



The socio-political construction of the Central Mediterranean Sea between politics of exclusion and practices of solidarity: the role of European migration policies and SAR NGOs in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings

Eugenia Blasetti

Introduction

In the last decade, different geopolitical dynamics and different political and international actors have been constantly reshaping the central Mediterranean space. The political uprisings of the so called Arab Spring in 2011 and the consequent reopening of the Mediterranean frontier, the EU political response to these events and the involvement of Search and Rescue (SAR) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) since 2014, have all transformed the central Mediterranean as a socio-political arena characterised by a series of conflicting spaces in which states' political power, control on human mobility and counter practices of solidarity have constantly intertwined and clashed.

As authoritarian regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya fell, in the aftermath of 2011, so did the cooperation framework established between the two shores of the Mediterranean, mainly defined by bilateral agreements ensuring regimes in North Africa as gatekeepers of migration flows towards Europe (Carrera et al. 2012). In response to this political instability, the EU's main attempt was to reinstate control and containment beyond its maritime borders, through means of externalisation and de-territorialization of border control. While pressuring new authorities in North Africa to cooperate in curbing irregular migration, and introducing new legislative proposals suspending mobility on land (Carrera et al. 2012), at sea, migrants' enduring and autonomous capacity to collectively move across the European border regime was fought through "politics of non-assistance" (Heller, Pezzani 2016:5) creating a maritime space of exclusion in the central Mediterranean.

In response to the persistent European policies of non-assistance, the launch of SAR operations conducted by independent NGOs in 2014, gradually reshaped the socio-political space of the central Mediterranean. Strongly criticising the exclusionary and securitised approach of the EU, while significantly supporting the unruly movements of migrants across the Mediterranean, SAR NGOs intervention was not only humanitarian but also social and political insofar it redefined the maritime space through principles of solidarity and political dissent. Despite their differences, SAR NGOs engagement in the central Mediterranean emerged as a form of political resistance, opening a space of dissent voices, and unlocking new spaces of counteraction in the central Mediterranean Sea (Dadusc, Mudu 2020).

The convergence of different state and non-state actors in the central Mediterranean Sea, as well as migrants' autonomous and collective attempts to challenge the European border regime at the central Mediterranean frontier, all contributed to a continuous reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean as a place composed of different and contrasting spaces ranging from exclusion to solidarity. Constantly reproduced and redefined by the different actors involved, the spatial dimension of the central Mediterranean assumed a multi-faceted identity becoming, in Foucauldian terms, a heterotopia representing in one real place several and often incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998).

Drawing on Lefebvre's theorisation of space as a social product that does not pre-exist human beings, rather it is built and shaped by them, and Foucault's notion of heterotopia, this paper proposes to analyse the role that both European migration policies and SAR NGOs' operations have played in the socio-political construction of the maritime space of the Central Mediterranean ensuing the Arab Spring, arguing that both these actors contribute to the reconfiguration of the latter as a transnational socio-political space in which exclusion and solidarity coexist and collide within a broader context of geopolitical space-making dynamics (Lefebvre 2018). Examining the theoretical framework underpinning the paper's main assumptions, the first section will focus on clarifying and explaining the main argument. Turning to the historical and political events that occurred in the Mediterranean region since 2011, the analysis will then provide a critical examination of both European politics of border control and SAR NGOs in the central Mediterranean, in the attempt to demonstrate how they both unfold processes of reconfiguration of the latter, redefining its spatial dimension as a heterotopia in which different and incompatible spaces of exclusion, humanitarianism and practices of solidarity coexist and clash.

1. The *heterotopia* of the central Mediterranean space between politics of exclusion and practices of solidarity

The central Mediterranean Sea, far from being a neutral setting in which events simply unfold, it is rather produced and reproduced by the social and political relations (Lefebvre 2018) underpinning the complex relationship between the EU and (the space beyond) its borders. Geographically constituting the maritime area between North Africa and Southern Europe, the central Mediterranean Sea is here also conceptually understood as a "transnational social space" (Faist 2019: 7), defined by processes and practices of social and spatial differentiation (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002), within a specific mode of production, entailing, containing, and dissimulating social and political relationships in their coexistence and simultaneity (Lefebvre 2018).

Ever since the end of the Cold War, the EU has faced the essential dilemma of where its final borders should be set (Smith 2005). With the gradual abolishment of borders within the European space, relationship with the outer space has become more problematic (Campesi 2015; Ciabbarri 2020; Del Sarto 2010). As the distinction

between the inside and the outside is inherent in any production of space reproduced by practices of mobility control (Collyer 2016), the construction of the European outer space became deeply connected with increasingly restrictive migration politics (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002). This led to the development of a “variable geometry of borders” (Del Sarto 2010:1), in which space is defined and governed through a variety of different mechanisms and actors (Bialasewicz 2012). In this context, the Mediterranean space features as the “EU borderlands, a peripheral and hybrid area of transition” (Del Sarto 2010: 2) in which the social and political traits of the Mediterranean Sea are defined through processes of bordering and practices of spatial differentiation (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002).

In this process of border making, practices of externalisation, based on shifting the locus of border control afield from European territory (Lavenex 2006), have become the EU main policy instrument to manage undesired human migration since the establishment of the Schengen area. As externalised European border control in the central Mediterranean strongly relied on cooperation with northern African countries, when political protests burst in the southern shore in 2011 such mechanism of cooperation was severely disrupted. Political events and geopolitical reactions ensuing the Arab uprisings deeply reshaped the spatial dimension of the central Mediterranean through a multifaceted socio-political process, ranging from cooperation to conflict (Lefebvre 2018). Such social and political changes led to a general fragmentation of the central Mediterranean space in which Lefebvre’s triad of space overtly emerged as the central Mediterranean simultaneously encompassed the perceived, the conceived and the lived dimension of space (Lefebvre 2018). While constituting the socio-physical material space in which migration occurred, the transnational space of the central Mediterranean also constituted a representation of space, insofar it was differently conceived by the different actors involved (Lefebvre 2018). While the EU conceived the central Mediterranean as a space of migration containment, defining the ontological distinction between what is accepted to be inside borders and what must remain outside, SAR NGOs conceived it as a space of human rescuing and, at times, of political dissent, posing solidarity rather than power at the core of social relationships. But the central Mediterranean also constitutes a space of representation, as it is shaped by those who directly live it, through their associated experiences, images, symbols, within what Lefebvre calls the space of the “inhabitants” and “users” (Lefebvre 2018:59). In this sense, the enduring, autonomous, and collective mobility of migrants (Heller, Pezzani 2016:8), despite everything, also contests European migration policies through a counter production of the Mediterranean Sea as a space of crossings and battles in which the exclusionary dimension of space is challenged and crossed.

