15. Genealogies of contention in concentric circles: remote migration control and its Eurocentric geographical imaginaries
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INTRODUCTION

The evocative statement "We did not cross the border, the border crossed us" has become a staple among pro-migration activism beyond the US/Mexico context where it was originally stated.[1] While counter-intuitive, it points to the historical and ongoing contingent movement of borderlines. It also speaks about the ingrained discriminatory character of a border mindset that believes that one's very self can be permanently marked as border crosser, and thus becoming an inappropriate and usually undesired other.[2] Indeed, the message conveyed by "the border crossed us" uniquely captures current migratory policies. Both the imagining and the enforcing of migration control are intended to "cross" – as in traverse through – certain populations. This crossing *by* borders is conducted through the containment, classification and segregation of those considered unwanted migrants.

As such, borders do carry on their own crossing practices ranging from high-tech infrastructures for the tracking and interception of some human movements *at and beyond* the borderline, all the way to the bordering of bodies *at and inside* the borderline through processes of racialized profiling, incarceration and deportation. The verb form and play on words of "B/Ordering" as developed by critical migration scholars of the Nijmegen School relates well with this notion of borders themselves actively crossing over people. This piece embraces their understanding of borders as complex filters that classify populations under an apartheid logic through the triple function of bordering, ordering and *othering* (Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002; Van Houtum et al. 2005). Now, such a twist on borders, not as passive lines to be crossed but as institutional practices actively b/ordering populations, do not only take place at the territorial limits of countries. In fact, the act of arranging people into hierarchies of mobility, along with its corresponding entitlements and lack thereof, is becoming a ubiquitous process wherever one might be.

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[1] The origin of this slogan comes from Mexican migrants in the US Southwest expressing the fact that much of the Western US was once part of Mexico. Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California were seized by the US in the Mexican-American war of 1846–48. Pointing to the irony of labeling Mexican citizens in the US Southwest as foreigners and illegal trespassers, the expression has been attributed to everyone from writer Jose Antonio Burciaga, actress Eva Longoria to the band Aztlan Underground. It is widely popular because it communicates the notion that geopolitical borders are imposed on peoples that have lived in those places prior to those dividing lines.

[2] Besides being used for immigrant rights, the slogan has resonated among Indigenous movements, Palestinian solidarity groups, anti-colonial and racial justice struggles, all working against institutional racism and practices of exclusion.

The spatial proliferation of such bordering practices – when migration control is carried out across unexpected places regardless of geographical location in reference to a national borderline – is possible due to a double process. The borderline has moved both inwards and outwards of the territorial state's outer limits. This chapter focuses on the second process, that is, the displacement of borderzones further away from apparent destination countries. In fact, these destination countries carry out practices of migration control thousands of kilometers away from their own traditionally claimed borderlines, and request collaboration from third countries to patrol suspected migratory movements. This phenomenon is referred to as "border externalization," both among policy circles and scholarly literature.

This form of borderwork from a distance, by which responsibilities conventionally assumed to be exclusive to a given state are delegated to third parties and carried out extra-territorially, has become standard migration policy in a variety of cases. This is the case of the European Union (EU) and its member states, whose migration control practices increasingly take place beyond their borderlines. The targeting of supposedly migrants' places of origin and transit has become the main policy objective. In order to trace and interfere in migratory journeys, a spectrum of means is carried out ranging from one-on-one interviews, aid plans and development interventions to paramilitary deployments. Far from sporadic or marginal, outsourcing the management of migration flows is indeed proliferating. In fact, border cooperation has become an expected modus operandi in international relations, transforming practices of migration control at the levels of legality, diplomacy and enforcement. This transnational process of border externalization has been underway in the Southern contours of the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa increasingly since the EU started to implement its *Global Approach to Migration* in 2005 and its Migratory Routes Strategy.

