiative such a role corresponds to binding neighboring countries to what scholars called the EU-rope (Jones, 2006; Bialasiewicz et al, 2013: 61-2). In this sense, the EU Neighborhood

¹²³ To date (June 2014), the countries that belong to the EU Neighborhoods (“Med” and “East”) are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. Under the ENP, the EU offers its neighbors a privileged relationship, building on a mutual commitment to values and principles.

¹²⁴ As many critics have underlined, this policy can be understood as a “partnership” only in the terms of a neo-colonial epistemology that builds the polarization of Mediterranean shores along gerundial lines (e.g., a “moderniz-*ing* South,” posited as attempting to catch up to the standard of modernity in Europe).

Policy represents a turn in the EU approach to international relations, where establishing a “ring of friends” at the doorstep of Europe becomes the tenet of EU security and where forms of “ethicalized governance” (Walters, 2006) become the instruments for the EU to extend its sovereignty and influence beyond its borders.

One of the central threats to EU security that the Euro-Med Neighborhood performs (Butler: 1997; Amoore, 2013: 7-12)¹²⁵ and is asked to govern is migration from third countries. Through this neighborly regionalization, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) is pushing for a cross-shore effort to “manage” migration flows and to “*discipline*” mobilities according to EU priorities (Gosh 2000; Geiger, 2014). This switch from blocking migration to establishing collaborations with sending countries to manage migrations meant a peak of €15 billion EU investment in the aftermath of the Arab Revolutions in the context of a “more for more” approach: more EU investments in exchange for “more” convergence towards EU political standards and vision for the region.¹²⁶ One of the Mediterranean neighborhood avenues I follow in this chapter targets one of such neighborhood border deal, i.e. the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership signed in March 2014.

But alongside this governmental framework of political stabilization of the Mediterranean (via neighborhood planning and neighbor friends), an activist

¹²⁵ Scholars in gender studies and critical security studies have amply demonstrated how risk is a performative structure that produces the threats it names.

¹²⁶ These include the restructuring of migration containment strategies, those that used to be in force under the dictatorships overthrown by the Arab Springs and that the EU was interested in re-instantiating.

framework of neighborhood contestation also emerged in relation to migration across the Mediterranean. On the migration activism front, neighborly imaginaries have been evoked to mobilize cross-shore solidarities and to organize migrant rights actions in this Mediterranean struggle-sit.¹²⁷ As a result, the Mediterranean has become the “hood” for the contested politics of mobility, in the double sense that Vicky Squire (2010) means for this expression: the stage for showing the conflicts that migration policies inscribe in the region and the battlefield for their open contestation, either through embodied struggles or through organized campaigns.

In bringing these two neighborhoods to bear on one another—the neighborhood by designed and implemented by policy and the neighborhood envisioned and enacted in advocacy—I am interested in understanding the spaces that are produced at this Mediterranean intersection of planning and activism, where the fantasy of a Mediterranean space becomes a flagship for regulating the movement of people across shores (migration management) and for claiming migrants’ right to freedom of movement across its shores (activism). Building on relational geography approaches to the study of neighborhoods (Martin, 2003; Pierce, J., Martin, and Murphy, 2011), I argue that it is at the contested intersection of planning and activism, of norms and contestations, of mandated neighborhoods and counter-acted ones that the regionalization

¹²⁷ On the anti-immigrant spectrum of the debate, public sentiment converged on the trope that has been part of city neighborhood epistemologies since the Chicago School, i.e. “invasion.” In urban studies, however, this very trope has been deployed against itself, and the neighborhood has become the geographic imagery and site of a democratization of access to public space.

processes underway in the Mediterranean acquire political salience, becoming legible and actionable.

The chapter opens by situating the Euro-Med neighborhood as an object of inquiry, presenting some methodological challenges and the approach I developed to confront them. It then moves to introduce the neighborhood design and vision that emerges from a specific policy initiative, the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership—an agreement for migration management signed within the institutional framework of the Euro-Med Neighborhood Initiative. The third episode of the chapter engages with an advocacy vision for the neighborhood that emerged in opposition to the Partnership and brought together a Coalition of NGOs and IGOs from across the Mediterranean. The chapter engages with a reflection on the circuits and politics of knowledge at stake in this Neighborhood production, mapping their workings but also attempting to operationalize their counter-use for migrant and refugee advocacy.

4.2 Notes on Methods

4.2.1 Spatial Exuberance and the Politics of Scale

A *spatial exuberance* characterizes the Euro-Med Neighborhood Project (ENP), both at a discursive level and on the terrain of implementation, presenting methodological challenges for critical scrutiny of this policy initiative. This

exuberance registers first of all on the spatial claim of the Euro-Mediterranean Neighborhood: a *neighborhood* spanning across the *Mediterranean Sea* as a unified policy *macro-region* and bridging the European Union regional bloc with the nation states on the Northern and Eastern Mediterranean shores, i.e. in Northern Africa and the Middle East. The “neighborhood,” the “Mediterranean,” the “macro-region” are all extremely unstable spatial constructs, and discussions about their boundaries and spatial production span across disciplines from urban studies, to postcolonial studies and geography. (Within the extensive literature that focuses on these constructs’ instabilities, see in geography: Agnew, 2013; Paasi, 2009; Silver, 1985; but see also, in postcolonial studies: Chambers 2008.)

Secondly, I title it “exuberance” because the EU project brings all these unstable spatial constructs together in one policy initiative, bundling different scales (urban, regional bloc, macro-region, etc.), spaces (the city, the region, the sea, etc.), and territorialities (the EU, nation states, borders, territorial and high waters, etc.). In other words, the ENP predicament rests on a spatial stretching, where the frontiers of policymaking’s geographic imagination reach a conceptual pastiche. The lexical exuberance of this initiative reverberates on its spatial productivity, resulting in a series of unstable assemblages of these various scalar, spatial, and territorial layers.

Spatial experimentation is now recognized as a key EU technology, particularly in regard to the crafting of the regional bloc’s role in international relations (Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones, and Minca, 2013: 61). However, with

the EuroMed Neighborhood initiative this EU *making of spaces* comes to a climax, raising important questions about this construct's spatiality and sovereignty. In terms of spatiality, for instance, the imaginary behind the ENP is so dense that it becomes conceptually blurred: is this a neighborhood across the sea, a liquid region, or a solid sea? In terms of sovereignty, these blurred boundaries have precise repercussions: does the Euro-Med Neighborhood represent a macro-region of Mediterranean partnership, EU rule over the Northern African and Middle East countries, or a Mediterranean policy region rooted in a Euro-centric blueprint? The Mediterranean of this ENP is a bundle of these spaces and imaginaries, which makes it a slippery construct for analytical engagement and a flexible instrument of governance.

Yet the growing body of literature about this policy initiative underplays this spatial complexity, reducing it to its institutional grand narrative—i.e., a policy macro-region spanning across the Mediterranean. In these accounts, the neighborhood disappears and the Mediterranean Sea features mainly as a historical referent. Thus, the spatial complexity enlisted by the Euro-Med Neighborhood Policy Initiative is streamlined into the abstract space (Levebvre, 1991) of the macro-region. The other two layers of this complex bundle are subsumed into this macro-regional account by its evocative title (Neighborhood) and historically contested area of geographic and/or cultural application (Mediterranean). This approach has certainly produced insightful engagement

with the territoriality at play in this project and particularly with the “*Euro-Med* appropriation” of the area, as I shall illustrate shortly.

However, the understanding of this spatial process—i.e., a regionalization process produced by neighbor-ing the Mediterranean shores—is somehow cut off at its planning and governmental predicament. In other words, the spatial productivity and the spatial conflicts that neighborhood planning and Mediterranean spaces bring about are overlooked for a focus on region-building solely. Such spatial analysis just in terms of the region is not only an incomplete account of a more complex process. It also supports and reinforces the governmental charting for the Mediterranean area and leaves its frictions out of the conversation, i.e., the frictions encountered in this geopolitical charting of the area and the re-arrangements they force.

Let me briefly illustrate the epistemological gain that derives from this focus on the ENP territoriality as a regional project (on the abstract space of the macro-region) before addressing its shortcomings and illustrating the approach that I propose to adopt instead. Political geographers have importantly unpacked the EU interests behind this Mediterranean partnership by bringing deep-rooted European fantasies about the Mediterranean to bear on this EU policy initiative of a Mediterranean neighborhood (e.g., Giccaria and Minca, 2011; Giaccaria, 2011; Jones, 2006). These accounts illustrate how the EU policy initiatives—Euro-Med as much as Euro-East—aim at Europeanizing¹²⁸ countries in the EU’s vicinity and

¹²⁸ This body of work has importantly situated the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in the context of the “Europeanization,” i.e., one of the “spatial strategies” through which

how the Neighborhood is the policy technology to implement the EU's "our size fits all" vision that, as Federica Bicchì (2006) observed, underpins the ENPI. The goal of the ENP, as Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles clearly put it, is "to generate space of political and economic alignment with the EU immediately outside its borders" (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles, 2012: 44). In this way, non-EU countries are brought into the EU orbit by policy in terms of both policy-making and political goals in the "abstract space" (Lefebvre, 1991) of a Euro-Med. In other words, in order to produce the Mediterranean as a macro-region under EU influence a *double-standardization* is implemented: policies are transferred and political convergence is mandated from the EU to the "neighbors."

But as we learn from policy studies, standards become socio-spatial processes only through friction. In the scholarship about the ENP, however, this contested and productive dimension gets lost for an exclusive focus on the normative side (i.e., the governmental plan to create a macro-region), resulting in the problematic erasure of both the "Mediterranean" and the "Neighborhood" components of the ENP territorial bundle. Let me briefly comment on the erasure

the EU has been projecting its sovereignty since the late 90s (e.g., Brenner, 1999; Clark and Jones, 2008). Through the ENP, the EU produces "European spaces" in other sovereign territories, a process which speaks to a "wider refashioning of its [the EU's] real and imagined role in the world" (Bialasiewicz et al., 2013: 61), enlists new assemblages of sovereignty and territory (e.g., "non-accession integration," see: Casas-Cortes, et al., 2013), and builds on a complex set of "macro-regional fantasies" (Bialasiewicz et al., 2013). In this macro-regional neighborhood context, Europeanization is "a method for...*shifting out* EU demands, norms, regulations and strategies" (Geiger, 2014: 226; see also: Lavenex 2006, Lavenex and Uçarer, 2002), and for creating "a European geopolitical project of extension of the EU order" (Jones, 2006: 427).

of the Mediterranean, before moving to that of the neighborhood that this chapter is more directly concerned with. Cultural and political geographers studying the ENP have looked at the Mediterranean as a contested historical referent, importantly unpacking the colonial legacy that looms over this project of regionalization and the politics of Mediterraneanist discourses. However, even from these conversations, an engagement with the space-making process unfolding *in* and *through* the Mediterranean Sea is missing. Or, to be more precise, it is at times posited as a research agenda—e.g., the recent calls for a new “thalassology” (Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones, and Minca 2013: 64) in Mediterranean Studies—or evoked as the site of a tension—e.g., between the openness of a seascape and the fencing up of a borderscape (ibid.)—but never actually embraced as an engagement with the Mediterranean spaces this policy initiative enlists (but see Mountz and Loyd, 2014 as an exception).

In addition, the “neighborhood” component of the ENP spatial bundle is dismissed in scholarly engagement with the Euro-Med Neighborhood. The neighborhood claim of the EU Neighborhood Policy Initiative is bluntly neutralized in its spatiality in the literature. The neighborhood, in fact, is treated as an evocative metaphor rather than as a spatial unit to study; it is glossed over as a rhetorical tool used to project partnership rather than as a spatial construct; finally, the neighborhood is treated as the *territorial marketing slogan to sell the macro-region*, rather than a layer of a complex space-in-the-making. I am not saying that all these things do not apply: the semantics of the neighborhood is

certainly enlisted with this promotional aim, and its imagery is certainly used as a marketized politics of affect, i.e., as branding. The EU is certainly interested in projecting neighborly imaginaries onto these “(semi)protectorates whose sovereignty is not denied but creatively constrained” (Zielonka, 2007). Moreover, this promotional use of the notion of neighborhood certainly pertains to the “geostrategy of proximity” (Cases-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles, 2012) that the EU is deploying to refashion its international relations in terms of ethicalized forms of governance and “rings of friends.” All these things are certainly true.

However, I propose to approach these neighborhood claims not simply from the angle from which they are enlisted (as policy slogans), but also from the spaces they intersect and conflict with. For instance, the EU projection of a frictionless space of partnership (the Euro-Med Neighborhood) is a governmental fantasy: an abstract space envisioned by institutional rule that responds to the political goal of stabilization. But neighborhoods are not simply technologies for political stabilization in the name of some community enlisted by policy. Neighborhoods are *contested spatial units for cohabitation*¹²⁹ *criss-crossed—if not held together—by tensions and conflicts*. As Rosalyn Deutsche put it:

Conflict is not something that befalls on originally, or potentially, harmonious urban space. Urban space is the product of conflict. (1996: 278)

¹²⁹ I use the word “cohabitation” in two ways: first, in reference to the social process of being in space; second, in reference to the ethics underpinning the condition of sharing space with others [I particularly refer here to Judith Butler’s recent work (2012) which, building on Hannah Arendt, reflects on antagonistic and un-chosen modes of cohabitation and the ethical obligations they entail, hence presenting a view on cohabitation that departs from the political tradition of communitarianism].

Building on this understanding, I argue for an engagement with urban studies' epistemology of the neighborhood in the conversation about the Euro-Med Neighborhood and the processes of regionalization in its name. Scholars who critically engaged with the ENP insist on the necessity to de-essentialize the notion of "region" to understand the rescaling of EU politics that is unfolding in the Mediterranean. This is an important indication, as regions—which have always been thought of as the archetypical units of geographical analysis—have recently been at the center of a methodological upheaval contesting their essentialization in public policy contexts (Derek, et al., 2009: 6341). Insights in this direction can be gained from the process of neighboring that the EU initiative claims for the Mediterranean region.