In the socio-political construction of the central Mediterranean space, following the political events of 2011, the different perceptions of the spatial dimension of the sea strongly emerged through the different spatial practices deployed. While migrants’ unruly movements produced the Mediterranean as a space of new possibilities and connections, EU migration politics and the different, at times

divergent, imaginaries and discursive framings of SAR NGOs' interventions, have strongly contributed to the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean Sea as a fluctuating space embroiling different and incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998). Representing different social and political realities, the central Mediterranean space has been redefined, in Foucauldian terms, as a heterotopia juxtaposing in one real place incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998). As described by Foucault, in fact, the heterotopic space features as a real emplacement in which all other emplacements encompassed are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed (Foucault 1998).

While acknowledging that Foucault's accounts of the concept of heterotopia remain briefly sketched and, to a certain extent, confusing, Johnson's interpretation of Foucault's heterotopia as a space simultaneously reflecting and unsettling other spaces (Johnson 2006) seems to better clarify the general concept. If we understand Foucauldian heterotopias as spaces where the normal ordering of things is confronted with a different ordering of things, also adopting Beckett, Bagguley and Campbell's interpretation (2017), then it seems clearer why such concept may be relevant to the present analysis. While EU migration politics produce the central Mediterranean as a space of violence and refusal, in the name of national security (Campesi 2015) ordering the maritime space according to European rules and norms, practices of solidarity and political dissent deployed by SAR NGOs overturn such ordering, supporting migrants' journeys and thus reconceptualising the central Mediterranean as a space of possibilities and opportunities (Garofalo 2017). The direct involvement of NGOs in rescuing operations challenges usual processes of space production in the central Mediterranean, re-politicising migration and border management by questioning and contrasting governmental policies (Cuttitta 2018a), while supporting migrants' autonomous mobility.

However, such re-conceptualisation does not occur homogeneously. While sharing the general motivation to alleviate suffering in the central Mediterranean, as Stierl (2017) argues, SAR NGOs understand their actions at sea differently, producing a "wide spectrum of humanitarian" (Stierl 2017: 6) spaces. The extent to which these different humanitarian spaces challenge and affect European migration policies, strongly depends on the way they conceive their mission at sea and whether their aim is merely humanitarian or also political (Cuttitta 2018a). While some NGOs aim at supporting states through humanitarian SAR operations, framing the latter as a mere pragmatic solution to limited EU and state resources and capacity (Stierl 2017), others rather overtly denounce the European restrictive border regime in the attempt to produce an alternative Mediterranean space based on solidarity and socio-political recognition of others. When NGOs intervention is offered as a merely technical and pragmatic solution, consciously distancing itself from any political debate, let alone, political dissent (Stierl 2017) framing migrants as victims that need to be saved, the humanitarian ends up reproducing stark asymmetries of power in which solidarity features as mere assistance to those in need. But when humanitarianism also embraces political dissent in the name of an alternative conceptualisation of borders, the central Mediterranean space is then redefined as a place of solidarity where migrants'

attempts to challenge the European border regime are strongly supported and become part of a real counter-production of the space of the sea.

As a result, a heterogeneous space of solidarity emerges, in which the spatial socio-political dimension of the central Mediterranean Sea appears even more fragmented, embodying the exclusionary dimension of European migration policies while also encompassing several and different modes of other space production from humanitarian assistance to political dissent. It is precisely in this production of the different political and social spaces of exclusion, humanitarianism, and solidarity that the heterotopic character of the central Mediterranean becomes manifest. The clashing and overlapping spaces (Johnson 2006) produced by EU migration policies and SAR NGOs are simultaneously entangled and in contrast with each other alongside a constant production and reproduction of the central Mediterranean space defined by an ever changing, (un)balance between the logic of exclusion and inclusion (Cuttitta 2018b). While functioning as a political excluding border zone operating as a geopolitical tool through which the EU defines its relationship with the space beyond its borders, the central Mediterranean Sea also appears as a space of humanitarian assistance, while also featuring as a political and social counter-site in which solidarity and certain types of resistance-practices (Beckett et al. 2017) to the EU border regime become possible.

Such multifaceted and constantly reconfigured identities that strongly emerged in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, define the central Mediterranean as a heterotopia insofar the space of established norms and rules is at the same time challenged and unchallenged yet strongly confronted with the production of transgressive spaces (Beckett et al. 2017) in an everlasting battle. The reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean space, occurring at different levels, embroiling different actors and complex old and new geopolitical dynamics in the region, results in a further redefinition of the space at and beyond European borders as an indefinite place, a multiplication of a series of places constantly changing (Leogrande 2019).

2. The Central Mediterranean region in the aftermath of the ‘Arab Spring’

Since the launch of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in 1995, the EU has attempted to regulate its interactions with the southern bank of the Mediterranean through a number of different policy instruments (Zardo, Cavatorta 2016) amongst which migration has always functioned as a geostrategic tool serving EU interests in the area (Collyer 2016). Following general and global trends of western liberal democracies extending control beyond their territories (Zaiotti 2016; Kent, et al. 2020), the main political strategy adopted by the Union in the governance of international migration was defined by the trans-nationalisation of migration controls (Collyer 2016: 613) through the externalisation of migration management (Bialasiewicz 2012). While establishing a variety of autonomous agencies engaged in migration management, such as the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and the supranational border control agency Frontex (Collyer 2016), bilateral agreements with northern African countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean also acquired significant

importance. While agreements with Tunisia and Egypt halted the central route of the Mediterranean and the strait of Suez, diplomatic relationships were also strengthened with Libya (Ciabbari 2020).