When approaching border externalization, authors have developed a rich spatial vocabulary to understand its geographical shifts and geopolitical effects. From the first engagements with this process as remote border control (Zolberg 2003), police at a distance (Bigo and Guild 2005), shifting out (Lavenex 2006) or re-scaling (Samers 2004) to the later readings of border externalization in terms of bio-political re-territorialization (Vaughan-Williams 2008); spatial stretching and itinerancy (Casas et al. 2012); offshoring and outsourcing (Bialasiewicz 2012); shifts in state sovereignty (Mountz and Hiemstra 2014); a networked and multi-scalar regime (Raeymaekers 2014). All of those conceptualizations are pointing to a spatial re-location and multiplication of bordering – as in its triple function of contention, classification and discrimination – beyond the geographical limits of the nation-state. Thus interdisciplinary debates on extra-territoriality and bio-political power have been pertinent in the geographical understanding of border externalization (Parker and Vaughan-Williams 2012; Gaibazzi et al. 2016; Zaiotti 2016).

This chapter in particular contributes to a genealogy of border externalization by identifying a rather Eurocentric ideological core at work underneath the neutral sounding policies of border externalization. We contend that despite being informed and fueled by circles of professionalism and expertise, current border externalization is inserted into a

previous contention logic based on exclusionary thinking and abusive practices on the ground.[3]

GENEALOGIES OF CONTENTION: THE WORLD DIVIDED INTO CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

According to the entry of the New Keywords on Migration, border externalization refers to the practices of migration control that involve acting beyond territorial lines in coordination with adjacent and non-adjacent countries (New Keywords Collective 2014). The origins of outsourcing border control – and the concurrent tendencies to evade the law and constantly extend geo-juridical boundaries – have roots in the US interdiction of Haitian refugees in the early 1980s and have spread, especially among the EU and Australia. For the EU, border externalization is neither new nor anecdotal. It has characterized the EU's strategy for containing migratory flows since the 1990s. Nonetheless, in our own research we have attempted to follow and describe the development of spatial frameworks that facilitated the birth of such bordering practices far from territorial limits of destination countries. In this pursuit we encountered an old proposal to approach inward migration to the EU rich in geographical thinking. By engaging the geographical imaginary that immediately precedes and sustain the bulk of the EU's extra-territorial border operations, a controversial vision of human mobility becomes explicit. This geographic imaginary is fraught with, literally, Euro-con-centric tensions, ordering global populations into designated circles: including a first ring of territories entitled to free movement; a second and third rings of territories where movement is relatively allowed; and a fourth ring where it is seemingly prohibited to move. While seen as greatly problematic initially, this uneven division of mobilities and hierarchical designation of territories has been slowly normalized. We point to the influential legacy of the EU draft strategy paper on asylum and migration and contend that the geographical imaginary and the contention logic displayed by this document is underpinning current externalized forms of migration control.

While working on the archaeologies of the current EU migration regime, an official document proposing to divide the world into concentric circles caught our attention: "The EU Strategy Paper on Asylum and Migration" by the Council of the European Union (1998a). This document has been analysed sporadically by authors tracing the history of the EU's inclusion of migration policy into its foreign policy (Boswell 2003; Lindstrøm 2005; Sterkx 2008; Chou 2009; Barbero 2010). We started to take it seriously since encountering the work by Belguendouz (2005, 2009). In his critique of the role of migration policy in the relations between North Africa (especially Morocco) and the EU, Belguendouz argues about the document's foundational importance to understand the current EU border regime. During the Austrian presidency of the EU in 1998, this historical official document was distributed to different branches of the EU Council (it was addressed specifically to the K4 committee of Interior Ministries). An initial draft was leaked to press and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) alerting the public as to its

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[3]   This chapter is based on a multi-sited research project funded by the National Science Foundation (Grant BCS-1023543). We focus on the EU's strategy of migration routes management in North and West Africa, looking at border cooperation projects between so-called destination-transit-origin countries.

controversial nature. This 1998 document classifies worldwide territories and populations therein into four concentric circles. It evokes a geographical vision of how mobility should be distributed in the world, implying that everyone, in a sense, belongs and should remain in their circle with little exception.

This proposed document, with a heavily geographical vision of managing mobility into Europe, scandalized many, including several EU governments, due to what was perceived as an unnecessarily restrictive and discriminatory approach to migration at that time. Yet, while the policy itself was officially voted down in 1998, many of its ideas were further pursued outside the EU framework by an intergovernmental network: the High Level Working Group (HLWG) on migration. This desired geographical imaginary of control and contention of human flows worldwide is surely not fully achieved on the ground. While EU-funded plans and projects are tried – such as the Frontex-led *Hera* operation, the Spain-led series within the *Seahorse Project*, the ongoing EU *Sophia* operation and Italy's *Mare Sicuro* in the central Mediterranean – there are different levels of success and failure. As such, this 1998 vision of migration control based on concentric circles is not a representation of the EU border regime as it actually exists or existed. Rather, we point to how its designation of worldwide territories beyond the EU in terms of their role in an imagined global migration system have, for the most part, remained intact.