Within urban studies, neighborhoods are understood in the terms sketched above by the art and urban critic Rosalyn Deutsche, as unstable configurations spurred and enacted by tensions—e.g., the tension between planning and appropriating spaces of belonging, between norms and practices of membership, between mandating a neighborhood unit and "enacting" (Martin, 2003) a neighborhood politics. These tensions are the neighborhood's fabric, so to speak. Deborah Martin's important contribution to this conversation centers on this tension, underlining how *neighborhoods are "enacted" by political action*:

It is precisely through the struggles of people in places, and scholars seeking to understand them, that neighborhood retains much of its power as a concept and term. By conceptualizing neighborhood as a sociospatial imaginary that is defined and made coherent through cases of social action, it is possible to examine the particular times and circumstances in which specific neighborhoods are constructed. (370)

Building on this approach, my aim is to bring this “conflict,” in Deutsche’s words, or this “social action,” in Martin’s, to bear on the discussion about the EU program of macro-regionalization of the Mediterranean.

I call this section “The Politics of Scale” to underscore that, in the spatial exuberance that is at play in this project of Mediterranean macro-regionalization in the name of the neighborhood, my focus is on the *politics* that this scalar bundling sets in motion: not only the governmental politics of region-building, but also the politics that this Euro-Med planning encounters on the terrain as open contestation or spatial turbulence; not only the politics behind the Euro-Med policy transfer, but also and eminently the politics it is met with and produces en route and at landing. I argue that the *nexus* and its contested configurations (between the neighborhood planning, practices, and activism in the context of the process of the Euro-Med Neighborhood Initiative) should be brought to the center of the debate.

Such focus on the contested geographies of neighborhood speaks to the critique that Alison Mountz and Jenna M. Loyd address toward regionalist frames (2014). In their piece for the *Acme* special issue on the Mediterranean, Mountz and Loyd claim that a regional approach to the Mediterranean space “overlooks the daily lives” and the “spaces of struggles and political engagement of individuals” (176). Their recent work builds on the feminist geography claim that a shift in scale may help understand politics and power relations in granular ways

that counter dominant narratives. In studying the Mediterranean, Mountz and Loyd in fact shift their focus from the scale of the region to the body of migrants, importantly unpacking the “reified notion of the Mediterranean as a coherent regional borderland” that is embedded in regional approaches to migration management.

My approach to the ENP from the “ground” of the neighborhood—the social practices of mobility across it, its institutional script as well as its situated contestations—is meant as a tool for an analytical “persistence” on the terrain whereon this macro-regionalization process places its claim and eventually lands.

As technologies of government, macro-regions come from powerful epistemic communities, and their analytical fixes rely on well-oiled circulation channels. “Order” is one of these fixes: macro-regions, in fact, tend to be essentialized not only as supposedly “natural” spatial units, but especially and most prominently as synonyms of order or even as policy arrangements ‘performing’ order. This essentialization is certainly embedded in geopolitics as a discipline, which derives its legitimacy from the ordering and bordering analysis of international relations (Bialasiewicz et al, 2014: 62; Van Houtum and Boedeltje, 2011: 123; Scott, 2011: 149). However, as James Wesley Scott reminds us in his engagement with the European Neighborhood Process “from the ground up,” this “order” is more the claim of this ENP governmentality than its spatial outcome:

Stripped of its façade of political and/or ideological clarity, however, geopolitics is generally rather quite chaotic, fragmented and strategically incoherent. (Scott, 2011: 150)

Likewise, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) remind us that any macro-region is the result of “a contested and incomplete process,” which, they suggest, “cannot be understood in isolation from...migratory movements, labor mobilities, and border struggles.” My focus on the neighborhood layer of this Euro-Med Neighborhood bundle is exactly intended to pay attention to the “struggles” that criss-cross the “fragmented,” “contested and incomplete” process of regionalizing the Mediterranean in the name of the neighborhood and under a EU policy initiative.

4.2.2 The Productivity of a Mediterranean Nexus

To engage in the exploration of the spatial process¹³⁰ that has been producing the Euro-Med neighborhood means to confront a methodological challenge. How does one *hold on to spatial productivity* when an agonistic frame is mobilized, with its scripted heroes and antagonists? How can one analytically account for a process when the focus is placed on a neighborhood plan *and* its contestations, a neighborhood unit *and* its turbulence, a set of norms *and* their unruly outcomes? How does one move beyond the map of antagonists when trying to come to grips with the conflicts of a spatial process? Which analytical

¹³⁰ The spatial process at the nexus of neighborhood planning, advocacy, and crossing.

move allows one to focus on the spatial contested-ness of the process and account for its productivity?

When I call analytical attention to the frictions and contestations that the ENP macro-regional process encounters, I am not interested in developing a counter-narrative of the Euro-Med Neighborhood. The critical scrutiny I engage with is *not one of discrete opposites*, i.e. the governmental capture *versus* the resistances on the terrain. My aim is not to unpack and crystallize moments of tension; instead, I am interested in pursuing the spatial productivity that emerges from these tensions' articulation, their produced neighborhoods.

In other words, the analytical posture I mobilize is not concerned with the opposition of competing frames: power versus counter-power; grand-narrative versus small-narratives; the Fortress Europe of policies versus the cosmopolitan Europe of migrants and refugees; the Schengen borders fencing the EU up versus the “no border” claim of migration activists working in the region. What I am interested in teasing out is not an analysis by opposites: neighborhood by design versus neighborhood by practice, spatial planning versus space-based activism. Instead, I am interested in engaging the nexus of these opposites or, to put it in more rigorous analytical terms, to engage these opposite *at* their nexus. I want to understand how these poles are co-constitutive of the cross-shore *neighboring of the Mediterranean*.¹³¹

¹³¹ I am not denying that there are poles and antagonists. For instance: it is clear that the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) builds a fenced up neighborhood, in attempts to prevent access to people who, in ENP terms, would be called “unskilled” migrants. At the same time, migrants “enact” and practice the Mediterranean as their neighborhood by

In their study of EU externalization policies building on the European post-workerist's debate (e.g., Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013; Papadopolous, et. al, 2008), Maribel Casas-Cortes, Sebastian Cobarrubias, and John Pickles call for a methodological engagement that "*challenges the idea that control and resistance are two different moments occurring in response to each other*" (2014: 4, emphasis added). I operationalize this move beyond mobility policies and resistance by studying the *spacing* of the Euro-Med Neighborhood in terms of the production of "distance" and "proximity" for different groups of migrants and refugees. In particular, I ask: how are "distance" and "proximity" produced across shores in the name of neighboring the Mediterranean of migration? How do technologies mobilized to manage migration distance or bind the shores of this short stretch of sea? How is the proximity of Mediterranean shores promoted and how is their distancing contested in the name of the neighborhood? To what does a Euro-Mediterranean neighborhood anchored in mobility amount?

4.3 EU-Tunisia Neighborhood Routes

In this section, I look at the normative side of the regionalization of the Mediterranean as a neighborhood, focusing on the Mobility Partnership signed between the EU and Tunisia as part of the EU Neighborhood Policy and as a continuation of a deep-rooted cooperation between Tunisia and the EU

contesting these *Euro-Med* borders—and very often even succumbing in this contestation. So a radical antagonism is there. I am proposing to start but not stop there with the analysis of the Mobility Partnership signed between the EU and Tunisia.

(Dandashly, 2014: 8).¹³² Engaging the policy document and the politics that arose from it, I argue that the neighborhood is a technology for re-routing migrations and for producing Tunisia as a receiving country. In fact, the project of “neighboring the Mediterranean” comes to correspond to the project of channeling migration and refugee flows in certain directions (and not in others). The notion of “*route*” is at the center of my study: looking at the paths through and paths off the Mediterranean Sea that are produced by policy, my aim is to chart the predication of a Euro-Med neighborhood against its produced traversability.¹³³ “Routes” are the operational tool and the cartographic script that underpins migration management. As such, they tend to be essentialized as the landmarks of calamities on the move or as the tools to produce “orderly and well-managed” movements (IOM definition), or they tend to be romanticized as the horizon for migrants’ subjectivities to play, i.e. through survival and pirating of institutional routes-management initiatives. Here, instead, I propose to put the notion of routes at the center of a spatial interrogation and look at how migrants and refugees are being routed, re-routed, and stalled by spatial arrangements of “neighbor-ing” the Mediterranean shores.

¹³² Tunisia and the EU have been allies on economic issues for decades: in 1969 they signed a trade-based cooperation agreement which was eventually followed by a Privileged Partnership and a new European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan, both in 2012.

¹³³ In chapter Three (Schengen) I introduce this notion to suggest the everyday experience of crossing / being stalled in a space where the mobility is heavily governmentalized, either through bordered or border-less arrangements.

4.3.1 Policies on the Move, Migrants' Spatial Fixes, and the Democratic Transition

Upon the signing of the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership¹³⁴ on March 3, 2014, a polarization entered public discourse. On the one hand, a supporting narrative highlighted the policy's aim to improve mobility across the two Mediterranean shores; on the other hand, critics underlined its securitarian focus, which they contended simply re-branded the long-standing externalization of the EU border to Tunisia as a sort of enhanced migration management. For instance, Cecilia Malmström, the then EU Commissioner for Home Affairs who guided the Partnership process, stated in 2012:

This Mobility Partnership aims to facilitate the movement of people between the EU and Tunisia and to promote a common and responsible management of existing migratory flows.

In opposition to Malmström, the German activist group ProAsyl renamed this policy initiative the “Immobility Partnership” to underline that its aim is in fact “the immobilization of migrants” (ProAsyl, 2014: 11). So there are two polarizing interpretations of the policy's intentions: the promotion of more mobility on the one hand and the production of further immobility on the other.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Mobility partnerships are one of the key tenets of the “Global Approach to Migration and Mobility” (GAMM), the policy framework the EU formulated as a response to public outrage after Spanish authorities' brutal suppression of migrants' attempts to cross into Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish enclaves in Morocco, in August 2005.

¹³⁵ Let me give an example of these different interpretations. On the supporters' side, Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, stated: “This Mobility Partnership aims to facilitate the movement of people between the EU and Tunisia and to promote a common and responsible management of existing migratory flows.” (Source: <http://www.enpi-info.eu/medportal/news/latest/36347/EU-and-Tunisia-establish->

In this section I show that this Partnership works on both sides of this dichotomy, immobilizing migrants and refugees in Tunisia (both Tunisian migrants and third-country migrants and refugees) and keeping them away from Europe. In other words, the mobility that the Partnership legalizes across the Mediterranean is *not* mainly concerned with migration flows from Tunisia to the EU or the other way around. Instead, the Partnership's key aim is to *transform Tunisia into a receiving country*, a destination for migrants and asylum seekers. I illustrate this argument focusing on three of its provisions: "visa facilitation," "readmission agreement," and "asylum and international protection."

Methodologically, I bring counter-cartography approaches (Crampton and Krygier, 2006; Dalton and Mason Deese, 2012; Cobarrubias, 2009; Casas-Cortes et al, 2014) to bear on critical policy analysis, with the aim of charting the mobility and immobility routes this Partnership designs along the Tunisia- EU trajectory. When mobilizing a spatial analysis of the mobility routes and the neighborhood(s) this Partnership performs, I have two aims: first, I am interested in engaging with the discursive tenets of the Joint Declaration in order to unpack and move beyond its "policy boosterism" (McCann, 2013); second, I am searching for sites of political intervention for migrant and refugee advocacy within the institutional framework that this policy sets up.

Mobility-Partnership). On the other hand, the activists group ProAsyl issued a document on the impact of the ENP on third countries where the EU-Tunisia agreement is re-named "Immobility Partnership" to underline that "the model of mobility partnerships turns out to be a front for projects that in the main aim at the immobilization of migrants." (ProAsyl 2014: 11)

Building on interviews with activists and policymakers, on archival work on this policy piece as well as other EU Mobility Partnerships (most notably that between the EU and Morocco), and on interviews with migrants and refugees in Tunisia, I discuss avenues for advocating the rights of migrants and asylum seekers within the normative infrastructure of the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership but against its “fixes.”

4.3.2 Visa Facilitation: Whose Mobility?

The political stake of this Partnership is often represented through a geometrical reference to the notion of parallelism: the EU and Tunisia agree to facilitate certain paths across the Mediterranean neighborhood “in parallel with” the closing of others (Art 9; interviews with policymakers and activists, 2014). More precisely, the setting up of visa facilitations for short stays is tied to an agreement on deportations. The reference to parallel lines certainly contributes to build a semantics of partnership (e.g., a joint proceeding, a symmetry of positions). Yet the specifics of how this parallelism is conceived are not about reciprocity at all. They are instead embedded in what Jean-Pierre Cassarino calls “unbalanced reciprocities” (Cassarino, 2013)¹³⁶.

As a matter of fact, the two allegedly parallel tracks of Article 9 are about deportation of migrants from the EU to Tunisia and visa facilitations for some

¹³⁶ For instance, a citizen of an EU member state does not need a visa to go to Tunisia for a short stay, and it is very unlikely that Tunisia would deport a European citizen found to be irregularly present.

Tunisian citizens to travel to the EU. In other words, some are allowed to move to the EU along the path of visa facilitation, while (many) others are pushed out along the path of deportations to Tunisia.¹³⁷ The parallelism here refers more to the compensatory equilibrium of a political deal than to a purported equality of signing partners, i.e. the commitment on the EU's part to improve short-stay permits for some Tunisian citizens is *contingent on* Tunisia's commitment to "readmit" – as the policy puts it – migrants found to be irregularly present in the EU.

In what follows, I engage with this governmental vision for routing mobility and interrogate the parallelism between the deportability and visa facilitation it introduces under the banner of "mobility partnership." Let me start from visa facilitation, the provision that grounds the marketing of this Partnership, i.e. the "facilitation of the movement of people" between Tunisia and the EU. *Who* is being "facilitated" to move and *how* is this facilitation of movement obtained? The Tunisian citizens targeted for inclusion in this EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership are certainly not the migrants who are currently risking their lives on fortune boats to

¹³⁷ Visa facilitation is contingent on readmission, "grafted" onto it, as it is stated more clearly in other EU documents to which this particular one refers—e.g., the Dialogue on Mediterranean Migration (2011), where it is stated clearly that this "increased mobility" will depend "on the prior fulfillment of a certain number of conditions, aimed at contributing to the creation of a secure environment in which the circulation of the persons would take place through regular channels and in accordance with the agreed modalities" (EU COM 2011: p10). Moreover, reports on existing mobility partnerships (between the EU and countries other than Tunisia) unequivocally show that agreements on exclusionary practices of migration management (e.g., readmission agreements) hardly opened any avenues for legal migration to member states.

access the EU. Instead, this Partnership route into the EU is intended only for “Tunisian pupils, university students, and researchers” (Article 7).