The Libyan case represents an emblematic case of the outsourcing and offshoring of European migration policies (Bialasewicz 2012) both before and after the political uprisings of 2011. Strongly oriented at combating criminal organizations and the smuggling of human beings, in 2003 the Italian government signed a cooperation agreement with Gaddafi's Libya (Martirano 2003) followed, in 2007, by a series of bilateral agreements which allowed for joint border patrols along the Libyan coast while providing EU funded surveillance equipment to monitor Libya's land and sea borders (Bialasewicz 2012). Agreements also focused on implementing training programmes for the Libyan Coast Guard, on the construction of detention centres for irregular migrants in Libya, and on the financing of repatriation programmes (Ciabbari 2020). Again in 2008, after a long process of negotiations, Italy and Libya signed the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation, which also encompassed the fight against illegal immigration. The Treaty also established that Libyan land borders were to be controlled by a satellite detection system, jointly financed by Italy and the EU (Ronzitti 2009). The 2008 agreement, which must be understood within the broader framework of a long lasting special diplomatic relation between Italy and Libya, (Corriere della Sera 2008), had an important impact on the management of migration flows in the central Mediterranean. Libya's approval to tightening control of its territorial waters, while accepting disembarkation of individuals intercepted at sea by Italian vessels (Bialasewicz 2012), translated, in fact, in the establishment of politics of pushbacks based on repatriation of migrants to Libya (Ciabbari 2020).

With the burst of political protests in 2011, known as the Arab Spring, the complex and controversial European system of border control within the Euro-Mediterranean region, was disrupted (Seeberg 2013), with a consequent increase of migration flows towards Europe. Differently from Egypt and Tunisia, in Libya, where political turmoil had resulted in a civil war, the deployment of an international military intervention contributed to further deteriorate the conflicting situation in 2014 (Morone 2015). Gaddafi's downfall, and the consequent disruption of the cooperation mechanism between Libya and Italy, resulted in Libya and the central Mediterranean becoming the primary migratory route towards Europe.

In Libya, where migration has had an important historical economic and socio-political significance, with the country traditionally hosting a significant number of migrant workers from neighbouring countries as well as from southern African states (Seeberg 2013), the war and the spread of violence had resulted in a serious increase of migration outflows due to the worsening of living and security conditions of both Libyan citizens and foreigners. Sub-Saharan migrants were particularly affected by the conflicting situation and soon became the scapegoats of the conflict and were subjected to torture, arbitrary arrests, and public killing (Morone 2015). Migrants in Libya also came from other neighbouring countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, together with Syrian refugees escaping the civil war and moving from hosting

countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey (Ciabbari 2020). When the conflict started in 2011, Libya was home to between 1.5 and 2.5 million foreign nationals, many of them refugees (Seeberg 2013). Economic migrants, belonging to those migration flows that occurred within the African region since the beginning of 2000s, following the opening of the southern frontier and the economic prosperity of that moment, also constituted an important share of the migrant population in Libya at the time (Morone 2015). Within such variety and complexity characterising the migrant population in Libya, only a small fraction of outflows from Libya was headed towards Europe. Despite the eurocentric representation of south-north migration flows, justifying restrictive European migration policies in the central Mediterranean, most migrants living in Libya had travelled there from their countries of origin looking for better working conditions. The decision to leave Libya and, in some cases, reach Europe, often solely depended on the political instability and the worsening of living conditions that followed the burst of the civil war (Morone 2015).

Such clarification is important insofar as it explains how in the Libyan case and, more generally, in the case of migration flows within the Euro-Mediterranean region, it was more difficult to distinguish between traditional categories of migration – such as economic migrants vs. asylum seekers (Morone 2015). As van Houtoum and van Naerssen notice, despite the arbitrary and abstract difference usually upheld: “it is generally acknowledged [...] that it is extremely difficult to trace and categorise the many and different motivations and apparent need for people to migrate” (van Houtoum, van Naerssen 2002:129). As most people leaving Libya were not Libyan citizens, rather coming from other African countries, leaving Libya due to the worsening of living conditions ensuing the burst of the civil war, the “categorical fetishism” (Crawley, Skleparis 2018) that characterised the binary policy distinction of “in vs-out” (van Houtoum, van Naerssen 2002) only served European exclusionary purposes within the broader political mechanism of mobility selection. The political arguments put forward by the EU, underpinning the unavoidable necessity of restrictive political measures within the central Mediterranean, in order to defend the European territory, were thus deeply de-contextualised and consciously aimed at turning the central Mediterranean in a space of exclusion in which restoration of border control prevailed regardless of the historical, political and social context in which people migrated.

3. EU migration politics and the construction of a space of exclusion in the Central Mediterranean Sea

3.1 The European response to the political events of 2011

After a relatively optimistic reaction of the EU to the potential democratic shift in north African countries (Seeberg; Shteiwi 2013), characterised by: “the need for a new approach, a re-prioritisation and an introduction of new ways of working” (European Commission 2015: 2) not much seemed to change. The EU’s response to the Arab

uprisings was defined, once again, by processes of externalisation of border controls (Zardo 2020) in the attempt to re-establish the EU border regime. Intensification of border control and surveillance, through the mobilisation of Frontex, and the deployment of agents from the EUROPOL (Carrera et al. 2012) were the first policy initiatives taken by the EU. Also, EU relations with third countries – be they state of origin or transit – regained centrality in political discourse (Zardo 2020), as the EU strongly pressured newly established authorities in North Africa to cooperate in clamping down irregular immigration (Carrera et al. 2012). To this end, EU individual member states quickly began to set up new bilateral agreements with post-revolutionary authorities, accelerating processes of repatriation and cooperation in the fight against illegal immigration (Attinà 2018a). The need for the EU to strengthen its external migration policy, by setting up partnerships with third countries, was also made evident in official documents of the EU Commission in which it was explicitly clarified that: “the Arab Spring and events in the southern Mediterranean in 2011 further highlighted the need for a coherent and comprehensive migration policy for the EU” (European Commission 2011: 2). As a result, dialogues on migration, mobility and security were launched with Tunisia and Morocco, and later with Egypt, in order to establish Mobility Partnerships (European Commission 2011) further institutionalising migration as a security issue (Zardo; Cavatorta 2016).