The "Strategy Paper on Asylum and Migration" of 1998 proposes four concentric circles to encompass the entire globe, and they classify countries as either: (1) desirable destinations and zones of mobility; (2) countries of transit adjacent to the EU; (3) countries of transit further away; (4) or sources of undesirable population flows. Quite remarkably, this EU document acknowledges the very existence of a "fortress Europe" policy concept. Indeed, the paper proposes that "a model of concentric circles of migration policy could replace that of "fortress Europe" (Council of the European Union 1998a: point 60) in reducing migratory pressure, and, more specifically, tightening border control. According to this model, all states of the world would be assigned to one of "four concentric circles." We have visualized those four concentric circles cartographically for the sake of clarity and in order to graphically show the geographical imaginary behind current policies (Figure 15.1).

The first circle is formed by the EU member states capable of fulfilling Schengen standards of control, and other countries which "do not cause emigration" but have become "target countries on account of their advanced economic and political situation" (Council of the European Union 1998a: points 60 and 116).

The second circle would consist of "transit countries" which no longer generate emigration but which "on account of a relatively stable internal economic and political situation accept only very limited control procedures and responsibility for migration policy." This second circle would comprise the neighbor countries of the Schengen/EU territory, that is, the associated states and "perhaps also the Mediterranean area." These countries' systems of control should gradually be brought into line with the first circle standards (1998a: points 60 and 118).

The third and the fourth circle would contain the countries of emigration. The third circle would be formed of countries of both emigration and transit, that is, the CIS area (former Soviet Union), Turkey and North Africa. These countries would be required to "concentrate primarily on transit checks and combatting facilitator [migrant smuggler] networks." The fourth (outermost) circle would consist of countries of emigration apparently deemed somewhat beyond the reach of European "political muscle" (mention

1 EU member states / Schengen zone

As the integration of the European Union proceeded, the twenty-odd members of the EU pooled their sovereignty together and created a zone of free movement for goods, capital and people called the Schengen zone. The zone allows you to move, work and study freely in any of its member countries. Considered one of the success stories of the EU, Schengen has come under increasing critique since the so-called financial and refugee crises.

2 European Neighbourhood Partnership

EU candidate countries are potential members of the EU, and must meet Schengen criteria. They are considered countries of transit until membership. Countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). These countries which are adjacent to the European Union are offered a chance to participate in the EU's Single Market and regulatory frameworks, but in exchange are asked to manage and police any undocumented migration passing through their territories, potentially on it's way to the EU. Integration to EU structures is made conditional on their cooperation in border security.

3 Transit Zone

The transit zone includes many of the ENP countries (which have stronger trade links with the EU), along with other countries, which are seen from the EU as needing to policing migrants that are 'transiting' through their countries on the way to the EU. Countries of the third circle are considered to be points of transit for migrants on their way to the first circle. These countries are not offered integration into EU Markets and frameworks.
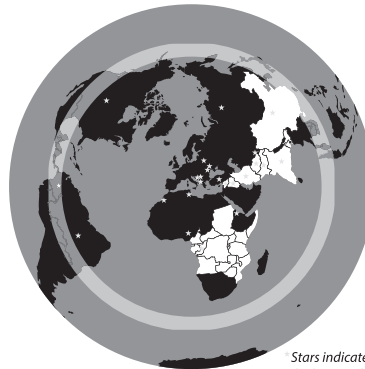
4 Source Countries

The countries of the 4th circle are seen as migration "source" countries, briefly referred to in the 1998 strategy as "the Middle East, China, and black Africa". The EU approach towards these countries includes border security as in the transit countries but is complimented by programs that encourage people to "stay in their circle". These projects of "dissuasion" can include development projects; PR campaigns on the dangers of irregular migration as well as signing agreements to allow for rapid deportation of these countries' nationals form the EU.

Countries highlighted on this map are those considered part of the "fourth circle" for EU purposes, but as the stars indicate, not all countries which actually make up the top sources of undocumented migrants to the EU are treated as part of the fourth circle by EU policy.