So this Partnership’s “facilitation” of mobility comes in a highly discriminatory mode, performing a *redlining* of the Euro-Med neighborhood across *class* lines. The facilitation of mobility for Tunisian citizens comes essentially in the form of the brain-drain of high-skilled Tunisian researchers and of student-exchange programs. The Mediterranean space that builds on this first track (visa facilitation) resembles a gated community more than a cross-shore neighborhood. Likewise, facilitation functions like an exclusive (and exclusionary) pass for very few rather than like a visa facilitation process for all. What this creates is the instantiation of a selective mobility facilitation into the intrinsically exclusionary mechanism of visas (Van Houtum, 2010).

Certainly, this gated community ghettoization of the Mediterranean Neighborhood is in line with the framework that the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) developed as its response to the Southern Mediterranean partners in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, when it framed regional Mediterranean cooperation and neighborliness as rooted in the “three Ms principle,” i.e. Money, Market access, and Mobility. Accordingly, this EU-Tunisia Partnership regulates Mediterranean mobility based on an individuals’ market and financial power.¹³⁸

But class is not the only barrier to Tunisian citizens’ mobility embedded in this Mobility Partnership. A *temporal border* also looms over this partnership for

¹³⁸ In the partnership, emphasis is placed also on support for the integration of Tunisians already present in the EU who contribute to the economy of their country of birth (e.g., by lowering remittances rates).

mobility. The neighborhood mobility this Partnership allegedly facilitates is, in fact, diachronically very limited: access to the EU is granted only on short-term visas. In other words, a targeted and small group of students and high-skilled migrants will be granted access *only* for short visits and contingent upon their return to Tunisia. So it is not migration that is being promoted. It is “short-term” visits of a selected class of students and high-skilled workers.

Moreover, when one looks at the specifics of this authorized niche, the Partnership’s claim to “facilitate mobility” gets even shakier. With this policy, in fact, the EU promises to loosen the visa requirements that Tunisian citizens should meet in order to be granted entry in the EU. That this gets framed as a partnership for mobility is rather ironic. At present, Tunisian citizens’ access to the EU even for a few days is contingent on a visa approval from Schengen authorities. This provision has long been criticized as a technology for racializing short-stay visitors to the EU (Van Houtum, 2010). With this Partnership the EU simply commits to facilitating the Schengen visa process, not to relieving the Schengen visa requirements for all or even just this particular class of Tunisian citizens. The implementation document (Annex), which will be published in a few months, will clarify what exactly this amounts to. However, the EU Commissioners’ declarations and interviews with migrant rights’ activists, the indication is that the Partnership will attempt to mitigate administrative barriers, working, for instance, to revise the length of time visa processing takes, the price

associated with applying for a Schengen visa independent from its issuing, the bank account profile the applicant ought to meet, and so on and so forth.

Thus the facilitation of mobility is a technocratic revision of the exclusionary policy of Schengen visas. Under this Mobility Partnership, the Euro-Med neighborhood is performed as a gated community, occasionally opened to streams of circular migration of high-skilled migrants and students. We can see why the German activist group ProAsyl re-named such policies as “Immobility Partnerships”: this is not a partnership meant to promote – even in a regulated, quota-based, way – the mobility of migrants. If anything, this clarifies *how “mobility” is a technology that depoliticizes migrations*, stripping labor migration from the picture and fencing up against the “excess” of migrant practices.

Yet while I agree that this Partnership further immobilizes migrants who want to move to the EU as ProAsyl has it, my argument is that it *also* produces more mobility across the Mediterranean: two of its key provisions, in fact, the Readmission Agreement and the support of the Tunisia asylum legislation, aim at producing the mobility of migrants and asylum seekers *to* Tunisia. These are the parallel lines of mobility, which, I suggest, this Partnership builds across the Mediterranean: (a lot) more mobility to Tunisia goes hand-in-hand with enhanced mobility bureaucracy to the EU for few Tunisians; more migrants and refugees are pushed to Tunisia while at the same time a smoother application process is granted to a class of Tunisian students and researchers to come to Europe. So let me unpack the specifics of these avenues of mobility to Tunisia that I claim

the Partnership creates through the Readmission Agreement and the support of the asylum legislation.

4.3.3 Transit as a Border: The EU-Tunisia Deportation Route

The first avenue along which this Partnership produces more mobility across the Mediterranean is a securitarian one, what in strict Neighborhood policy language is called “readmission”¹³⁹ and corresponds to what is more commonly defined as deportation.

Now, a terminological clarification is due here. The notion of mobility is rarely associated with practices of border enforcement. When addressing removal, deportation, and readmission, scholars tend to talk about the statist action of patrolling borders, maybe even documenting abuses and denouncing this as an exclusionary practice, but still focusing on the abstract spaces of sending-transit-receiving countries. So, in these statist terms, deportations are removal from one state and readmission to another state, “from-to” movements envisioned as acts of nation-state sovereignty to send away aliens¹⁴⁰ (receiving country) and to take back citizens (sending country). This account of deportation, however, is poorly equipped to grasp the contested geographies of mobility, the

¹³⁹ In Jean-Pierre Cassarino’s 2013 definition: “Readmission is the process through which individuals who are not allowed to stay on the territory of a country (e.g. unauthorized migrants, rejected asylum-seekers or stateless persons) are expelled or removed, whether in a coercive manner or not.”

¹⁴⁰ I am using the US nomenclature here for simplicity. In EU terms the expression would be: “undocumented third-country nationals.”

mushrooming of non-state actors in the business of migration management (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010), as well as the political spaces that originate “in deportation” (De Genova, and Peutz, 2010).

Instead, I propose to study deportation (or, “readmission” as the ENP puts it) as the *forced mobility* that technologies of migration management—the Mobility Partnership and the Neighborhood, in this case—impose on migrants, interrupting their life patterns and further weakening the precarious survival strategies they mobilized. From this vantage point, I contend, one can refocus analytical attention on migrants’ spatio-temporalities and situatedness, moving away from the spatial abstractions of migration management. Alison Mountz and Jenna Loyd (2014) have recently suggested that

regional solutions of migration management rest on a reified notion of the Mediterranean as a coherent regional borderland, and in so doing obscure both the instability of this place as well as the violence that occurs there. (175)

They hence call for attention to “the violence enacted on migrant bodies that is obscured by ostensibly humane, managerial regional solutions” (175). The notion of “readmission” is one of such “ostensibly humane, managerial regional solutions” which obscures “the violence” enacted on migrants in deportation. I propose to focus on the *routes of forced mobility* produced, enlisted, and closed by this Mobility Partnership in order to refocus analytical attention exactly on this obscured “violence.”

An approach to deportation in the statist terms sketched above, instead, would just account for the securitarian agenda of the EU, leaving out of the picture the spaces that are produced in the name of security, the violence that is enlisted to this end, and the frictions that are encountered in these spaces. While deportations certainly pertain to this securitarian agenda and an important line of critical migration studies has originated exactly from such a focus, I contend that an interrogation of the Mediterranean spaces of mobility should engage with the geographies of the movements crisscrossing the Mediterranean. In other words, if this Mobility Partnership is indeed working toward the production of a Euro-Med space—regionally, neighborly or, better maybe, a space regionalized as a Mediterranean neighborhood—then its deportation component should also be analyzed in terms of the *spaces of mobility* it performs, versus an understanding of deportations as from-to movements that abstract from the space in-between. It is in this sense that I argue for an engagement with the “readmission agreement” of the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership from the angle of the forced mobility it produces.

A couple of words about the policy context of Readmission Agreements are needed here. Critics have been denouncing Readmission Agreements as the “bargaining chip” (EuroMed interview, 2014) that the EU deploys with third countries when negotiating cooperation—be this negotiation about the bureaucratic simplification of short-term Schengen visa applications, foreign aid, remittances fees, all these things together, or even membership in the case of

the Eastern Neighborhood. Actually, the mandate to find appropriate bargaining chips to induce third states' collaboration on readmissions has been part of the EU framework for a long time now (European Commission, 2002).¹⁴¹ As a matter of fact, bilateral agreements linked to the readmission of migrants have skyrocketed in these past years in the EU, recently reaching more than 300 EU-third country readmission agreements (Cassarino, 2013). So it is clear that also in this EU-Tunisia case, the purported "parallelism" of Article 9 is in fact meant as a bargaining chip, that the EU promises to facilitate short term access for a limited number of Tunisian citizens in exchange for the opening of the *EU-Tunisia deportation route*.

It is now to this Euro-Med mobility route, i.e. this EU-Tunisia deportation route, that I want to turn, focusing on the migrants that this Partnership targets for deportation across the Mediterranean. Who, in fact, is going to be deported as a result of this Mobility Partnership? Certainly, Tunisian migrants found to be irregularly present in the EU are prime candidates. Allegedly, also EU nationals found to be irregularly present in the EU will also be subject to deportation—though it is hard to imagine this direction of deportation ever being enforced

¹⁴¹ In 2001 the community moved towards a more comprehensive leverage in bilateral agreements with third countries, "providing incentives to obtain the cooperation of third countries on readmission agreements" (COM 2002: 25). This change was anticipated in a 1998 *Strategy Paper on Immigration and Asylum*, which called for a policy of conditionality in the field of migration in order to make readmissions successful (i.e., economic aid to third countries was posited as contingent on the issue of a visa and collaboration on readmission. In 1999 the Amsterdam Treaty empowered the European Community to conclude readmission agreements with third states (title IV, art 63(3) b; Source: <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research/analyses/ra/>). Finally, in 2011 the improved mobility of third-country migrants to the EU was definitely and clearly tied to their countries' collaboration on the readmissions of undocumented migrants present in the European territory (EU COM 2011, p10).

given the “unbalanced reciprocities” (Cassarino, 2010) at stake. So, those targeted for deportation along the route opened by this Partnership are certainly the nationals of one of this policy’s contracting partners (i.e. Tunisia) and theoretically also the nationals of the other (i.e. EU countries).¹⁴²

But this group (partner countries’ citizens) does not exhaust the population this policy targets for deportation. My contention is that this is not even the biggest group that this Partnership is targeting for deportation to Tunisia. As a matter of fact, the jurisdiction of the EU-Tunisia deportation route is not limited to Tunisian citizens. It also includes third-country nationals who transited through Tunisia on their way to the EU and who are found to be irregularly present in one of the EU member states.¹⁴³ It is actually this larger group that the EU is planning to set in motion along the EU-Tunisia deportation route.¹⁴⁴ This is the *neighborhood planning* at stake with this Mobility Partnership, i.e. the creation of a Tunisian *carceral ghetto* where migrants irregularly present in the EU could be “readmitted” in as its *transients*.

Now, the EU has long been externalizing its borders to Northern African countries and the Neighborhood Policy Initiative of the EU has long been understood as part and parcel of this effort toward externalization. Migration

¹⁴² Participating EU countries are: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the U.K.

¹⁴³ The indication that this provision is not only about Tunisian citizens but also about any other third-country national who came to the EU through Tunisia is subtle but peremptory. Article 9, in fact, states that readmission agreements will be carried out according to existing EU standards and protocols, i.e., allowing deportations to transit countries (COM 2011, 292/3).

¹⁴⁴ The same is true for the EU-Morocco Partnership.

containment and preventative border enforcement strategies have been part of the Neighborhood planning that the EU has been working towards in the Mediterranean region. With the Mobility Partnership however, this process comes to a *spatial climax* where the Neighborhood is used as the technology for deportation, which *de-territorializes the institute of citizenship*. As a matter of fact, citizenship is conveniently set aside here for a focus on *transit*: migrants irregularly present in the EU will be returned to Tunisia, regardless of their citizenship, if Tunisia can be proven to be a country they passed through en route to the E.U.

It is easy to understand how this serves the interests of the EU's migration management, especially since Tunisia is one of the few relatively accessible routes remaining to gain access to the EU. However, how the notion of transit is conveniently put to play here needs further reflection. When citizenship is the foundation of the entire apparatus of migration management, including its deportation regime (De Genova, and Peutz, 2010), this *shift in policy from the accident of birth to the accident of transit* demands critical attention. This is especially the case since transit through Tunisia for migrants and refugees is not a deliberately chosen stop-over. It is instead a forced neighborhood path, a forced transit that the EU border regime imposes on migrants en route to Europe, managing migration to the EU by decelerating it or stalling it in the transit country of Tunisia—i.e., governing migrants by endlessly fragmenting their journeys (Collyer, 2010).

The legal grounds of this provision (i.e., deportation to a transit country) are flakey to say the least, both in terms of sovereignty and in terms of migrants' rights. Why should a transit country, in fact, be "returned" the nationals of another country by the authorities of the EU where they are found to be irregularly present? And what is the legal basis on which the EU returns an illegalized migrant to a country where he/she has no political, cultural, or social ties? On what legal ground is the EU forcing migration to Tunisia for these people?

Here, however, I am not interested in a normative assessment of this provision, and activists, in their advocacy against the readmission agreement contained in this partnership, have not taken this legal approach either. Instead, it is the spatiality that this Partnership enlists that I want to focus on. In a space of mobility regionalized as a neighborhood, routes of deportation are planned and enforced based on the *geography of transit*, i.e., the whereabouts of people's paths towards the EU as long as they keep at a distance from the EU border. The migration apparatus of the EU has worked extensively on transit in recent years, with the aim of managing migrants and refugees' access to the EU—e.g. implementing "preventative frontier" operations against migrants, passing and enforcing the Dublin regulation which forces asylum seekers to claim a European refuge in the country from which they accessed the EU from.

With readmission agreements in Northern-African countries, the EU uses the Mediterranean neighborhood as a technology to bypass the jurisdiction of citizenship and to enforce transit as a diffused jurisdiction for return. So somehow

the EU forces an intra-African and Middle Eastern neighborhood into Tunisia, a neighborhood of “abject cosmopolitans” (Nyers, 2003) that the EU first illegalized as irregular migrants and then turned into legitimate travelers as deportees to Tunisia. So this Mobility Partnership produces the mobility of nationals of any country to Tunisia as long as they transited through it en route to the EU.