Collaboration between the two shores of the Mediterranean was also put into effect through substantial financial incentives, in a partial reconfiguration of the EU funding landscape for migration, asylum, and border policies (Zardo 2020). Funding strongly reflected the general European understanding of migration in security terms and mainly supported measures of stricter border control, the fight against illegal immigration (Hertog 2016) and the reintegration of irregular migrants (Zardo 2020). Furthermore, EU legislation was modified with the introduction of new clauses imposing restrictions on mobility in the framework of emergency mechanisms. In addition to a modification of Visa regulation, the amendment of the Schengen Border Code was also undertaken (Carrera et al. 2012).

Despite these European attempts to re-establish political control on the Mediterranean space, migration flows significantly increased in 2013, as a result of the exacerbation of the Libyan conflict and the war in Syria (Ciabbari 2020). Such escalation also reflected an increase of casualties at sea, with the Lampedusa shipwreck in 2013 being the most emblematic. The EU thus entered a new phase of the migration crisis in the Mediterranean, with the Italian government launching Operation Mare Nostrum, re-orienting European priorities in the central Mediterranean. The operation shifted the focus from politics of border control to SAR operations aiming at rescuing migrants travelling on vessels in distress and combating organized crime and smugglers (Panebianco 2016). However, Mare Nostrum soon became the object of domestic political tensions, with both the EU and partner governments condemning the operation and blaming the Italian government for endangering the Schengen system (Attinà 2018b). Also claiming Mare Nostrum to be politically and economically unsustainable, in 2014 the Italian government called for the EU to take over the

mission (Panebianco 2016). Quickly re-orienting its migration policies towards border control (Cusumano; Villa 2020a), the EU launched the Frontex's Joint operation Triton, significantly reducing the operation assets and covering a far smaller area than the previously overseen by Mare Nostrum (Panebianco 2016). In the same year, the military maritime operation EUNAVFOR (European Union Naval Force) MED Operation Sophia was launched against criminal organizations of migrants trafficking, also aiming at reducing the number of arrivals (Attinà 2016). EU institutions and governments finally restored to exclusionary migration policies, calling on cooperation with third countries to block people at their borders (Attinà 2018b) pushing the EU border further south (Zardo:2020). Following the EU-Turkey agreement in 2016, the memorandum between Italy and Libyan militias in 2017 restored the Libyan coast guard, mainly through technical and capacity building programmes (Loschi, Russo 2020), fully delegating border control and thus preventing further departures. Strongly reasserting Libyan power over its waters, the agreement also marked the establishment of an exclusive Libyan SAR zone (Ciabbarri 2020). Regardless of Libya's legal framework, deeply colluded with serious human rights violations (Loschi, Russo 2020), the Central Mediterranean space was thus (re)defined through means of exclusion, within a geopolitical framework in which borders functioned as a strong strategic tool of socio-political power.

3.2 Securitisation of migration and the construction of a space of exclusion

European reactions to the political events of 2011 have often been understood through a crisis narrative approach, justifying political actions on the grounds of exceptional measures (Zaiotti 2016). However, EU politics towards migration in the aftermath of the Arab Spring rather recall general global tendencies of western liberal democracies to frame mobility in terms of insecurity (Carrera et al. 2012). The migration-security nexus, is, indeed, connected to global, social, and political transformations of border governance, in which processes of securitisation of migration draw back to wider processes of politicisation of immigrants and asylum seekers, depicted as dangerous to public order, cultural identity as well as domestic labour and market stability (Huysmans 2000). Such securitisation of migration has led to a deceptive use of the phenomenon, often situated within an erroneously homogeneous epistemic framework (Campesi 2015: 16), in which migration discourses are interrelated with a range of different political and social issues (Huysmans 2000). As a result, migration has been transformed into what Huysmans defines a "meta-issue": a phenomenon that can be referred to as the cause of many problems (Huysmans, 2000: 761).

Such securitisation also paved the way for new conceptualisations of state borders worldwide, grounded in the long-term rationale of borders being guarantors of security in a globalizing world. To this effect, borders have become socially and politically intrinsic to everyday life, affecting people and places in highly unequal manner (Popescu 2012). At the political level, this resulted in the development of

radical political strategies aimed at excluding certain categories of people (Huysmans 2000), through a general rearrangement of states' border control policies and practices transforming borders in systems of rules, grounded in processes of differentiation and selectivity (Mau et al. 2012). Territorial space, deeply intertwined with power, has thus become a device of control (Cuttitta 2007) through a deep and stark "complexification of the border" (Stierl 2017: 2) in which an array of innovative migration-control practices has emerged (Kent et al. 2020). The tendency to externalise control beyond national borders, resulting into a "spatial flexibilization" (Mau et al. 2012), is probably one of the most emblematic aspect of the overall process. So, for instance, in 1994 with the strategy of "Prevention through deterrence" the United States controlled its southern border using an array of fencing, surveillance and border guards. Similarly, Australian governments introduced boat turn backs, offshore asylum processing and maritime interception to prevent "boat people" to access Australian territory (Kent et. al 2020). Externalisation of border management is, therefore, neither a new phenomenon nor exclusively distinctive of the EU. Rather it dates back to the origins of immigration policy at the turn of the 20th century and it has experienced significant transformations since then, becoming more complex and widespread, affecting the constellation of actors involved and the nature of their relations, the technological tools they employ and the magnitude of legal and political challenges it confronts (Zaiotti 2016). Both the securitisation rationale and practices of externalisation of border control have been central to the socio-political construction of EU external borders. The redefinition of European internal borders ensuing the political construction of the Schengen area, occurred in parallel with a deep redefinition of external European borders in terms of security and control (Campesi 2015; Ciabbarri 2020). As migration became deeply associated with reterritorialization of exclusion (Collyer 2016), European border management was reorganised tout court (Campesi 2015) through practices of exclusion strictly linked with space and the territory as means to differentiate between the "Self" and the "Other" (Doty 1998).