Stars indicate the countries which were identified as top sources of illegal entries in 2016

Source: Council of the European Union (1998a).

Figure 15.1   Visualization of concentric circles by MCC, SC and Tim Stallman

is made of "the Middle East," China and "black Africa"). These countries are to be encouraged to "eliminate push factors" of migration (1998a: points 60 and 119).[4]

A reward would follow if a country meets the obligations arising from its assignment to a particular circle. "For example, the second circle must meet Schengen standards as a precondition for EU membership; for the third circle, intensified economic cooperation is linked to the fulfillment of their obligations; and the fourth circle, the extent of development aid can be assessed on that basis" (1998a: point 61; Fortress Europe Circular Letter 1998).

EURO CONCENTRIC VISION OF MOBILITY

Such a geographical imaginary literally puts the EU in the center, dictating who should move and who should not move around the world. It also assumes several major dynamics of migration that empirically are very questionable. In the first place, the document implies that everybody intends to get to circle 1, thus ignoring movement within and across circles, especially South to South migrations. Secondly, the document suggests that no one gets out of the EU, and that there is no migratory movement from circle 1 to circles 2, 3 or 4.[5] Thirdly, there is an implication that the EU should be able to designate, or at least heavily influence, which country is in which circle and who can move where.

These maps of the 1998 document and its emphasis on externalization help to make taken for granted assumptions of migratory policies explicit, and in particular point to the Eurocentric basis of externalization. This realization helps to frame single case-studies of border externalization projects (whether more focused on police cooperation projects, legal migration or development initiatives) into a shared implicit spatial reference. Individual border cooperation projects are underpinned by an underlying geographical imaginary where the entire world is b/ordered according to Europe. Distinct regions of the world are assigned particular roles both for governments and how they should carry border control as well as for their populations, in terms of how and where they should migrate.

At the time, this document was firmly contested since its language was not politically correct and went beyond an assumed tradition of cosmopolitan openness towards migration and the welcoming of refugees. The text called upon the EU to show "political muscle" in preventing refugee and migrant fluxes, enumerating possible foreign policy actions ranging from economic pressure to military intervention against refugee

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[4]   Immediately after this strategy paper (1998a) was voted down during the Austria presidency, another EU Council document serving as a brief on the issue of migration and asylum to the incoming German presidency of the EU makes suggestions as to how the strategy on concentric circles could be followed up on. The language and goals of this new document build on that contention logic, for instance: an initial list of countries was to be produced "with action plans comprising measures which can be taken *against* such countries," the goal being to "*reduce* this influx" of asylum seekers and migrants (Council of the European Union 1998b, emphasis added). Despite more recent attention to human rights in the EU's border apparatus, the initial architecture of its externalized borders saw transit and origin countries as targets, legitimating all means under the primary goal of "reducing influx."

[5]   As a side note, this omission has been noted in some recent critiques of the lack of vision of emigration policy by Southern European countries, where Southern European emigrants are traveling to countries that were once assumed to be "origins" of migration not destinations (Mavrodi and Moutselos 2016).

and migrant generating states. Controversy arose among human rights associations and certain member states, but especially among non-EU states that criticized the role they would be assigned as border guards for Europe. Border externalization by EU countries though pre-dates the 1998 document. Early attempts to encourage border cooperation with non-EU states can be traced at least as early as 1992 with the formation of the Budapest Process between Central and Eastern European countries, individual EU member states and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries; and to 1991 in the case of a request by EU member state interior ministries to the government of Morocco to cooperate in border enforcement. Still, we signal how the Austrian document becomes a point of inflection in the building of a specific geographical imaginary that facilitates a border externalization strategy that can be applied in multiple regions according to its internal logic. Thus, the Austrian document does not constitute the "origin" of future externalization projects, but it is an important landmark for researchers identifying the geographical and ideological underpinnings of current contention politics ingrained in border externalization processes. Many of the provisions regarding migration control, especially those related to the collaboration with and intervention in third states, have materialized or been attempted. The approach of border control envisioned in that document, with its distinct circles of permissible and impermissible human movement surrounding a growing EU, began to rear its head with the adoption of the "External Dimension" of Migration Policy at the Tampere summit of 1999 and more explicitly with the approval of the Global Approach to Migration (2005).