Having sketched this securitarian path along which the EU produces mobility in Tunisia, I now want to turn to the humanitarian one.

4.3.4 The Humanitarian Route: The Border of Democracy onto Refugees’

Bodies

EU Commissioner of Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström claimed in 2012, “Hopefully Mobility Partnerships will be an important part in the democratization process in countries across North Africa,” when the Partnership with Morocco had just been signed and intense negotiations with Tunisia were underway. Human rights are the center of the democratizing discourse that underpins the EU neighborhood planning in the Mediterranean and Eastern regions and ground the “more for more” approach that, since 2012, has constituted the framework for partnerships between the EU and its neighboring countries. With respect to Tunisia in particular, human rights are one of the key tenets the EU deployed to characterize the “change” brought by the Arab Uprisings. In this section, I illustrate how a new use of human rights emerged as a neighborhood planning

tool in the context of the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership: focusing on the refugee law provisions of the Partnership, I show how the humanitarian regime is used to *induce refugee mobility* to Tunisia.

Democracy and the Refugee – In the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership, one key democracy test for post-revolutionary Tunisia comes on the issue of international protection and refugee rights. Though Tunisia signed the Geneva Convention in 1955, it never set up a law on asylum.¹⁴⁵ In 1992 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was appointed as the body for adjudicating refugee claims¹⁴⁶ for all asylum seekers present in Tunisia and for deciding about the resettlement of status refugees in countries with a functioning asylum system. Now, along with the Mobility Partnership, the EU is pushing for establishing a refugee legislation in Tunisia (article 25), a mechanism to protect the right to non-refoulement for refugees (article 25), and a system of expertise exchange between member states and Tunisia on international protection (articles 26 and 27).

But how does this humanitarian commitment to asylum and refugees translate on the routes of the Euro-Med neighborhood? I argue that the Euro-Med neighborhood is a technology for the reorientation of refugees across Mediterranean shores: the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership, in fact, translates into

¹⁴⁵ On paper, Tunisia is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and adopted a new constitution in January 2014, which guarantees the right of political asylum in Tunisia and the principle of non-*refoulement*—at the time of revising this chapter (January 2015), the refugee law draft is pending approval and Tunisia does not yet have a national refugee status adjudication process.

¹⁴⁶ In countries with a functioning asylum law and reception system, this role is played by the national authorities and UNHCR has only the role of supervising the process.

a drastic *re-routing of asylum seekers' claims to refuge*, a re-routing which diverts asylum seekers away from the EU and instead pulls them into Tunisia. The EU advocacy for setting up an asylum system in Tunisia, ultimately contributes to fixing asylum seekers to Tunisia, against their will and against international protocols—the protocols which grant refugees the right to deposit their asylum claim in any country of their choice. Tunisian authorities' preoccupation about a “pull factor” being imposed on Tunisia by this agreement (Interview, May 2014) is well-grounded, I suggest, for at least two reasons.

First, this Mobility Partnership fixes *transit* as refuge, forcing refugees to seek asylum in Tunisia, i.e., in what they intended to be a country of transit en route to Europe and which what they perceive as an unwanted final destination. At present, asylum seekers from Sub-Saharan or MENA region countries must go through Tunisia and resort to traffickers if they want to claim asylum in a European country, since they can't deposit their claim to asylum in an embassy or have access to “humanitarian corridors” granting their safe arrival to Europe. Tunisia is then a *forced* station for asylum seekers, a country of transit turned into a site of forced settlement in the name of the Euro-Med neighborhood. The experience of being forced to stay in Tunisia is a recurrent story when talking to Syrian refugees and Libyan war refugees in the city of Tunis and on the premises of Choucha,¹⁴⁷ a former UNHCR refugee camp at the Tunisia-Libya border:

¹⁴⁷ On the camp of Choucha, see: refugees' blog “Voice of Choucha” (Source: <https://voiceofchoucha.wordpress.com>); the video . For a discussion of the experience of the camp and refugee struggles at different times since 2011, see: Garelli and Tazzioli 2013; Garelli and Tazzioli, forthcoming.

Nobody really accepted local integration here, we are trapped, we have no choice. We are at gunpoint. (Interview, summer 2014)

We know there is no future for us here, even Tunisian people can't live in this country because of the economic state here. (Interview, summer 2014)

I am blocked here because I can't go home. I asked to go, but UNHCR said no and I can't go away from Tunisia because I won't risk my life on a boat. (Interview, summer 2014)

When the EU pushes for Tunisia's democratization and the implementation of a functioning asylum system in the country, it also further brings to a climax the *first-entry territoriality* that characterizes EU regulations about asylum: the EU-Tunisia Partnership, in fact, aims at blocking refugees in the country where they first accessed the Euro-Med Neighborhood (i.e., Tunisia), in the same way that the Dublin III regulations force asylum seekers to deposit their claim in the "first country of entry" into the EU, (i.e., the country from which they entered the EU).

The *Neighborhood* then is the *spatial arrangement* for bordering refugees in Tunisia in the name of shared democratic values and human rights standards. It is a neighborhood planning, moreover, that paves the way for the policing of human rights within the Tunisian territory, i.e., strengthening border patrol initiatives to prevent third-country nationals from leaving Tunisia to claim asylum elsewhere. The joint patrolling of Mediterranean borders is a deep-rooted policy of the Euro-Med neighborhood planning. However, this European support of a Tunisian refugee law (i.e. producing a buffer zone for international protection in

Tunisia) pushes this phenomenon a step further, *enforcing* a sort of *Tunisian “humanitarian border”* (Walters, 2011; Garelli, 2013; Williams, 2014) upon those who may have wanted to deposit their refugee claims within the EU.

Such Tunisian “refuge” pertains to the abstract space of region-building that Mountz and Loyd talk about (2014) and that I referenced above. It is indeed quite removed from the social and political space of refugees’ embodied experiences of vulnerability and forms their desired claims to refuge. For instance, at the refugee camp of Choucha¹⁴⁸ in 2012, 2013, and even just recently in 2014, Libyan war refugees were vocal in expressing that Tunisia was not a possible solution to their struggle and that resettlement in the EU, Canada, or the US was the refuge they were seeking (Voice of Choucha, 2013; Tazzioli and Garelli, 2014; Storiemigranti 2015).

But this Mobility Partnership may *force a pull factor into Tunisia for refugees* also in another, more subtle way, which links to the other key provision analyzed above, i.e. Readmission Agreements. Activists have documented deportation abuses perpetrated by the EU and individual EU member states’ authorities in dealing with refugees. One such fundamental abuse consists in the mass deportation of people prior to establishing whether they may want to claim refuge. A full-functioning refugee system in Tunisia (what this Partnership establishes) opens the path for legalizing expulsions of potential asylum seekers

¹⁴⁸ Choucha is the name of the refugee camp that was opened in February 2011 by UNHCR in the southern protectorate of Ben Guardene at the Tunisian border with Libya in order to host and process people displaced by the Libyan war.

from the EU to Tunisia (or even from high waters, when refugees' boats are targeted for search and rescue missions).

To summarize, the EU-Tunisia Partnership produces refugee flows to Tunisia: it stops asylum seekers aspiring to reach the EU in this transit country and paves the way for the deportation of asylum seekers who reach the EU back to the country from which they entered the Euro-Med Neighborhood, i.e. Tunisia. In this sense the Partnership contributes to *normalizing* the emergency situation that Tunisia found itself in during the Arab Uprisings. As a matter of fact, during 2011 and 2012 Tunisia became an emergency refuge for different groups coming from Libya and from Sub-Saharan countries (ICMPD, 2013: 20; Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2013: 7).

After the outbreak of the civil war in Libya in February 2011, a mass exodus of refugees reached Egypt and Tunisia. The flow of refugees to Tunisia was composed of about 800,000 Libyans, 400,000 third-country nationals and 5,000 Tunisians who fled the Libyan conflict to Tunisia. In the context of this Partnership, it is guaranteed that these figures will stabilize, if not even expand, especially considering the escalating scenarios of violence and warfare in Middle Eastern and African countries.

4.4 Enacting Neighborhoods: The Mobility of Politics and Migrants'

Claim to the Neighborhood

The Mobility Partnership represents only one of the voices of the neighborhood productivity at play in this EU-Tunisia space. The re-routing of migrants and refugees to Tunisia and away from the EU only reflects the governmental vision for the Mediterranean space, i.e. the *EU-rope* thrown onto the Tunisia-Italy migration route by EU and Tunisian authorities. The frictions and re-routings that this Euro-Med neighborhood is met with on the contested terrain of migrant mobility are the spaces I now want to attend to.

4.4.1 The Tunisian Effect on Mobility Politics

In the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, Tunisia became a magnetic pole for international activism and social justice agendas. The choice of Tunis as the home of two World Social Forum editions (in 2013 and 2015) speaks to the raising of Tunisia's standing in the global agenda of social justice and grassroots activism. On the battleground of migrant and refugee rights, this resulted in three years of intense activist mobility—from the countries where they are based to Tunisia—and in important cross-shore campaigns (Statewatch, 2014).

Here I offer a few examples just to give a sense of Tunisia as an epicenter for regional activism: Tunisian migrant collectives in European cities claiming their turbulent geographies of belonging beyond the confines of citizenship in the

aftermath of the Arab Spring (e.g. The “Tunisians from Lampedusa in Paris,” “The Tunisians from Lampedusa in Hamburg,” etc.¹⁴⁹); the Tunisian-Italian campaign “From One Shore to the Other: Lives that Matter” bringing together an Italian feminist collective and Tunisian families on the cause of disappeared Tunisian migrants (LeVenticeinqueundici, 2012)¹⁵⁰; the Boats 4 People flotilla, which in the summer of 2012 crossed the Mediterranean from Italy back to Tunisia offering rescue to migrant boats in distress and organizing events to create media attention on migrants’ rights abuses (Boats For People, 2012¹⁵¹); the issuing of a Charter for migrants’ right to free movement in the Mediterranean issued from the island of Lampedusa in the aftermath of tragic shipwrecks (Lampedusa Charter, 2014¹⁵²) in Italian and Libyan waters, just to name a few.

All these initiatives speak of an *enacted neighborhood*, the cross-shore neighborhood enacted by the people and the politics that move through it. While above I attended to a neighborhood designed by policy, here I am interested in how the neighborhood is practiced, contested, and appropriated in migration. Building on a growing conversation in critical migration studies on the politics of presence (Bosniak, 2007; Cintron, 2013; Squire and Darling, 2013) and on the “contested politics of migration” (Squire, 2010), I am interested in layering the abstract space mandated by the Partnership with the social and political space

¹⁴⁹ See Federica Sossi’s remarkable contributions on the experience of the “Tunisians from Lampedusa in Paris” collective: Sossi, 2012, 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Source: http://leventiceinqueundici.noblogs.org/?page_id=354 (last accessed: May 8, 2015).

¹⁵¹ Source: <http://www.boats4people.org/index.php/en/> (last accessed: May 8, 2015).

¹⁵² Source: <http://www.lacartadilampedusa.org> (last accessed: May 8, 2015).

that this Partnership landed in and was confronted with.

4.4.2 A Political Coalition

It took more than two years for the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership to finally (on March 3, 2014) reach the stage of a joint declaration of commitment signed by the Tunisian Ambassador to Belgium (Tahar Cherif), the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs (Cecilia Malmström), and the Ministers of the ten EU Member States involved in the Partnership. These two years were not only ripe with the neighborhood activism mentioned above. This was also a time when different strands of advocacy in Tunisia and in the EU were channeled into a cross-shore political campaign against some of the Partnership's provisions. This organized effort brought together NGOs, unions, human rights organizations, and migrant organizations from both the Tunisian and the European shores of the Mediterranean and resulted in a broad coalition of very different types of organizations, from the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) to the European activist network Migreurop, for example.¹⁵³

In its advocacy, the Coalition mobilized the tenets of representative politics

¹⁵³ Tunisian Organizations: Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT), Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH), Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), Tunisian Association for Democratic Women (TADW), Coordination of the Forum for Tunisian Immigration (FTRC, ADTF, UTIT, AIDDA, Collectif 3C, UTAC, Zembra, ATNF, ATML, Filigranes, ACDR, UTS, CAPMED, CFT, Younga). International organizations based in the EU: Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), European Association for the Defense of Human Rights (AEDH), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Migreurop, Solidar.

against the Partnership—accountability and democratization (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, 2008), as I will show—against some of the Partnership’s provisions, seeking a civil society inclusion in the planning process of the Euro-Med neighborhood.

With this, it allowed for the constitution of the Coalition as a political actor with a broad, cross-Mediterranean constituency. This forced a political terrain of negotiation about the provisions that the EU Neighborhood Policy inscribed in the region. It is on the terrain opened by this coalition, I argue, that neighborhood practices and visions emerging from more radical political stances may infiltrate the negotiation process, hence its strategic importance as object of analysis and political interrogation. In this section, I first illustrate the work of the Coalition in opposing the Partnership and then reflect on the next steps of political work on the terrain of this Partnership.

The main advocacy line the Coalition focused on is *accountability*. One official of the EuroMed Rights group—the NGO which has been guiding the Coalition’s effort—put it in the following terms:

They [the EU] have commitments and procedures in place and we’re acting accordingly, reminding them when they don’t abide by them. (interview, May 12, 2014)

When asked if this meant being a facilitator for EU provisions the NGO representative said: “I would rather say we are watchdogs” (Interview, May 12, 2014). In this watchdog role, the Coalition has so far been holding EU institutions accountable for the standards and rationale they enlisted in the region in the first

place and indeed through the technology of the Neighborhood, demanding that the Partnership meet them. This request addressed both the Partnership's process (i.e. the political process leading to the signing of an agreement) and its content (i.e. the individual provisions contained in the partnership).