In light of the foregoing considerations, the European political response to the political turmoil of 2011 was thus situated within a complex and dynamic geography of control (Campesi 2015) in which the relationship between power and space emerged as a crucial aspect of the social and political production of European external borders. In the aftermath of 2011 European migration policies were mainly concerned with the reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean space in terms of power and control. EU restrictive migration policies, and the selective outsourcing of border control duties, in strong cooperation with sending and transit countries, all served the aim of preventing migration to Europe (Del Sarto 2016), framing the central Mediterranean as a space of closure and exclusion. Such exclusionary character was mainly based on coercive power and control, as migrants did not intentionally stop moving, rather they were forcibly and forcefully detained. Politics of non-assistance at sea (Heller, Pezzani 2016) as much as pushback practices and repatriation policies, more than deterring maritime migration, that is changing the motivations of actors,

aimed at defending external borders, limiting people's capabilities to move. (Kent et al. 2020).¹ So, for example, when on 7 June 2016 Libyan authorities, alerted by the Italian coast guard about a vessel heading north, took migrant people on board and returned them to Libya (Cuttitta 2018b), they physically and coercively prevented them to reach European soil.

Within this context, the central Mediterranean space thus became the absolute strategic and political space (Lefebvre 2018) in which borders functioned as instruments of social stratification, reproducing social hierarchies and socio-political exclusion through practices of migration control and distribution of different mobility credentials (Campesi 2015). As van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002) have argued, it is precisely through and at borders, indeed, that rigidity and openness in the governance of places becomes most clearly manifested.

4. SAR NGOs reshaping the space of the central Mediterranean Sea

In response to the European exclusionary political stance, in 2014 civil society started playing a key role in the central Mediterranean space, conducting autonomous and independent SAR operations at sea (Cusumano; Villa 2020a). Launched by the Maltese charity Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), the first one to set sail, by 2016, several independent as well as more traditional NGOs, such as Sea-Watch and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) also became active in the central Mediterranean Sea.

Their involvement was strongly linked to the disengagement of the EU in SAR operations right after the end of Mare Nostrum. Despite Triton and EUNAVFOR Med's outward communication, emphasising the provision of SAR, EU operations only conducted a relatively limited number of SAR operations, rather prioritising border control and anti-smuggling tasks (Cusumano 2019). Such mismatch between rhetoric and action generally reflects behavioural politics of traditional humanitarianism worldwide, in which the a-political and de-historicised humanitarian reasons (Malkki 1996; Ticktin 2006) often work as fig leaves covering states' attempts to curb irregular migration and reinforce border control (Cusumano 2019). In this sense, the humanitarian dimension of EU migration governance in the central Mediterranean reifies what Fassin has called a "compassionate repression" (2011), in which the humanitarian, deeply intertwined with power and control, becomes just another strategic tool within the overall mechanism of border control (Tazzioli 2016). As a result, for instance, the humanitarian rhetoric deployed by Italian and EU, as well as Libyan authorities, about sea operations merely served the intent to cover up practices of interceptions through rescue operations (Tazzioli 2016; Cuttitta 2018b). Similarly, in sending and transit countries, the implementation of development-aid programmes (Kent et al. 2020) as well as the engagement of UN international organisation (e.g. IOM)² has become a widespread practice of: "not letting people leave" (Tazzioli 2016:13).

¹ Such theoretical clarification is important because as Kent et al. argue: "labeling tactics that are forceful exercises of defence or that threaten force as "deterrence" whitewashes their true nature and blurs the line between policies that might be considered legally acceptable and those that violate liberal protection commitments" (2020: 854).

Generally framed within the humanitarian lens, the engagement of SAR NGOs at sea, has therefore raised general skepticism (Cuttitta 2017; Tazzioli 2016; Stierl 2017; Ciabbari 2020) about their capabilities to re-think and truly challenge EU migration governance in the central Mediterranean. At a first glance, indeed, the humanitarian rhetoric of saving lives at sea recalls a patronising and dehumanised approach (Camilli 2019) which depicts migrants as merely victims that need to be saved, reproducing assistance through hierarchical relations of power (Dadusc, Mudu 2020). Furthermore, the initial strong cooperation between NGOs and Italian political authorities, and the MRCC in conducting SAR operations, raised questions about SAR NGOs true intentions in the central Mediterranean.

However, like Stierl suggests (2017), the ways in which SAR NGOs conceive of and enact their intervention at sea differ considerably. While some only have a humanitarian purpose, regardless of the political implications intrinsic in the overall context, others also have a political aim to denounce the European restrictive border regime, claiming for the establishment of safe passages to Europe (Cuttitta 2018a). As self-representation and discursive framings are deeply entwined with their actualisation, the extent to which SAR NGOs actively challenge the European border regime, producing a counter space of solidarity and inclusion, beyond traditional humanitarian rhetoric, precisely depends on how they understand and frame their own interventions at sea (Stierl 2017). The political scope of MOAS for example was strongly limited. Rather than a political matter, rescuing lives at sea was understood as a pragmatic solution to the scarceness of European resources and capacity at sea. Such depoliticised approach (Stierl 2017) strongly emerged in their action at sea grounded on an uncritical: “full cooperation and collaboration with authorities on both land and sea” (MOAS) which was also made evident by the sharing of sensitive information with states, in support of their intelligence activities (Cuttitta 2018b). Also, their retirement from the central Mediterranean scene, justified on the grounds of a “decreasing need – linked to reduced flows of people – [...] for our search and rescue operations” (MOAS), showed how MOAS framed the situation in the central Mediterranean Sea as a contingent, rather than structural situation, thus not engaging with the political dimension linked to the complex and controversial border regime within the Mediterranean region.