Iterations of distinct externalized spatialities begin to emerge in different EU and member state strategies. The adoption of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2005, as a successor in many respects of the Euro-Med process that began in 1995, explicitly adopts the vision of a "Ring of Friends," of cooperative adjacent states to the EU, which would fulfill requirements around migration management and border control according to EU requests in exchange for a preferential relationship with the bloc. This buffer zone spatiality was overlaid with a distinct spatial imaginary of borders with the adoption of the Global Approach to Migration. In this policy framework the focus is less on entire regions and countries and more on migrant *routes*.

THINKING IN ROUTES: THE EMERGENCE AND SPREAD OF A MIGRATION POLICY CONCEPT AND BORDER PRACTICE

While the policy itself was voted down in 1998, slowly but surely, this vision became the organizing framework for EU policy on migration management. It is a vision where everyone, in a sense, belongs and should remain in its circle with little exception. This understanding of mobility is based on designating the members of specific territories and populations as having different entitlements to move. By doing this, the focus shifts from border crossings at national limits to a more "global" method of migration control. It becomes necessary to pay attention to the points of origin and transit of those flows from places labeled as undesired sources of mobility. This vision of migration control was made explicit and officially approved through the *Global Approach to Migration and Mobility* framework in 2005 with its Routes Strategy connecting points of origin, transit

and destination.[6] Both were reinvigorated in 2015 after the Arab Spring uprisings around the Mediterranean.

"The Migration Routes Strategy"

Building on a vision of the world divided into concentric circles of uneven mobilities, a distinct way of imagining migration control emerges: thinking in terms of routes. Besides reinforcing surveillance technology at literal border lines, the goal of tracking and cutting routes spread among EU migration policy circles, expert security actors and border authorities. We observed that this thinking in terms of routes has been possible in great part thanks to a series of maps and cartographic representations of human flows, most of them assumed to originate in Africa and Asia and imagined to move always towards EUrope. This series of cartographic iterations of routes, technologically slick and expert-looking maps, conform to a migration mapping matrix. These maps crystallized and further support the EU's Strategy of Migration Routes.

The conventional understanding of migration control is that each nation-state is in charge of its own borders at its territorial lines and ports, and manages visas in national embassies abroad. Yet this approach is considered incomplete within EU migration policy circles, which believes that "efficient migration management" entails going beyond the place and time of the entry point. Thus, it is necessary to establish transnational cooperation in order to locate *where the migrant is* in her or his process of moving towards an assumed destination point in Europe, and to collaborate with the border authorities of other countries to intercept irregular migrant flows.

The shifting itineraries of migrants (though defined by the EU, member states, and collaborating institutions not by migrants themselves) become the object of migration management policy, and thus the attempt to map and define the spaces of routes becomes the political goal. It is in the creation and implementation of these partial and multiple spatial imaginaries of mobility control that our research intervenes attempting to understand how "routes" – with their endless iterations – are defined, mapped and zeroed in on as objects of policy (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015).

Cutting the Routes: The Mapping Migration Matrix

The objective is to trace and manage the journey, which is how the *route* has become a migration management concept and strategy. Since 2003, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development has visualized migrant routes, with the intent of managing them. Their i-Map project, a regularly updated online cartography, has become a reference point for border management from a distance. The map does not trace border walls or empirically represent individual journeys; rather, it focuses on clustering flows into distinct routes that can be managed as shared itineraries with clear points of origin, transit

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6   While the Global Approach to Migration (GAM) was initially considered a new policy framework that was less repressive in its approach to migration, there is an important linear genealogy from the 1998 Austrian document to the GAM. It is under the section "Global Approach" in the Austrian strategy paper that reference to the concentric circles is first made, and where the terms "origin, transit and destination" countries appear. The GAM's principal contribution then is to articulate a "routes strategy" that connects work across countries in different "circles."

and destination. Initially, the European Commission designated four main routes traversing the African continent: the West African/Atlantic Route, the Western Mediterranean Route, the Central Mediterranean Route, and the East African/Horn of Africa Route.[7] More recent iterations of i-Map show how the representation and naming of routes evolve according to perceived transformations of migrant itineraries.[8] The i-Map's visual work has inspired similar routes mapping projects by institutions relevant to the EU's border regime such as Frontex or the International Organization for Migration (IOM).[9]

In visualizing targets as fluctuating routes, these maps do not provide a straightforward empirical representation of the exact numbers of people moving through the routes, nor are the directionality of the routes accurate, as Europe is often assumed to be the sole destination. Such maps – which are widely disseminated among border authorities and migration experts as well as by the media – produce, spread and normalize a particularly restrictive way of thinking about migration control.