In this “watchdog” capacity, the Coalition has first of all lamented the “the lack of transparency in the negotiation process” of the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership, “which did not involve civil society actors, many of whom have been active on issues directly relevant to the agreement” (May 12, 2014 Interview). This, as advocates from the Coalition underline, is particularly problematic since the strengthening of Tunisian civil society was presented as *the* reason for a Euro-Med neighborhood to exist in the first place and as one of the pillars of the Action Plan the EU put in place in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings.¹⁵⁴ As a matter of fact, the mushrooming of civil society associations has certainly been one of the early and still enduring outcomes of the Tunisian Revolution. There is certainly no lack of civil society organizations on the terrain that can be involved in the Mobility Partnership process in post-2011 Tunisia. Part of the work of the EuroMed Rights Network has been doing, as the Tunis project manager explained in an interview (March 2014 Interview), has been to build coordination tools to assure presence and voice at key negotiation moments when usually

¹⁵⁴ In Euro-Med Neighborhood policy language, the Tunisian revolution was read in terms of a “rapidly changing neighborhood” that the EU had to “catch up with,” rebalancing the Euro-Med Neighborhood through a set of policy initiatives aimed at supporting the organization of civil society in Tunisia (see Schengen chapter).

only EU Delegations in Tunis and Tunisian governmental figures would be present.

Second, the Coalition has held the Euro-Med Neighborhood accountable for the human rights claim grounding its mission and characterizing its marketing. Despite the rhetoric of a commitment to human rights, this Mobility Partnership has in fact been deemed to severely harmful to migrants' and refugees' rights, the Coalition claims. This has been the argument all throughout these two and a half years of opposition.

In March 2014, for instance, the Coalition issued a press release arguing that the Partnership was not in line with the paradigmatic shift in policy paradigm that the EU announced as its "response to a changing neighborhood" in 2011 (European Neighborhood Policy Initiative, ENPI, 2011). In 2011, in fact, the European Neighborhood Policy Initiative (ENPI) had revised its policy framework for the Mediterranean region in light of the Arab Springs. Such a shift was eloquently summarized in the EU policy slogan, the "more for more approach:" financial and institutional support from the EU would come "only for those partners," meaning neighboring countries, "willing to embark on political reforms and to respect the shared, universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law" (European Parliament, 2012).

In this early stage of the Partnership negotiations, the Coalition held the EU accountable for this principle, indicating that "more reform" and "respect for

shared, universal values of human rights” were not going to come from this Partnership, hence calling for *more* EU support for change in Tunisia:

We call upon the European Union to implement its “more for more” policy by providing concrete support to Tunisia in its effort to establish democratic institutions and adopt legislation to implement the new Constitution with regards to provisions relating to economic and social rights and fundamental human rights, and in particular the rights of migrants and refugees.¹⁵⁵

The argument for accountability is certainly not one of radical politics. Yet, such discursive “pushing back”—on this discursive battlefield for accountability—may be a strategic terrain in a time of increasingly “knowledge-based management of migration” (Geiger, 2014). This discursive resistance is especially pertinent since much of the Euro-Med neighborhood planning relies on circuits of knowledge and exchange of best practices, stamping a governmental mandate on the politics of knowledge at stake in migration and refugee studies. So the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership has a very strong epistemic underpinning: finding ways to channel and re-direct this governmental knowledge—its slogans, frameworks, and visions—through activism is an extremely important challenge for activist scholars and scholar-activists. I will come back to this point at the end of this section, but first I want to expand on the Coalition’s advocacy against the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership.

The second pillar of what I called the *soft neighborhood enactment*, referring to the Coalition’s politics, is the discourse of democratization, which is

¹⁵⁵ Source: “Joint Press Release,” retrieved from <http://www.migreurop.org/article2492.html?lang=fr> (accessed, June 2015).

another tenet of representational politics especially in its colonial and neo-colonial mission of “bringing” democracy to countries casted as “develop-*ing*” and through different “not yet” predications (Chakrabarty, 2000; Mbembe, 2001).

Once the Partnership was signed, as one of the Coalition’s member explained to me in a June 2014 interview, the advocacy focus changed and came to coincide with the effort to minimize the Partnership’s exclusionary agenda and its discriminatory practices. This meant a negotiation on the visa facilitation and asylum provisions.

On the Tunisia-to-EU route, the Coalition’s aim is to mitigate the redlining effect of the Partnership, requesting that the extension of visa facilitation provisions for short stays (which is part of the text of the Partnership) be granted to *all* Tunisian citizens, not only the now targeted, privileged class of students and high-skilled workers.

Even such rather conservative requests (not a contestation of the mechanism of visas by any stretch), however, has to confront many institutional barriers embedded in the EU governance mechanism. While in public statements and press releases the request to extend visa facilitation provisions to all Tunisians is addressed to the EU as a whole, talking with NGO officials involved in the campaign reveals the *fragmented reality of EU sovereignty*, along with its internal differences. All Mobility Partnerships, in fact, are governed by two rather different EU institutional bodies: on the one hand, the EU External Action service (to which the overall European Neighborhood Policy Initiative belongs), which

tends to align with a liberal discourse of human rights and democracy promotion, and, on the other, the DH Home Affairs body, which has jurisdiction on all migration and border policy issues for the EU and tends to frame immigration solely in securitarian terms. As one advocate from the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network put it, “It is a small detail but it actually matters quite a lot in terms of advocacy” (2014 interview). Advocating for a democratization of the neighborhood planning process and asking that the borders enlisted against migrants and refugees be slightly less contained, the Coalition tries to work within the constraints posed by these counterparts. For instance, while the Coalition addresses its requests to the EU as a single body in public statements, the actual advocacy process consists of working in a very deliberate parallel process which doubles the effort and weakens the overall impact.

But the Coalition’s struggle with the structure of EU sovereignty to democratize the visa facilitation provision does not end here: a decision about a possible enlargement of the visa facilitation provision to *all* Tunisian citizens can happen only at the member-state level and has to confront national legislations about short-term visas for third-country migrants. In fact, no executive decision dealing with immigrant visas can be made at the regional bloc level. The European Commission, in fact, has jurisdiction only on student and intra-corporate mobility—i.e. on-demand, short-term, and non-controversial migration flows—whereas jurisdiction on visas for all other categories of migrants (i.e. long-term migrations) is still solely the “national prerogative” of individual states.

On the readmission agreement component—the second provision of the Mobility Partnership that the Coalition is targeting for reform—the layers of this scalar politics of EU governance are still further complicated. While it is true that the EU Commission is in charge of negotiating readmission agreements for member states with third countries, these removal actions will be operated from the territory of nation states and will intersect with the existing legal spaces and consolidated practices of deportation in different European countries. Italy and France, for instance, already have readmission agreements in place with Tunisia: the Italian one is very similar to the Partnership provisions and targets both Tunisian and non-Tunisian citizens (found to be irregularly present in Italy) for “readmission” to Tunisia; the French one, instead, provides for the deportation of Tunisian citizens solely. How will the EU-Tunisia Partnership impact the French-Tunisian one? Will it supersede it, expanding deportability to third country nationals, or will it stick to the nationality boundary, keeping deportability limited to Tunisian citizens? And, most importantly, what will happen in countries where no such agreements exist? Will the scale of regional bloc governance scale force a legislative path towards it? These are some of the normative frictions that the enacted neighborhood has to deal with, even in such a soft enactment mode of deportation and democratization of visas.

After this overview of some of the frictions ‘that this Partnership will have to confront ‘at landing’ when encountering the actual, existent legal spaces and sovereignty scales of the neighborhood, I now want to turn to some instabilities

that are internal to the spaces that this Partnership enlists.

4.4.3 “Within and against” Technologies of Governance

In their work on migrant routes in the Mediterranean, Cases-Cortes, Cobarrubias, and Pickles (2014) point to the “relationality among processes of mobility and processes of control” calling for analytical attention to the new spaces that get produced in such relation. Above, I attended to the spatial processes at play in the Mobility Partnership, focusing on the de-territorialization of the institute of citizenship and on the institutional production of a country of transit into a country of “forced” settlement and refuge. In this section I look at possible paths for migrant and refugee rights’ militancy that emerge from these new spaces—i.e. the space of a deterritorialized citizenship and the space of transit-refuge that this Partnership produces.

To put it rather directly: can the de-territorialization of citizenship that this Partnership enlists in the Mediterranean be deployed against the securitarian agenda it stems from? Can this de-territorialization of citizenship become an insurgent legal space to be used in a militancy for migrants’ rights “within and against”¹⁵⁶ the institutional framework of the Partnership as well as its rhetorical tenets? Such re-routing, I argue, is a strategic battleground for a militancy on the terrain of migration management and neighborhood technologies—where this

¹⁵⁶ See the Methods section in Chapter 1 for the Post-workerist’s genealogy of this approach.

“on” is intended to denote both a positioning (as the normative “inside” that one is forced to in advocacy—versus the “outside” that one may pursue in the “exodus” mode of the political¹⁵⁷) and a strategy (a politics that works *on* the vision and instruments of bordering in an attempt to reverse their outcomes).

A clarification on the scope I am envisioning here: I do not mean to suggest that a party line of militancy will emerge from the analytical work I am engaging in here. The space that may connect the instabilities of migration governance with a political mobilization only emerges from a collective social process that has very little to do with what one does in writing a dissertation. However, thinking through the normative and political instabilities of the Mobility Partnership may certainly contribute to a “political epistemology” (De Genova, Mezzadra, and Pickles, 2014; Garelli, and Tazzioli, 2013a; Mezzadra, and Ricciardi, 2013) of the nexus between mobility and control. It is to this contribution that I am attending here.

The de-territorialization of citizenship that the Partnership enlists for deportation purposes is a relational geography that, I argue, could be engaged also to advocate for migrant and refugee rights. In what follows I offer two examples of what this work could be. The first example deals with the Partnership’s technologies for routing migrants and refugees to Tunisia (and away from the EU), forcing their presence in a country they conceived of as just a passageway. The “deportation regime” (De Genova and Peutz, 2010) of this

¹⁵⁷ Here I refer to “destituent” (*destituente*) traditions of political thought and practice. See, for instance: Virno, 2000; Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos, 2006: 202.

Partnership relies on transit (i.e. people's accidental presence in Tunisia en route to the EU) over citizenship, creating a precedent for an argument about presence-based rights superseding birth-based ones.

The same restructuring of legal frames (valuing “presence at locality” and transit over birth and citizenship) characterizes the “humanitarian border” (Walters, 2011) of this Mobility Partnership, where refugees are forced to settle in a transit country and are not allowed to seek asylum in their intended destination. In this context, the Neighborhood serves the securitarian agenda of the EU, bypassing the order of citizenship and enlisting a “rule of presence” as the regional rationale for migration management.

This new “assemblage of territory, authority, and rights” (Sassen, 2006) radically reworks the order of the citizen and the foreigner. Such a new and evolving configuration, I argue, has the potential to be enlisted as a building block for refugees' advocacy, despite the exclusionary politics it represents and pushes forth. An example for what this means: based on the normative framework of this Partnership, an argument could be made to frame Tunisia as a jurisdiction for claiming refuge across the Mediterranean, in the Euro-Med Neighborhood, hence also in the European countries that asylum seekers aspire to reach as refuge when transiting through Tunisia. To put it more directly: if the regulatory framework of the Euro-Med Neighborhood performs transit through Tunisia as entitlement to the Tunisian asylum system, then transient presence in Tunisia could equally be advocated as an avenue to claim asylum in the EU. In the

reshuffling of territoriality and sovereignty here—i.e. the territoriality of presence and the regional scale of authority—could be used against the exclusionary mode it plays out in the Partnership to advocate for the right of asylum seekers to claim asylum in an EU country *from Tunisia*.

The *insurgent spatial politics of presence* has long been at the center of attempts to ground a politics of migration beyond the exclusionary frame of citizenship, both on the part of scholars (Bosniak, 2007; Cintron, 2014; Garelli and Tazzioli, 2014; Squire and Darling, 2013) and militants (from the Sanctuary Movement in the Anglo-American world to the Sans Papiers movement in France, to the enduring struggles of rejected refugees at Choucha, to the 2008 marches in the US, to name just a few). In this context, the urban has functioned as the landmark of such insurgent politics against the closure of the nation-state, i.e. migrants' presence in cities posited as the grounding political principle against the order of the citizen, which relies on the accident of birth.

Here the urban stretches across the regional and on the cross-shore scale of the Euro-Med Neighborhood. When the migration management that is performed within the policy framework of the Euro-Med Neighborhood reworks so drastically the territoriality of birth and presence, then some of the insurgent politics of migrants and refugees' "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996; Balibar, 2009: 31-50; Harvey, 2012; Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos, 2014: 82-118) could be engaged for a counter-use of the Partnership exclusionary agenda. One of such counter-uses is the claim that the Tunisian-EU neighborhood—the

legal, institutional, and economic space of EU-Tunisia Partnership—should be regarded as a legitimate jurisdiction for claiming asylum in an EU country while being in Tunisia.

Migrants' and refugees' deaths at sea in the Mediterranean have long been denounced as the outcome of the EU migration and asylum, against the rhetoric of natural calamities and accidental tragedies. In this context, EU institutions have recently started to argue for preventative border enforcement in order to prevent migrants' deaths at sea (Statewatch, 2014). Now, advocating for a neighborhood enactment in regards to asylum seekers would mean redirecting political focus away from such humanitarian borders (i.e. the use of humanitarian rhetoric to justify border enforcement) and instead working towards an expansion of refugees' access to the "neighborhood." In concrete terms, this would correspond to the possibility of filing for an asylum claim with the EU from Tunisia *and* the provision of means for safe access to the EU. The conjunction "and" is fundamental here: these two advocacy lines should, to quote the Partnership's language, proceed "in parallel." Otherwise, this would result simply in the externalization of refugee processing abroad, which by the way is a governmental fantasy that a restricted (and not victorious group of European leaders, including Tony Blair) have been advocating for in order to minimize the number of non-status refugees (denied refugees and asylum seekers) on the soil of European countries.

Formal advocacy for these two parallel tracks was unsuccessfully

attempted in the aftermath of the tragic shipwrecks of October 2013 and in the context of the Syrian civil war, when a Joined Motion for a Resolution was brought to the EU Parliament asking “for the creation of humanitarian corridors by the international community” to grant access to the EU via safe routes in order to prevent refugees from risking their lives at sea in order to reach the soil of a country in which to claim asylum. The Motion talked the abstract language of human rights and failed. A neighborhood territorialization, I argue, would help to support this advocacy line within the Euro-Med Neighborhood institutional setting but against its exclusionary agenda.