Contrarily, NGOs such as MSF and Sea-Watch strongly framed the migration crisis in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings in political terms. Their SAR operations were characterised by a deep and confrontational denounce of the European border regime, criticising death at sea as a “politically orchestrated phenomenon” (Stierl 2017:14). While aware of the risk to become: “co-opted into filling for states” (Del Valle 2016: 30), MSF strongly refused: “to let its operation become the patch up solution which would help consolidate the situation and obscure the responsibility of

² IOM's activities during the 2011 war in Libya, concerned with assistance to refugees and returnees as well as repatriation programmes from Libya to migrants' home countries is an example of how migration management can also occur behind the veil of humanitarian rhetoric and practices. Connected with economically dominant states, international organizations are often aimed to partake in the global fight vs. irregular migration, irrespective of migrants' own needs and desires (Brachet 2016).

politicians in the EU” (Del Valle 2016:31). Political dissent also characterised Sea-Watch intervention in the central Mediterranean. Denouncing EU: “agreements on readmission with third countries such as Turkey” defined as: “questionable and controversial under international law” (Sea-Watch), the political scope of Sea-Watch engagement at sea emerged as intrinsically embroiled in its humanitarian action. Strongly operating in a confrontational manner, Sea-Watch production of a counter space in the central Mediterranean occurred through active and outspoken political dissent, ranging from the refusal to sign the Code of Conduct³ to demonstrative acts such as the captain of Sea Watch 3, Carola Rackete forcing entry to the port of Lampedusa in 2018, regardless of the risk of being accused of abetting illegal immigration and being arrested. The political and confrontational characters of SAR NGOs action at sea, also emerged through the conflictual relationship with Libyan authorities due to the persistent SAR activities of NGOs’ vessels next to Libyan waters (Cuttitta 2018b). A series of confrontations occurred between 2016 and 2017 with Libyan authorities boarding and searching the Sea Watch vessel, shooting at, boarding, and searching for MSF “Burbon Argos” and detaining two volunteers of the German NGO Sea Eye. In May 2017, the Libyan Coast Guard, accusing Sea Watch of hindering their work, also interrupted a rescuing operation, returning 500 people from international waters to Libya (Cuttitta 2018b). Allegations of NGOs constituting a pull factor of irregular migration (Frontex 2017), initiated by the European border agency Frontex in 2016 and then also strongly endorsed by Italian political authorities and media narratives (Cusumano, Villa 2020b) also demonstrated the conflictual relationship between European migration politics and civil society engagement in the central Mediterranean, paving the way for a strong process of criminalisation of humanitarians at sea (Camilli 2019).

In the socio-political reconfiguration of the central Mediterranean space after 2011 the different ways in which SAR NGOs engaged in the central Mediterranean Sea contributed to the production of a heterogeneous humanitarian space, at times perpetuating yet also strongly contesting the exclusionary political space produced by European practices of migration control. While some NGOs, such as MOAS, intentionally refrained from politically engaging in the central Mediterranean, framing the latter as a mere “humanitarian border” (Walters 2011), the disobedient and confrontational acts put forward by other SAR NGOs contributed to a counter production of the maritime space, beyond traditional forms of humanitarianism, based on the deconstruction of European spaces of denial (Garofalo 2017), re-drawing the central Mediterranean as a space of solidarity and political dissent. Holding European migration politics accountable and responsible for border violence and policies of social and political exclusion, SAR NGOs autonomous practices of solidarity (Dadusc, Mudu 2020) supported migrants’ sea crossings as legitimate enactments of their right to leave, move, survive and arrive (Heller et al. 2017), rescuing not out of compassion but out of solidarity (Stierl 2017). Within the complex Euro-Mediterranean

³ in 2017, the Italian government, backed by the EU commission, redacted a Code of conduct for NGOs operating at sea (Cusumano; Villa 2020a) establishing “dos and don’ts” of SAR NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea.

border regime, defined by European politics of exclusion, SAR NGOs' political commitment to rescue people at sea challenged such conceptualisation redrawing the outer space in terms of solidarity, challenging the established order of things through the production of an alternative, transgressive space (Beckett, et al. 2017). Through these Foucauldian "counter-conducts" defined as: "an attempt to conduct oneself differently from the imposed way" (Rahola 2018:12), NGOs supported migrants' irregular forms of inhabiting and moving within the maritime borderland, becoming the rip to the European leash, the route and the passage tracing counter geographies of inclusion and solidarity (Rahola 2018).

Conclusion

Borders are the result of different forms of social relationship, consequence of different asymmetries of power between individual and collective subjects. Constantly present throughout human history, their forms, and the way they function have significantly changed over time (Cuttitta 2007). Far from their original conceptualisation as territorial dividing lines fixed in space and time, borders emerge today as the result of dynamic social processes and practices of spatial differentiation. They emerge as constructed socio-political spaces (Lefebvre 2018) in which their spatial and conceptual complexity is fluid and shifting (Brambilla 2015).

In the process of the social and political reconfiguration of the Euro-Mediterranean space in the aftermath of the Arab spring in 2011, the central Mediterranean space precisely emerged as fluid and shifting. The dynamic and constant reshaping of its identity, through European restrictive migration policies and SAR NGOs heterogeneous (humanitarian) practices of solidarity, resulted in the construction of a fragmented and heterogenous space in which logics of exclusion and solidarity coexisted and confronted. Established and, at the same time, continuously traversed by a number of bodies, discourses and practices constantly redefining its ontological essence and its functions, the central Mediterranean space appeared as a borderscapes (Brambilla 2015; Musarò 2019): a dynamic ontology in which reality is actively constructed, evolving, emerging and re-emerging (Brambilla 2015) between "what is and what is not yet, but could be" (Beckett et al. 2017: 5).

The multifaceted and complex spatial identity of the central Mediterranean Sea thus materialised as a heterotopia as incompatible spaces of European migration policies, SAR NGOs humanitarian practices and practices of solidarity coexisted, contrasted, and reversed each other, reshaping the maritime space as a place of exclusion, asymmetrical inclusion but also as a contested space of social negotiations and political dissent. The multiple processes of space production that occurred after the political events of 2011 constructed the central Mediterranean space as a fluctuating border space, materially established, experienced and lived, reinforced and blocked but also crossed and inhabited (Brambilla 2015).

The heterotopic character of the central Mediterranean space then lies precisely in its fragmentation and fluidity, in this idea of the central Mediterranean as a real

emplacement encompassing incompatible spaces at once. The securitised approach of European migration policies, SAR NGOs humanitarian practices and confrontational practices of solidarity meet at the border and while contesting each other, they never really supersede one another. Within this context, while the EU construction of its external borders emerges as still strongly anchored to an understanding of migration profoundly grounded on matters of national and international security, the role of SAR NGOs acquires importance insofar it attempts to challenge such political conceptualisation of borders, not only assisting migrants in distress at sea, but also engaging through active political dissent, producing a transgressive space (Beckett et al. 2016) in which EU migration policies are contested.