Normalizing and even legitimizing the tracking and the management of movement along a migrant route gives rise to controversial border practices. For instance, since 2006, Spanish border authorities have deployed to Senegalese and Mauritanian territorial waters, and inland borders thousands of miles away from the territorial borders of Spain, where they aid in patrolling potential migrant boats (fishing boats retooled for possible migration) or overland transit migrants through satellite technologies, military vessels, aircraft and the construction of border posts (Casas-Cortes et al. 2016). Recent Migration Compacts between EU and African Union (AU) countries have followed the EU-AU Valetta summit of 2014, which have allowed political relationships, training, equipment and funds to flow to specific transit or origin countries such as Eritrea, Niger, and governing entities in Libya, in some cases allowing states with dubious human rights records to emphasize their international cooperation with migration policy goals (Prestianni 2016).

While we do not think that the routes strategy developed in a linear fashion from the Austrian document on concentric circles of migration control, we suggest that such regional migration control strategies develop out of a very particular geographical, and geopolitical imaginary. Rather than a case by case, or ad hoc approach towards externalization, the concentric circles represent a macro-regional approach that allows for controversial statements that pertain to its vision of each circle. The specifics of particular transit countries or routes that traverse more than one circle fit into its overall narrative, one that reminds readers of classical grand geopolitical concepts such as *Heartland Theory* or *Lebensraum*. The EU as the center of the circles and its differing influence in each circle entail a multi-tiered strategy over borders and migration based on a political influence that appears to "fade out" as one moves away from the center. It is an imaginary with a global reach, but where according to its own logic, different strategies of migration management should be employed in the different macro-regions (the circles).

Yet, as with any grandiose geopolitical fantasy of near global reach, the possibility of

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[7]　See parts of the initial version of i-Map called "Interactive Map on Migration" at http://www.imap-migration.org/index.php?id=1130.

[8]　See animation of routes at http://www.imap-migration.org/index.php?id=471.

[9]　See Frontex: http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/ and IOM: http://migration.iom.int/europe/ (last accessed September 29, 2018).

this geographical imaginary to hold is tepid. The horizons opened early on during the Arab Spring (Tazzioli 2015), the Eurozone crisis and ensuing emigration from Southern Europe, developments in intra-regional migration, especially within Africa, or the growth of new migration destination centers (such as China, see Bodomo 2010; Castillo 2016) demonstrate that a straightforward reading of the EU's centrality in migration streams misses out on the turbulence of migration (Papastergiadis 2000). Migration management strategies based on simplistic geographic understanding and hierarchical thinking over populations will likely lead to errors and abuses in reading and interfering with migrant journeys. In fact, in its own internal review of the migration routes strategy, auditors of EU policy have noted the lack of attention to dynamics such as South-South migration or intra-African migration with regard to EU-Africa relations, and that these lead to inappropriate policy decisions (Picard et al. 2009).

CURRENT CONFIGURATIONS OF CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

The vision of concentric circles presented itself as a way to go beyond the Fortress Europe model. Thus, in understanding the implementation of its near global spatialization of the border, we should not necessarily look for concentric border walls. Instead, its implementation required a distinct notion and practice of borderwork.

The geopolitical imaginary of concentric circles gives rise to a not straightforward picture of where the border is and how it works. A series of simultaneous traits might be instructive. In order to further visualize and understand the shifts brought by border externalization policies: (1) borders are conceived to be on the move; (2) borders actively profile and classify people regardless of territorial limits; and (3) borders need a multi-layered architecture of institutional and extra-institutional actors. Building on the debates in critical border and migration studies, we propose the triple notion of "Itinerant B/Ordering Assemblages." The first term in this triptych refers to the constant itinerancy of migration control practices. That is, when borderwork, besides constituting walls, also expands to become a series of mobile checkpoints and fleeting infrastructures. The second term points to the ongoing suspicion and classification of inappropriate mobilities. Borders are de facto bio-politically ordering individuals and populations into different levels of "illegality" before any unauthorized act of border crossing. The third term addresses the multi-layer coalescence of a series of actors, territories and devices attempting to control certain migratory flows. Borders are enacted through a series of ad hoc assemblages – both hard and soft – at times succeeding and at times failing in their goals. More ethnographic work is needed in order to further locate the infrastructures and dissect the inner workings of such assemblages.