The institute of international protection is rooted in a post-World War II geography that is no longer in tune with the accidents, ways, and routes of people’s displacement, as many have argued. The governmental response to these new, turbulent geographies has certainly been going in the direction of a “protection lite” (Gameltuft-Hansen, 2011) and of a “politics of dis-charge” (Tazzioli, 2013) on the part of state and non-state actors involved. It is easy to see how the EU-Tunisia Partnership works in this direction too, further “vulnerabilizing” refugees by returning them to a forced country of transit where they do not feel safe and where there is no legal, social, or political infrastructure in place to receive them. Above I suggested a way to attend to present landscapes of displacement from an advocacy angle, i.e. working within the spaces of new normative and non-binding institutional arrangements of regional migration management, e.g. the technology of the neighborhood.

4.5 For a Politics of Friction: Policy Mobility, Circuits of Knowledge, and the Neighborhoods

In this chapter, I engaged with the neighborhood politics that have taken center stage in the Mediterranean of migrant mobility, asking: what does a neighborhood claim applied to this marine, transnational, EU-Tunisia route of mobility mean? I attended to this question spatially, mapping the reorganization of mobility routes—migrants’ and refugees’ routes—that this neighbor-ing of Tunisia by EU policy has enlisted.

This meant bringing two processes to bear on one another: one, the “neighborhood unit” that is being planned as a governmental response to migrant and refugee mobility and two, the horizon of “neighborhood enactments,” both those that have been practiced in mobility by refugees and migrants and those that were cast as open opposition to the Partnership.

Neighborhood Unit – The Euro-Med Neighborhood is a technology for the *regionalization of migration management* along channels of policy mobility and is characterized by flexible sovereignty, standardization of governance patterns, and growing epistemic engagement. Within the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership, the Neighborhood works as a technology for selecting, blocking and/or re-routing migrant and refugee mobility. The Neighborhood stabilized through the Partnership, in fact, allows temporary access into the EU for a very small class of

Tunisian citizens, while pushing away from the EU large numbers of migrants and refugees who are Tunisian, or who transited or may transit through Tunisia en route to the EU.

The “neighborhood unit” this Partnership is trying to impress on the EU-Tunisia route is part of a global policy blueprint. In this eclectic transnational context—as much as it has always been the case in urban settings—neighborhood planning is a technology to govern population flows and to standardize cohabitation, i.e., impressing an idea of neighborly order by managing access to space and membership in space and by drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion in the name of the neighborhood (albeit of an identitarian, securitarian, or economic nature).

Since a managerial vision (promoting orderly and predictable population movements) is at the heart of this planning, the neighborhood is also a technology for *neutralizing frictions*. It pertains to that “post-control spirit” (Sassen, 1996: 59) that has been the feature of the government of migration since the 1990s and that produces disciplining effects on mobility flows, besides producing sheer control. Let me provide an illustration of this “spirit” the agreements sealed under the Neighborhood Policy Initiative are not legally binding; this makes them solid technologies of government (easy to approve and to implement) and extremely hard targets for contestation. As a matter of fact, it is not easy to mobilize opposition and press coverage when confronted with such a loosely defined scale of sovereignty, i.e. a full-functioning instrument of border

management (as I illustrated above), which is however predicated on neighborhood solidarity and is anyway normatively loose, as IGO and NGO representatives I talked with kept emphasizing.

But the neutralization of friction that the neighborhood performs does not only play out at this technical level; it also eminently plays out at an epistemic level. The Neighborhood neutralizes frictions through a persistent and powerful work of *knowledge production* and *reproduction*. On the one hand, in fact, the *Euro-Med* order is essentialized as the norm against which everything else registers as a security threat. In this context, for instance, migration management policies tend exactly to the outcomes I observed above: mobility is abstracted from its friction and idealized in various forms of circularity, be it that of deportations, voluntary returns, or short-term stays of the Mobility Partnership. Similarly, the humanitarian regime is abstracted from the humans it supposedly protects and who are instead forced to claim asylum in the Tunisian quarter of the neighborhood where they do not want to be. Finally, undocumented migrants are deported, in the name of the Neighborhood, away from the EU.

In this chapter I addressed this Euro-Med Neighborhood Unit in two ways. On the one hand, I attempted to chart this neighborhood planning on the terrain of migrants' and refugees' "ecologies of existence" (Cases-Cortes, Cobarrubias, Pickles, 2015: 5). This has meant an engagement with unpacking the spatial outcomes of the Partnership's commitments for migrants' and refugees' access to their chosen mobility path. For instance, I showed how democratic discourse in

neighborhood guise—i.e., the EU supporting its neighbor’s path to democratization—works as the instrument to enforce a “humanitarian border” in Tunisia, i.e. blocking asylum seekers in Tunisia from seeking asylum in the EU against both the asylum seekers’ will and the international regulations on refuge granting the right to deposit an asylum claim in any country of the person’s choice. On the other hand, I worked to trouble the essentialization of a governmental standard as a “unit,” i.e. as the only rationale for cohabitation in the Mediterranean space of mobility. This brings me to the second frame through which—borrowing from conversations in relational urban geography—I entered this Neighborhood, i.e., the frame of “neighborhood enactment.”

Neighborhood Enactments – Frictions, appropriations, and re-routings are integral parts of policy mobility, the mechanism at the heart of the Euro-Med neighborhood. Scholars have called analytical attention to the “actually existing spaces” (Brenner, and Theodore, 2002) of policy mobility, to indicate an interest in the socio-spatial process in which policies are changed as they move across space (Peck, and Theodore, 2001 and 2011; McCann 2011; Cochrane, 2011) and to signal a shift away from the paradigm of “policy transfer,” which dominated neoliberal fantasies of government. Tunisia—and particularly the Tunisia produced by this EU-Tunisia Partnership—is a privileged vantage point wherefrom to map these spatial processes. As a matter of fact, Tunisia has been both a target for the aspirations of EU policy transfers *and* a contested ground for policy re-routings.

Yet the literature about the policy mobility between the EU and Tunisia in the context of the ENP tends to underline only a process of the rule transfer while leaving the frictions, organized oppositions and the re-routings of policy mobility out of the analytical map (one important exception is Jean-Pierre Cassarino's work which I reference below). In their focus on rule transfer, these accounts importantly underline the EU standard that is imposed in the Mediterranean through a sort of "our size fits all" (Bicchi, 2005) policy mobility approach, a view which reflects the language of EU documents. When the spatial paradigm for understanding policy mobility is that of a 'transfer,' however, the space of policy mobility is only conceptualized in the rather a-relational terms of "adaptation"—i.e., the only relationality conceived in this EU-Tunisia policy mobility is that of Tunisia's "adaptation" to the EU rule (e.g. Dandashley, 2014) and "adoption" of EU standards (Casier, 2011, 2014).

However, already under dictatorial rule, the permeability of Tunisia to external transfer, was "channeled" (Cassarino, 2014: 111-112, 114-115) towards more layered and complex spaces of policy mobility. Since 2005, for instance, when Ben Ali agreed to act as the EU border and immigration enforcement actor, the policy mobility implemented between the EU and Tunisia was hardly the passive reception of a *Euro-Med* rule by Tunisia. Instead, Ben Ali selectively applied the migration management standard that the EU tried to export to his country. For example, Ben Ali definitely worked on containing out-migration from Tunisia but did not cooperate with the EU on deportations of Tunisians found

irregularly present in the EU, despite signing readmission agreements with the EU towards this end. Moreover, Ben Ali used the EU-Tunisia policy channel to set his own policy agenda and policy language about Tunisia in motion. Particularly, Ben Ali used the channel to set his fictitious picture of the welfare of Tunisia under his rule to travel across international circuits of policymaking and think tanks. By seemingly executing a policy transfer, he was in fact boosting Tunisia's global standing on the myths of a democratizing country and of an "economic miracle," despite raising domestic discontent, state repression, and poverty (e.g. Gafsa protests; see: Goldstein 2012), all instances that he was able to conceal by re-routing the implementation of his EU border policy and obtaining EU support.

But the re-routings of the EU policies are not (only) the outcomes of political leaders' programs or propaganda but also stem from the ground of organized institutional politics as well as from migrant and refugee struggle-fields. Since the Arab Uprisings, civil society groups have accessed the relational space of policy mobility and, as I have illustrated above, introduced their frictions to the mobility of a Euro-Med standard. In this chapter, I looked at some of the re-routings that emerged from this terrain of NGO advocacy, underlining their contribution towards what I called a "soft" neighborhood enactment, which consists mainly of two things: firstly, a practice of neighborhood organizing, i.e. forcing the presence of migrant and refugee organizations to the discussion table set by the European Union Neighborhood Policies institutions and governmental

Tunisian representatives; secondly, the prompting of a negotiation line with the Partnership's contracting institutions based on the argument of accountability, i.e. re-routing some of the Partnership's provisions towards the European Neighborhood Policy rhetoric of democratization and human rights protection.

However, this approach lags behind and risks stagnating in abstraction when it comes to confronting the neighborhood discipline that the ENP Euro-Med (as well the global migration management actors and best practices it relies on) are impressing on the Mediterranean space. The deployment of neighboring technologies for migration governance is not the outcome of a unitary sovereignty framework which could be opposed on an equally unitary terrain of representational politics (e.g. the accountability argument). The regionalization of migration management that is pursued through the Euro-Med Neighborhood is much more the outcome of "effects of sovereignty" that are fragmented in terms of their poles of emanation and disseminated in terms of their terrains of application. It is on these multiple and fragmented spaces of mobility sovereignty that, I argue, a politics of neighborhood enactment could work, bringing the claims to presence of migrants and refugees *into* the neighborhood mandated by policy but *against* its *Euro-Med* closure.

In retrospect, my ambition in this chapter has been to craft, position, and rehearse an analytical gaze, more than capitalizing on what it illuminates. This

partly has to do with the aim to give a spatial account of a process in the making while working at the pace of writing and not being interested in the account of antagonists (see “Notes on Methods,” in this chapter). But it has also to do with the topic itself: the processes of neighboring I have analyzed in this chapter in relation to the Mediterranean, in fact, bring some of the conceptual tensions that run through the entire dissertation to their apex. Building on the analytical gaze I developed here, I now turn to the “Concluding Remarks,” where I reflect on the epistemological and political contribution of these tensions.

(May 2012; December 2013; February 2015)

CHAPTER 5

THE HUMANITARIAN FRONTIER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: DEATH, ROUTES, WAR

This research has set out to map the political landscape of Mediterranean migration in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings and in the context of growing violence in the region. The analysis of the spatial processes ongoing at some of the key migration landmarks of the central Mediterranean path into Europe have shown an uncanny political convergence of both migration practices and migration control toward what I call the “*humanitarian frontier*.” On the one hand, in fact, the Mediterranean Sea is increasingly targeted for crossing¹⁵⁸ (and often deadly crossing) by people fleeing war, violence, and persecution—human lives profiled as “humanitarian” within the normative frames of the government of mobility. On the other hand, the Mediterranean is also the site where migration management is most aggressively being restructured through humanitarianism, incorporating human rights as instruments of border enforcement, rationales for push-back operations and deportations, and even prerogatives of waging wars in

¹⁵⁸ It is estimated that more than 218,000 refugees and migrants have crossed the Mediterranean in 2014, almost three times the previous peak in 2011 during the Arab Uprisings. An underestimation of people who were reported dead or missing in the Mediterranean for 2014 is 3,500. (Source: UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/551128679.html>, last accessed May 28, 2015).

order to prevent people from crossing the sea.

In the past few years, important scholarly work has contributed to the understanding of humanitarianism as a governmental technology (Malkki, 1996; Hyndman, 2000; Fassin, 2007, 2012), in which human life is regulated in the name of preserving biological life. Referring to migration issues in particular, scholars have underlined the deployment of humanitarian aid or human rights rationales to govern migration and compensate for the violence of borders, while nevertheless leaving this violence structurally unchallenged (Cuttitta, 2014; Garelli, Tazzioli, Sciurba, 2015; Walters, 2011; Pallister Wilkins, 2015; Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Willams, 2014 and 2015). William Walters first talked about humanitarian border-zones as new developments of contemporary border regimes where humanitarian aid services emerge in border regions in response to the violence of restrictive border regimes (2011: 138). Since then the conversation about the humanitarian border has developed in two directions: in one, scholars have documented humanitarian activism in border-zones (Millner, 2011; Squire, 2014, 2015; Cook, 2011); in the other, research has focused on the deployment of human rights rationales to support and speed up border enforcement practices, particularly deportation (Garelli, Sciurba, Tazzioli, 2015; Pallister Wilkins 2015; Willams, 2014 and 2015).

My work has built on this second conversation, contributing a *spatial focus*: Through engagement with some of the landmarks of the central Mediterranean path into Europe, I have documented the “humanitarian *routing*” of

migrants across this central Mediterranean stretch of sea.

In this concluding chapter I focus on the notion of the “humanitarian frontier” in three ways:

- First, I illustrate the workings of the “humanitarian frontier” in the spaces and the timeframe of this dissertation’s research as a project of *routing* and *managing presence* through humanitarianism.
- Second, I account for its currently unfolding new configuration (happening as I set to write this concluding chapter) as a *military* technology of *migration block* in the name of saving lives.
- Third, I introduce my future research on the humanitarian frontier.

5.1 Humanitarian Routing: Managing Presence

Across the Schengen area, at the biggest refugee center in Europe, in the Euro-Med neighborhood, and more generally along the central Mediterranean, my research has shown how migrants and refugees’ mobility is increasingly governed by *humanitarian routing*, the channeling of people in certain directions (and, most importantly, away from certain spaces) based on human rights rationales and humanitarian technologies. What scholars describe as an ongoing global re-articulation of migration politics—the evolution from sheer control to practices of mobility management—has indeed resulted in an increase in the deployment of humanitarianism to channel migrations. While in the previous

chapters I provided policy and ethnographic detail about the humanitarian routes in the central Mediterranean in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, here I want to reflect more generally on the politics of *humanitarianism as a routing technology* building on my research findings.

The humanitarian frontier in the Mediterranean signifies an *expansion* of migration management's reach in two directions, one dealing with the multiplication of border enforcement practices, the other dealing with the governance of receiving countries' national economies and international relations.