Exclusion, humanitarianism, solidarity, and political dissent reshape the central Mediterranean Sea through different processes of space ordering (van Houtum, van Naerssen 2002) coexisting, overlapping, feeding into each other while at the same time contrasting and confronting one another in the attempt to prevail. It is precisely in this sense that the central Mediterranean Sea becomes a heterotopia: a place outside all places, encompassing several incompatible spaces (Foucault 1998).

References

- Attinà Fulvio (2016). "Mare Nostrum e Triton la valutazione degli esperti". *ReShape Online Papers Series*, Paper 13/16, 1-32.
- Attinà Fulvio (2018a). "Forced irregular migrants, and the EU performance in trans boundary crisis management". *Comillas Journal of International Relations*, 11, 37-50.
- Attinà Fulvio (2018b). "Tackling the migrant wave: EU as a source and a manager of crisis". *Revista Espanola de Derecho Internacional*, 70/2, 49-70.
- Beckett Angharad E., Bagguley Paul, Campbell Tom (2017). "Foucault, social movements and heterotopic horizons: rupturing the order of things". *Social Movement Studies*, 16/2, 169-181.
- Bialasiewicz Luiza (2012). "Offshoring and Out-sourcing the Borders of Europe: Libya and EU Border Work in the Mediterranean". *Geopolitics*, 17/4, 843-866.
- Brachet Julien (2016). "Policing the desert: the IOM in Libya beyond war and peace". *Antipode*, 48/2, 272-292.
- Brambilla Chiara (2015). "Exploring the critical potential of the Borderscapes concepts". *Geopolitics*, 20/1, 14-34.
- Camilli Annalisa (2019). *La legge del mare. Cronache dei soccorsi nel Mediterraneo*. Milano: Rizzoli Mondadori Libri.
- Campesi Giuseppe (2015). *Polizia della frontiera. Frontex e la produzione dello spazio europeo*. Roma: DeriveApprodi srl.
- Carrera Sergio, Den Hertog Leonard, Parking Joanna (2012). "EU migration policy in the wake of the Arab Spring. What prospects for EU-Southern Mediterranean relations?". *MEDPRO Technical report*, 1-29.
- Ciabbari Luca (2016). "Le migrazioni irregolari via mare verso l'Italia. Tra continuità storiche e l'attuale crisi di rifugiati". In: Catone Stefano (ed). *Nessun paese è un'isola. Migrazioni, accoglienza e il futuro dell'Italia*. Imprimatur.
- Ciabbari Luca (2020). *L'imbroglio del mediterraneo. Le migrazioni via mare e le politiche della frontiera*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina editore.
- Collyer Michael (2016). "Geopolitics as a migration governance strategy: European Union bilateral relations with Southern Mediterranean countries". *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 42/4, 606-624.
- Corriere della Sera (2008). "Berlusconi da Gheddafi. Siglato l'accordo: uniti sull'immigrazione". *Corriere della Sera*, disponibile a: https://www.corriere.it/esteri/08_agosto_30/berlusconi_libia_gheddafi_bengasi_478ee3f4-767e-11dd-9747-00144f02aabc.shtml (accessed november 2020).
- Crawley Heaven, Skleparis Dimitris (2018). "Refugees, migrants, neither, both: categorical fetishism and the political bounding in Europe's 'migration crisis'". *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 44/1, 48-64.
- Cusumano Eugenio (2019). "Humanitarians at sea: selective emulation across migrant rescue NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea". *Contemporary Security Policy*, 40/2, 239-262.
- Cusumano Eugenio (2019). "Migrant rescue as organized hypocrisy: EU maritime offshore Libya between humanitarianism and border control". *Cooperation and conflict*, 54/1, 3-24.

- Cusumano Eugenio, Villa Matteo (2020a). "Over troubled waters: maritime rescue operations in the Central Mediterranean Route". In: Emma Borgnäs and Irene Schöfberger (eds). *Migration in West and North Africa and across the Mediterranean. Trends, risks, development and governance*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 202-2012.
- Cusumano Eugenio, Villa Matteo (2020b). "'From angels' to 'vice smugglers': the criminalization of sea rescue NGOs". *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*.
- Cuttitta Paolo (2007). *Segnali di confine. Il controllo dell'immigrazione nel mondo-frontiera*. Mimesis.
- Cuttitta Paolo (2014). "From the Cap Anamur to Mare Nostrum: humanitarianism and migration controls at the EU's maritime borders". *Cleer working papers*, 2014/7, 21-37.
- Cuttitta Paolo (2018a). "Repoliticization through Search and Rescue? Humanitarian NGOs and Migration Management in the Central Mediterranean". *Geopolitics*, 23/3, 632-660.
- Cuttitta Paolo (2018b). "Inclusion and exclusion in the fragmented space of the sea. Actors, territories and legal regimes between Libya and Italy". In: Elain Burroughs and Kira Williams (eds.). *Contemporary boat migration. Data, Geopolitics and Discourses*. London: Roman & Littlefield, 75-88.
- Deanna Dadusc, Pierpaolo Mudu (2020): *Care without Control: The Humanitarian Industrial Complex and the Criminalisation of Solidarity*, *Geopolitics*, 1-26.
- Del Sarto Raffaella (2010). "Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the EU's buffer zone". In: Dimitar Bechev, Kalypso Nicolaidis (eds). *Mediterranean Frontiers: Borders, Conflicts and Memory in a Transnational World*. London: I.B.Tauris, 146-167.
- Del Sarto Raffaella A. (2016). "Normative Empire Europe: the European Union, its Borderlands and the 'Arab Spring'". *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54/2, 215-232.
- Del Valle, Hernan (2016) "Search and Rescue in the Mediterranean Sea: negotiating political differences". *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 2016, 35, 22-40.
- den Hertog Leonhard (2016). "Money talks. Mapping the funding for EU external migration policy". *Liberty and Security in Europe*, 95, 1-56.
- Doty Roxanne Lynn (1998). "Immigration and the politics of security". *Security studies*, 8/2, 71-93.
- European Commission (2011). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions. "The Global Approach to Migration and Mobility" SEC (2011) 1353 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0743:FIN:EN:PDF>.
- European Commission (2015). Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the Committee of the regions. "Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy", SWD (2015) 500 final. https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/documents/2015/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf.
- Faist Thomas (2019). "Contested externalisation: responses to global inequalities", *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7/45, 1-8.
- Fassin Didier (2011). "Ambivalent hospitality: governing the unwanted". In Fassin D., *Humanitarian reason. A moral history of the present*. University of California Press: Berkley.