For instance, Ruben Andersson (2014) provides a thorough illustration on the difficulty and elusiveness in identifying "where" the externalized border is. Andersson's work includes an ethnographic "following" of different points, moments or spaces of the externalized "Euro/African Borderlands." He demonstrates in various instances that the "EU border" in its externalized sense only comes into being when a person or group is scripted (or profiled) as the "illegal/irregular migrant" that this border is eagerly searching for. In his exploration of the cooperation of West African security forces in policing the EU's external borders Andersson shows how the "irregular migrant" is a vague figure

to identify. He shows how potential candidates for migration must be profiled by their "look" and "behaviors." These include hanging out in groups by fishing beaches and carrying full backpacks (Andersson 2014, pp. 101–2). There is no "EU border" abroad until those police forces profile potential candidates as "migrants."

Further research can illuminate the re-configurations of bordering far away from conventional borderlines. As such, the emerging spaces of illegality are constructed in ways that target border crossing far and before any border is crossed, making someone *illegal* at the very moment and place where she or he decides to migrate. The EU's current practices of remote border control are indeed normalizing a geographical imaginary of illegality beyond the borderline, taking bordering work to a worldwide scale. Processes of border externalization deepen this repurposing of borders for not only containing territories but also intercepting human mobility and classifying populations. As such, the displacement of migration control based on exclusionary genealogies of contention and Eurocentric geographical imaginaries confirm the forceful critiques by Indigenous, anti-colonial and migrant movements of borders as institutions of ingrained racism: "You call it illegal trespassing, I call it White Power" (graffiti in border wall, Arizona). When speaking of the externalization of migration policy, the insights provided by the popular slogan "the border crossed us" definitely resonate. Both in its insinuation that borders actively move and in its message that b/ordering is fraught with a racist politics of othering.

In search of compelling narratives that support a critical yet easy to understand view of the unfolding border regime, we wonder if this cartography conveying a mega-vision of dividing the world in circles might help in reworking assumptions about the neutrality of migration control policies. When visualizing this geographical imaginary of four concentric circles into a series of maps, an explicit counter narrative about migration emerges that questions the status quo. In contrast to the normalized opinion fueled by experts and political authorities that points to the dangers of irregular migration or "too much" migration, the problem is not about trouble-makers from the poor countries in the South fleeing in massive exodus towards the US and the EU. This view, where migration is "changing the face of the world" in unsustainable ways, is exemplified in its legitimized version in Paul Collyer's volume *Exodus*, justifying restrictive solutions towards migrants and refugees. In contrast, giving attention to this dusty EU policy document helps to put taken-for granted assumptions about migration control upside down: the problem does not lay with those moving. Rather, our concern should be with the imposition of a top-down plan to manage and even dictate human mobility worldwide.

While talk around Trump's discriminatory approach towards migration and the deadly management of refuge flows in the Mediterranean is on the rise, could it be useful to start mobilizing a narrative around "the border empire strikes back"? A narrative which not only signals the violence and human rights abuses that can occur in the day-to-day carrying out of border policy, but which names and targets the vision of a border as crossing over people, in a sense like a *war on mobility* in the way there is a war on drugs. Is it time to seriously rethink practical forms of resistance and disobedience that delegitimize the very foundations of current border regimes rather than pointing out their abuses? This way of framing the problematic character of current migration management is inspired in a text message sent by a Sub-Saharan migrant while trying to swim the 15 kilometers of seawaters between the African to the European continent

through the Strait of Gibraltar. A few decades ago a regular ID would have been enough to enjoy safe travel by ferry to get to Southern Spain but now he and many others are prohibited to embark on the South-to-North route. During his illegalized and otherwise simple international move is when he wrote: "There is an ongoing war on migrants." Indeed, borders are at constant war because of their exclusionary and discriminatory foundations.

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