First, through humanitarianism, the *terrains* whereon *border enforcement* is carried out multiply, expanding well beyond the securitarian agenda of border control.¹⁵⁹ So, for instance, as Chapter Three illustrates, Tunisian migrants were re-routed away from Italy in 2011 through a humanitarian permit that allowed their free circulation in the Schengen area, and produced a humanitarian short-circuit of the mechanism of free circulation upon which the European Union project is grounded. In other words, the provision that allowed "removing" third-country nationals from the Italian national territory was ethicalized through the humanitarian regime. In fact, it is the "travel permit" associated with temporary "humanitarian protection" that provided for Tunisian migrants' re-routing to France and for the "freedom of circulation" across the Schengen Area that in turn

¹⁵⁹ It is important to underline that securitarian and humanitarian modes of border management coexist, resulting in a fragmented, articulated, and multi-faceted sovereignty over borders.

provides for the “expulsion”¹⁶⁰ of Tunisian migrants from Italy on the humanitarian path. That France responded by fencing up in a securitarian mode is an important testimony to the fragmented, articulated, and multi-faceted sovereignty over borders.

I documented a similar repurposing of human rights for border enforcement practices in my analysis of the migration chapter of the EU approach “to a changing neighborhood,” i.e. the EU master plan for relations with Northern African countries in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings. It is in fact through the technologies of the humanitarian frontier that a country of transit like Tunisia is transformed into a country of forced settlement for migrants and refugees. The “EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership,” in fact, plans for¹⁶¹ the transformation of Tunisia into a country of asylum, i.e., a European neighborhood “at large” where a preventative humanitarian border is enlisted and where asylum seekers from African and Middle Eastern countries are forced to find refuge. It is a spatial fix of refugees to the Tunisian neighborhood framed as a strengthening of Tunisian democracy through human rights (e.g., implementation of a functioning refugee system).

As part of the same policy packet, the language of an EU-Tunisia *partnership for democracy* also supports deportation schemes to Tunisia for

¹⁶⁰ I use quotation marks around words such as “expulsion” and “removal” to underline that I am not using them within their proper normative boundaries (technically, Tunisian migrants are not forcefully removed or expelled). However, their humanitarian routing to France is exactly aimed at removing them from the Italian territory.

¹⁶¹ It is important to underline that these are policy visions. They will thus have to eventually “land” on the contested terrain of implementation. My research in Chapter Four documented the initial steps of this contestation.

migrants of any nationality who are apprehended in Europe and who are believed to have transited through Tunisia. This is the humanitarian frontier spatialized as a Euro-Med Neighborhood: “presencing”¹⁶² migrants and refugees in Tunisia in order to un-presence them from Europe; reversing flows across the Mediterranean, through the promotion of a country like Tunisia as a democratic, human-rights-legitimate European partner.

Second, the nexus of humanitarianism and migration management also speaks to another central Mediterranean frontier, one in which the governmental functions that are brought to bear on migrants and refugees expand beyond migration management itself. In other words, migrants and refugees are incorporated into the receiving country’s statecraft as its internalized population—differentially and predatorily internalized—but still a receiving country’s “population.”¹⁶³ In other words, if above I documented the new frontiers of governing migration that come through humanitarianism, here I account for new frontiers of governing *through* migration that became available in the name of human rights.

But, what else is being governed, then, if not only or mainly migration flows? A staggering national and local economy, first of all, as my engagement

¹⁶² I owe this term to Ralph Cintron, whose path-breaking engagement in the rhetoric of migration politics and presence is part of his forthcoming book *Democracy as Fetish* (the chapter I reference here was presented to the UIC Institute for the Humanities; Cintron, 2013).

¹⁶³ Elsewhere I have reflected on how Foucault’s notion of “population” can’t technically apply to migrants and refugees since “population” is the nationally bounded target of governmentality (Garelli, 2012). The predatory and differential inclusion that I am documenting here, however, slightly shifts the terms of this conversion in ways that deserve analytical attention.

with the refugee center of Mineo, in Sicily, illustrated in Chapter Three. The humanitarian frontier at the camp of Mineo works as a *technology for value extraction* where refugees' presence is profited on and uncared for and where the refugee camp becomes a medium for re-routing humanitarian funds to feed the local tertiary sector. It's been widely recognized that humanitarianism is part of a chain of value (e.g., Weiss, 2013) with concrete interests in the reproduction of what it cares for, i.e., the preservation of the industry. However, when it comes to refugees and their host society, public discourse tends toward a different framing, with an obsessive focus on the financial burden to host societies that refugees represents. My illustration of the "extractivist inclusion" for which refugees are targeted at the camp of Mineo speaks to an expanding frontier of capital in the management of humanitarian sites for refugees.

But the governing through migrants and refugees that I am describing under the notion of a "humanitarian frontier" is not limited only to the national economy of the receiving country. The expansion of the governmental functions that are brought to bear on migrants and refugees also invests the terrain of international relations and the economy of transit countries. The European push for Tunisia to implement refugee legislation, for example, is an instance of how asylum seekers and refugees become part of international negotiations. Tunisia, in fact, commits to the regulatory changes necessary for it to become an internationally legitimized country of refuge (and hence, following this

perspective, absorb refugee flows) in exchange for European economic investment.

Whereas the securitarian border governs migrants and refugees as the “outside” of the national order that actually threatens it, the humanitarian frontier incorporates them—predatorily, differentially, and instrumentally—as an “inside” through which the national order is “cared for.” As I detail these two approaches to border management, humanitarian and securitarian, it is important to underline that they synchronously pertain to the polymorphous character of border-work. Securitarian and humanitarian border practices, in fact, work in conjunction in the sites that I researched.¹⁶⁴ My work, in fact, documented *layers* of sovereignty, not sovereignty’s diachronic stages: it is not about one border technology supplanting the other; it is about their changing configurations, the different ways in which border-work is assembled.

The recently announced EU military mission in Libya is a case in point: it is to this humanitarian war, waged on the battleground of migrants’ departures, that I now turn my attention in order to introduce the epistemic interventions that I envision engaging in my future work on the humanitarian frontier.

¹⁶⁴ For instance, in the Schengen chapter, despite the controversy around humanitarian permit, Italy and France were working in unison in terms of fencing up against Tunisian migrants; the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership crafts deportation schemes and focuses on the security threats in the Euro-Med neighborhood.

5.2 Humanitarian War: Preventing Departures

After yet another tragic border-death record was broken in the Mediterranean in the month of April 2015,¹⁶⁵ European Union leaders signed onto an *air and naval military mission off the coasts of Libya*, the country where most migrants and refugees end up taking boats toward Europe. The EU military plan was revealed in early May by the media organization Wikileaks, the website Statewatch, and the newspaper *The Guardian* which published and commented on a leaked EU document on the military mission. The document presents a plan “to disrupt the business model of the smugglers, achieved by undertaking systematic efforts to identify, seize/capture and *destroy vessels* and assets before they are used...[and] on the high seas” (Statewatch, 2015: 1; emphasis added).

A few days earlier a *European Agenda on Migration* was published, announcing (but not specifying) a similar plan for “targeting criminal smuggling networks” (European Commission, 2015: 3) and hence responding, so the *Agenda* goes, “to the human tragedy in the whole of the Mediterranean.” The leaked document clarifies the type of response: it details the military deploy, announces that UN backing will be pursued but would not be necessary for the mission to start, illustrates the intelligence and surveillance components of the mission, and clarifies that operations against vessels and smugglers in the

¹⁶⁵ Over 2,000 refugees and migrants were recorded dying at the Mediterranean border between April 13-20, 2015, with the single biggest loss of lives occurring on April 19 when 850 refugees died as their boat capsized off the Libyan coast while it was heading to Lampedusa, carrying people from Eritrea, Senegal, Syria, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Gambia, Ivory Coast, and Ethiopia.

presence of migrants will present “a high risk of collateral damage including the loss of life” (Statewatch, 2015: 8).

Waging war in the name of protecting life is a deep-rooted and well-documented tenet of humanitarianism (Fassin and Pandolfi, 2010; Orford, 1999, 2003). However, with the announced EU mission in Libya, this belligerent humanitarianism is *shifting terrain*, moving from the realm of international relations and geopolitics to the sphere of migration management—proving, as Didier Fassin put it in 2010 quoting the military theorist Clausewitz, that “humanitarianism is nothing but the continuation of politics by other means” (Fassin, 2010: 247).¹⁶⁶

But what type of humanitarian war is the EU planning in Libya? What does it mean to wage an intervention to *destroy the logistics of migrant travels* across the Mediterranean in order to save migrants from death at sea? It means deploying military force to *block migrants’ and refugees’ departures* in the name of saving their lives from a possible shipwreck en route to Europe and with the result of abandoning them to sure atrocities in Libya.¹⁶⁷ Destroying the means of transportation at origin—in the country of departure toward Europe—signifies the

¹⁶⁶ Parsing which politics is being continued however—and how, through humanitarian continuation, “politics” is being reconfigured and maybe even displaced from its known territories (Redfield, 2012)—is what calls for analytical engagement.

¹⁶⁷ At the EU summit of April 23, 2015, a program for the resettlement of 5,000 refugees from the Mediterranean crisis was presented (the number was bumped up to 20,000 in a subsequent document). These are ridiculous numbers. Let me just give an example from Syria: more than 3,900,000 Syrians had fled their country because of the war as of August 2014. Lebanon hosted 1,196,560; Turkey 1,758,092; Jordan 628,427; Iraq 247,861; Egypt 133,862; the 28 EU member states altogether received 24,793 Syrian refugees, as of August 2014. (Source: The Greens, European Free Alliance, 2014). For a compelling visual representation of how little the EU has been doing for Syrian refugees, see: <http://greenmediabox.eu/syrianrefugees/> (last accessed: May 27, 2015).

closing off of the last and only “escape route” (Papadopoulos et al, 2008) left to people fleeing war, famine, and persecution—a dangerous, violent, abject escape route (Amnesty International, 2015) but the only one available to refugees in the current political approach to regulatory frames.

If indeed carried out, this EU military intervention would reassemble the humanitarian frontier as the *ultimate “preventative border”* of the EU abroad. The staple of the EU migration regime is externalization: in this case, however, the project to contain migrant and refugee flows by externalizing border enforcement in countries of departure reaches the apex of planning a full-fledged blockage.

Military operations at the humanitarian frontier of the Mediterranean are nothing new.¹⁶⁸ So far, however, they have mainly¹⁶⁹ engaged in search and rescue missions, i.e., routing onto land people who were about to sink. This announced EU mission in Libya would bring humanitarian warfare to a different level: it is a plan of attack against the infrastructure of travels, the physical infrastructure first of all and the business model of the travels. Let me attend to both sides of this plan.

The War on Vessels – Destroying vessels, the EU military strategy contends, will prevent shipwrecks. The idea of a war against vessels is flawed and even ridiculous from a planning standpoint: it will slow down rescue missions

¹⁶⁸ For instance, in 2013, Italy launched the Mare Nostrum operation, a year long “military and humanitarian” mission, where the Italian Navy intercepted and rescued 150,000 migrants and refugees whose boats were in distress and at risk of drowning.

¹⁶⁹ It’s been documented that as part of the Mare Nostrum mission, for instance, rescued boatpeople were fingerprinted at sea, upon rescue, in a problematic overlap of humanitarian and securitarian functions on traumatized bodies.

(Paleologo, 2015), and boats are replaceable anyway. But it is also *criminal, from a humanitarian standpoint*. What will happen in Libya, for instance, if the EU were indeed to launch its operation? The cost of crossing would rise, there would be fewer vessels that would be even more overcrowded and even less seaworthy, and growing numbers of refugees¹⁷⁰ would be stuck in an extremely violent and dangerous place like Libya where abduction, sexual violence, and abuse against migrants and refugees are the rule (Amnesty International, 2015).

So this mission simply displaces the site of death-risk for migrants and refugees, *from* the doorstep of Europe in the Mediterranean Sea, where the risk is high¹⁷¹ but where search and rescue missions are in force, *to* Libya where refugees' lives are bound to be subjected to violence and where there will be no rescue except death.

A war on vessels, however, goes a long way in terms of public support. As William Walters recently put it to present his important research on “viapolitics:”

We need a fuller understanding of how certain vehicles function as *visual operators* in what is emerging as one of the most significant developments in migration politics, namely the humanitarianization of migration control. (Walters, 2014: 8; emphasis added)

The rickety, overcrowded, unseaworthy boat has certainly become the icon of border-deaths in the Mediterranean. It is a convenient image for the EU to use in this context: it stages a humanitarian tragedy and erases the EU's own visa

¹⁷⁰ At this point, everyone who wants to leave from Libya should be considered a refugee, as war is waged on them.

¹⁷¹ The probability of dying at sea in crossing the Mediterranean has recently been estimated around 65% (Fargues and Di Bartolomeo, 2015).

politics that forces people on these boats in the first place (See: Chapter One). Vessels are the visual operators of public support for this EU mission: by fixing the risk of death to the moment of crossing, they erase the politics of death that people are running away from by *deciding* to take a chance on a boat. The notion of “decision” is key here. Let me expand on this.

Humanitarianism and Its Distorted Historical Narrative — The EU-planned mission is predicated on a deeply flawed historical parallel, which is nonetheless instrumental in supporting the humanitarian argument. A military action is needed, the EU rhetoric goes, in order to “save migrants and refugees...from the 21st century slave trade” of organized human trafficking (e.g., Renzi, 2015, Mogherini, 2015). So migrants and refugees are portrayed as slaves traded by traffickers across the Mediterranean.