- Foucault Michel (1998). "Different spaces" in J.Faubion (ed.), *Aesthetics: the essential works*, 2. London: Allen Lane, 175.
- Frontex (2017). Risk Analysis for 2017. Disponibile a: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf, (last accessed november 2020).
- Garofalo Sabrina (2017). "La frontiera mediterranea possibile. L'esperienza dei corridoi umanitari". *Occhiali rivista sul mediterraneo islamico*, 1/2017, 100-110.
- Heller Charles, Pezzani Lorenzo (2016). "Ebbing and flowing the EU's shifting practices of (Non) Assistance and bordering in a time of crisis". *Zone books near futures online*, 1/2016, 1-33.
- Heller Charles, Pezzani Lorenzo, Stierl Maurice (2017). "Disobedient sensing and border struggles at the maritime frontier of Europe". *Spheres Journal for Digital Cultures*, 1-15.
- Huysmans Jeff (2000). "The European Union and the securitization of migration". *Journal of Common market studies*, 38/5, 751-777.
- Johnson Peter (2006). "Unravelling Foucault's 'different spaces'". *History of the human sciences*, 29/4, 75-90.
- Kent Jonathan, Norman P. Kelsey, Tennis H. Katherine (2020). "Changing motivations or capabilities? Migration deterrence in the Global context", *International Studies Review*, 22, 853-878.
- Lavenex Sandra (2006). "Shifting up and out: The foreign policy of European immigration control". *West European Politics*, 29/2, 329-350.
- Lefebvre Henri (2018). *La produzione dello spazio*. Milano: Pgreco Ed.
- Leogrande Alessandro (2017). *La frontiera*. Milano: Universale Economica Feltrinelli.
- Loschi Chiara, Russo Alessandra (2020). "Whose Enemy at the Gates? Border Management in the Context of EU Crisis Response in Libya and Ukraine". *Geopolitics*, 1-24.
- Malkki, L. H. (2006). Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. *Cultural Antropology*, 11(3), 377-404.
- Martirano Dino (2003). "Clandestini, via all'intesa Italia-Libia". *Corriere della sera*, https://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Esteri/2003/07_Luglio/04/immigrazione.shtml (last accessed november 2020).
- Mau Steffen, Heike Bradbaudt, Lena Laube, Christof Roos (2012). *Liberal states and the freedom of movement. Selective borders, unequal mobility*. Springer.
- MOAS. "MOAS in Central Mediterranean". <https://www.moas.eu/central-mediterranean/> (last accessed February 2021).
- Morone Antonio (2015). "La Libia, crocevia migratorio. Nuove e vecchie dinamiche dal 2011 al 2014". In: Ciabbari Luca (ed). *I rifugiati e l'Europa tra crisi internazionali e corridoi d'accesso*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina editore, 59-79.
- Musarò Pierluigi (2019). "European borderscapes: The management of migration between care and control". In Lawrence Michael, Tavernor Rachel (eds.). *Global Humanitarianism and Media Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 145-166.
- Panebianco Stefania (2016). "The Mare Nostrum Operation and the SAR approach: the Italian response to address the Mediterranean migration crisis". EUMedEA Online Working Paper Series, 3/2016, 1-31.

- Popescu Gabriel (2012). *Bordering and Ordering the 21st century. Understanding borders*. Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Rahola Federico (2018). "The Leash and the Rip: Struggles and Conflicts beneath Migrants' and Asylum Seekers' "Secondary Movements", *Policies and Practices*, 105, 1-13.
- Ronzetti Natalino (2009). "The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: new prospects for cooperation in the mediterranean?". *Bullettin of Italian Politics*, 1/1, 125-133.
- Sea Watch. "About us". <https://sea-watch.org/en/about/> (last accessed February 2021).
- Seeberg Peter (2013). "The Arab uprisings and the EU's migration policies – The Cases of Egypt, Libya and Syria". *Democracy and Security*, 9/1-2, 157-176.
- Seeberg Peter, Shteivi Musa (2013). "European narratives on the Arab Spring from democracy to security. *Centre for Strategic Studies*, 1-11.
- Smith Karen E. (2005). "The outsiders: the European Neighbourhood Policy". *International Affairs*, 81/4, 757-773.
- Stierl Maurice (2017). "A fleet of Mediterranean Border Humanitarians". *Antipode*, 00/0, 1-21.
- Tazzioli Martina (2016). "Border displacements. Challenging the politics of rescue between Mare Nostrum and Triton". *Migration Studies*, IV/1, 1-19.
- Ticktin, M. I. (2006). Where ethics and politics meet: The violence of humanitarianism in France. *American Ethnologist*, 33(1), 33-49.
- van Houtum Henk, van Naerssen Ton (2002). "Bordering, ordering and othering". *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 93/2, 125-136.
- Walters William (2011). "Foucault and Frontiers. Notes on the birth of humanitarian government", in Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann and Thomas Lemke (eds.). *Governmentality: Current Issues and Future Challenges*, New York: Routledge, 138-164.
- Zaiotti Ruben (2016). "Mapping remote control: the externalization of migration management in the 21st century" In: Ruben Zaiotti (ed.). *Externalizing Migration Management: Europe, North America and the spread of 'remote control' practices*, New York: Routledge, 3-31.
- Zardo Federica (2020). "The EU Trust Fund for Africa: Geopolitical space making through Migration policy Instruments". *Geopolitics*, 1-20.
- Zardo Federica, Cavatorta Francesco (2016). "What is new in the borderlands? The influence of EU external policy-making on security in Tunisia and Morocco after the uprisings". *EU Working Paper RSCAS*, 2016/02, 1-18.