This is crude historical blasphemy. As I write, over 500 migration and slavery scholars have signed a petition to denounce that this argument as historically skewed, to clarify that migrants and refugees today *want* to leave Libya and get to Europe, and to critique the EU mission and the EU fabrication of a humanitarian argument based on a flawed historical lesson. Let me quote from the petition’s text published on *Open Democracy*:

What is happening in the Mediterranean today does not even remotely resemble the transatlantic slave trade. Enslaved Africans did not want to move. They were held in dungeons before being shackled and loaded onto ships. They had to be prevented from choosing suicide over forcible transportation...*Today, those embarking on the journey to Europe want to move. If they were free to do so, they would be taking advantage of the flights that budget airlines operate between North Africa and Europe at a tiny fraction of the cost of the extraordinarily dangerous sea passage.* And it is

not ‘slavers’ or ‘traffickers’ who are preventing them from accessing this safe route. (Achtnich, Ahmed, Anderson et al, 2015, emphasis added)

To continue the argument of the petition: That risking their lives at sea is the only way out of certain death at home is the outcome of the institutional violence of European migration politics. The network of smugglers is the *response* to the EU visa politics of border-deaths. Sea-crossing is an illegalized border crossing on the way to refuge, in the absence of legal and safer means of escape, an absence that allows a market for the services of the smuggler to emerge (Giuffre’ and Costello, 2015).

In closing, let me summarize three important points. In the military fashion of the EU-planned mission in Libya, the “humanitarian frontier”:

- *blocks departures* of refugees and migrants from Libya,
- *violates human rights, i.e., the right to leave any country and the right to seek asylum*, and
- *delivers* migrants and refugees to sure *violence* and abuse in Libya.

In 2010 Didier Fassin importantly underlined that humanitarianism should be seen as “a new repertoire for public action...not as something external to politics, but as something that reformulates what is at stake in politics” (247). In a recent contribution, Peter Redfield (2012) calls for an interrogation of what “politics” is when it is enacted through humanitarianism (2015: 453). In what

follows I sketch some possible avenues through which this interrogation can be pursued and sketch some epistemic recommendations for understanding and intervening on the politics of the humanitarian frontier.

5.3 Re-Routing the Humanitarian Frontier: A Research Program

The humanitarian frontier is fast moving, land-grabbing, and ever-expanding, with violent bordering outcomes for migrants and refugees, as the previous chapters have documented. With its claim to universality, status of moral authority, and lack of empirical specificity, humanitarianism is a potentially viral policy framework in the context of a global approach to migration management. Humanitarianism is always an ambiguous political project. Here I explore a possible use of this project to support migrants and refugees' "right to escape" (Mezzadra, 2006)¹⁷² and their "right to presence" across the shores of the Mediterranean.

As the EU military is about to undertake its first hostility ever and do so on the battlefield of migrants' and refugees' departures; as several political processes have been initiated to block migrants and refugees in African countries;¹⁷³ and, finally, as the claim to "save" and "protect" migrants' lives has

¹⁷² While this notion, importantly, has recently entered public discourse (e.g., Costello, 2015), it is important to underline the theoretical context from which it arose, i.e., the Autonomy of Migration debate, in which mobility is not constrained by the terms of human rights or migration politics but is enacted as a disobedient practice of escape.

¹⁷³ I refer specifically to the following processes: Mobility Partnerships, Route Management Initiatives (e.g., the "Khartoum Process"), and the regional consultative

been persistently tied to these initiatives—as, in other words, border-work is increasingly naturalized as humanitarianism—I am now interested in mapping possible sites of epistemic intervention on this fast expanding and ever re-assembling terrain of the “humanitarian frontier.”¹⁷⁴ My dissertation has documented a process of *humanitarian routing*: a process whereby migrants are “routed away” from Europe in the name of human rights or “fixed for profit” in humanitarian spaces. Now I am interested in working diagnostically on the humanitarian frontier, in order to understand how it could instead be used to support migrants’ and refugees’ claims to presence—across the Mediterranean, in Europe, and through safe and regular paths of mobility.

Allow me a short digression to situate this engagement. The 90s and 00s have been characterized by a steady process of “securitization”: the naturalization of illegality as the overarching ontology through which migrant presence is read and as the rationale for the emergence of a deportation regime across the world. The political, technocratic, and epistemic effort in the direction of naturalizing the criminalization of undocumented border crossings was so persistent that the notion of migration as a “problem” that requires special regulations and as a threat to the receiving countries’ stability is either taken for granted in mainstream research on migration or has become a constantly

processes (RCPs) also announced as part of the 2015 EU Agenda on migration.

¹⁷⁴ Over the course of writing this dissertation, the humanitarian frontier in the Mediterranean has variously taken on the features of a forcefully imposed “burden sharing” across the Schengen space, a deportation technology, a rescue mission, and finally a warfare against migrants’ vessels.

necessary foil for critical research on migration.

Humanitarianism is undergoing a similar process as it is associated with the call to prevent migrants and refugees from leaving to Europe and with the predicament to save them from traffickers. In this context, then, the challenge is: How might the call to find a political solution for migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean be framed in humanitarian terms—relying on international human rights regulations and agreements—but part ways from the bordering technologies that humanitarian policies are currently working toward in the region (routing migrants and refugees away from the EU and containing them in African countries)?

In *policy terms*, the answer is straightforward, i.e. humanitarian corridors that allow for safe and legal arrivals in Europe for those fleeing wars and violence (Carta di Lampedusa, 2014),¹⁷⁵ as was done at other times of political and humanitarian crisis (e.g., Kosovo). In terms of the humanitarian frontier, this policy would pave the ground for a political process of re-routing humanitarianism in the Mediterranean of migrants. It would, in fact, correspond to three important outcomes:

1. Enacting *humanitarianism* as the political, normative, and public ground on which to grant safe and enduring exertion of fundamental human rights for

¹⁷⁵ Among the many formulations of what a humanitarian corridor may entail, the Lampedusa Charter's offers an interesting one, affirming the need to "establish routes to guarantee secure and fast arrival for those who leave their territory of birth and/or citizenship and/or residence, in order to escape wars, individual or collective persecutions, climate and environmental catastrophes, as well as economic and social ones." (Charter of Lampedusa, 2014).

migrants and refugees (e.g., the right to leave any country; the right to claim asylum);

2. Reclaiming “international protection” as the focus of *migration management* through humanitarianism, versus the current focus on preventative border enforcement;
3. Re-directing the *governmental target* of the humanitarian frontier from the current focus on managing departures (blocking, rescuing, deporting people who are trying to leave the MENA region toward Europe) to ensuring safe arrivals for those fleeing war, violence, and persecution.

In short, it would be a shift from border enforcement through humanitarianism, to *humanitarian visas* for the people caught in the Mediterranean crisis. In October 2013—in the aftermath of the then biggest single loss of life in the Mediterranean—the European group GUE/NGL¹⁷⁶ unsuccessfully proposed to undertake this initiative in a special session of European Parliament on the Mediterranean crisis. The initiative has been revived several times since then with different variations and from very different political ranks.¹⁷⁷ It is important to underline that this policy could be implemented within

¹⁷⁶ The “European United Left / Nordic Green Left” is a left-wing political group in the European Parliament; see <http://www.guengl.eu> (last accessed May, 20, 2015).

¹⁷⁷ It was first proposed by activist groups in 2013 (Melting Pot, 2013) and has, since then, been backed by EU politicians, migrant organizations of different political approaches (from radical groups to institutional organizations such as UNHCR and even IOM), and religious groups (actually one of the most original proposals, which included a funding scheme through the Italian mandatory tax to support religious and social institutions, comes from the Federazione Chiese Evangeliche e Valdesi, 2014: <http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/“contro-le-stragi-in-mare-subito-un-corridoio-umanitario”/>).

the current regulatory framework: first, enforcing the Schengen Border Code which allows member states to issue visas to third-country nationals for humanitarian purposes; second suspending Dublin III¹⁷⁸ in order to allow refugees to relocate to a EU member state where they may have family or other types of connections. Yet in the current political climate and in the overwhelming presence of border enforcement naturalized as a fully enlisted humanitarian predicament, such a political move is doomed to fail or to be implemented as another version of the exclusionary politics of the humanitarian frontier.¹⁷⁹

My future research addresses this challenge. I want to close by sketching two areas of epistemic engagement that I intend to pursue in order to contribute to a political articulation of a politics of presence linked to the current humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean.

1. “Forced Mobility and Immobility” Through Humanitarianism: Documenting the Spaces of the Humanitarian Frontier — When humanitarianism is the supporting argument for routing migrants and refugees away from their intended paths (e.g., blocking their access to transit countries), critical scrutiny about the processes this humanitarian routing catalyzes is very difficult to

¹⁷⁸ The suspension of Dublin III would allow refugees to locate themselves in the European country where they may have family ties or other connections, versus the current mandatory refuge in the country through which the asylum seeker accessed the EU.

¹⁷⁹ The European Commission has recently approved two plans in this direction. First, the reinstallation across Europe of 40,000 asylum seekers from Syria and Eritrea who landed in Italy and Greece after April 15, 2015. The resettlement of 20,000 third-country refugees across Europe in the course of the next two years. While this is certainly an important step, its impact on the Mediterranean crisis is limited to say the least.

mobilize. This is the case especially when the practice of departing (in its infrastructure, business model, or alleged forcefulness) is framed as a humanitarian emergency (in order to prevent a shipwreck or save victims of traffickers). That migrants and refugees are blocked at origin and in transit is nothing new, but it was usually the outcome of a securitarian agenda and police operations. It is the humanitarian positioning of this migration containment that is new: migrants and refugees blocked in Libya, trapped in Tunisia, or routed into screening centers in countries in the Horn of Africa on the grounds of saving/protecting their lives.

Humanitarianism is producing forced mobility to places of abjection for people who seek refuge and, in parallel, it is producing their forced immobility in countries of forced settlement. Documenting the geographies of the current practices of the humanitarian frontier is a first step toward the political articulation of a different solution to the Mediterranean crisis. With Federica Sossi and Martina Tazzioli, I have recently started to collect ethnographic evidence on the carceral dimension (Garelli, Sossi, Tazzioli, 2015) and spaces of abandonment (Garelli and Tazzioli, forthcoming) for refugees blocked in Tunisia.

I intend to continue this work through ethnographic engagement in Tunisia, where the logistics of humanitarianism are constantly changing (the sites of and the overall approach to hosting and processing), though they so far maintain the destitution of refugees as their enduring practice. I also intend to conduct non-local ethnography (interviewing policy-makers, activists, and refugee

organizations) on different EU plans for “increasing the migration management capacity” in origin and transit countries like Libya and countries of the Horn of Africa (“EU Bam Libya,” launched in 2013; “EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative,” signed in 2014).

2. The Politics of Departures — The landscape of departures, in its logistics and business model, is constantly mobilized to support humanitarian initiatives of migration containment in African and Middle Eastern countries. This framing comes with two problematic outcomes. First, humanitarian interventions are abstracted from visa politics that puts migrants on unseaworthy, overcrowded boats in the first place and that creates an informal market for organizing trips.

Second, the *decision* to risk one’s life—a consciously assumed risk, as it emerges as when talking with anyone who tried or is planning to cross the Mediterranean—is removed from the picture, as migrants and refugees are portrayed as victims of traffickers. While people are certainly also trafficked across the Mediterranean, resorting to a smuggler is the most often chosen path for Mediterranean “boatpeople,” the only path out of war and persecution that is allowed by visa policies. In other words, departures are chosen acts of refusing to be blocked in spaces of daily, enduring, and escalating violence, and the network of smugglers provides the only available travel option for those who would not be granted a Schengen visa or who have no passport.

Interviewing a sampling of migrants and refugees who managed to arrive in Italy about their Mediterranean crossing, I will document the differences

between smuggling and trafficking, which are currently constantly conflated in policy and public discourse; underline the geographically and historically specific characteristics of how trips are organized—which are very different, say, on the Tunisian beach of Zarzis, for instance, from those on the Libyan port of Zuwarah as well as from those in any given Libyan port in the time of Ghaddafi, in the aftermath of the uprisings, during civil unrest, or after the EU announced its military mission in Libya (2015); and, finally, examine what counts as a threat to life worth humanitarian intervention in the context of a migrant’s decision to flee across the Mediterranean.

The humanitarian frontier works through the regulatory and epistemic spaces of policy mobility. The last two chapters of my dissertation documented how policy-mobility channels serve the implementation of border-work in the name of humanitarianism. Next, I want to explore how epistemic communities that participate in migration policy mobility across the Mediterranean think about humanitarianism (both as humanitarian routes and as humanitarian claims to presence), its regulatory frameworks at different scales, and its current mandated enactments as part of the EU-Tunisia Mobility Partnership and the EU-African Union Migration Route Initiative.

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VITA

NAME

Glenda Garelli

EDUCATION

B.A., Philosophy, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy, 1998.

MUPP, Urban Planning and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008.

Ph.D. Urban Planning and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2015.

HONORS

2012-13. University of Illinois at Chicago, Dean's Scholar Award.

2009-11. UIC Chancellor's Supplemental Graduate Research Fellowship.

2007. UIC Provost's Award for Graduate Research.

TEACHING

University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Urban Planning and Policy, USA.

2009-2014. Instructor – "Cinema and the City," (undergraduate students).

2008-2010. Teaching Assistant – David Perry and Rachel Weber, "Great Cities: UIC's Metropolitan Commitment" (undergraduate students).

2008. Teaching Assistant – Raffaella Nanetti, "Globalization and International Development II" (graduate students).

Università degli Studi di Catania, Department of Humanities, Italy

2013. Instructor, European Master Erasmus Mundus Tema –

"Mediterranean Maps and Counter-Maps," Designed syllabus, taught, advised students (graduate students).

Università degli Studi di Bergamo, Department of Philosophy, Italy.

1999-2004. Teaching Assistant – Federica Sossi, "Aesthetic and Theoretical Philosophy" (undergraduate students).

PUBLICATIONS

(2015, forthcoming) Garelli, Glenda, and Martina Tazzioli, *Tunisia as a Revolutionized Space of Migration*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, Pivot Series Mobility and Politics (MPP).

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RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2015. "Migrants in Tunisia: Detained or Deported," a report by Glenda Garelli, Federica Sossi, Martina Tazzioli, <http://www.storiemigranti.org/spip.php?article1080>

2012-2015. Research Assistant for Norma Moruzzi's project *Gender and Revolution. Critique Interrupted*.

2011. Research Assistant for the project "Captive labor, mobile capital and migrant lives: Remittances as global commodities" (PIs: Phil Ashton and Ralph Cintron; Funding Unit: UIC Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy, IRRPP).

2008-2010. Research Assistant for Ralph Cintron's project *Democracy as Fetish*.

2006-present. Co-founder and member of the editorial board of the migration stories website www.storiemigranti.org, a web-based archive of migration stories.