

Conclusion

In the second half of 2018, the increase in the number of irregular border crossings in the Western Mediterranean pushed Spain and the EU to revamp their cooperation with Morocco over the control of the Euro–African border (see Chapter 1). Spain lobbied the EU to grant Morocco more financial support for border control cooperation. The EU proactively reacted to these pressures, and allocated Morocco €74 million for two different border security projects. These projects, funded through the EUTF and implemented by the ICMPD and the FIIAPP respectively, specifically aimed at providing Moroccan authorities with technical equipment to more effectively control their land and sea borders (Statewatch 2019). This substantial increase in funding for border security was further topped up in December 2019, when the EU granted Morocco €101.7 million for a programme supporting the fight against human smuggling and the management of irregular migration (European Commission 2019). While the news about the escalation of violence against migrants in Northern Morocco flooded the international press, Morocco became the second largest receiver of migration-related aid in the EU neighbourhood (European Commission 2018b).

In December 2019, the Spanish press began publishing details about the technical equipment delivered to Moroccan authorities as part of these two EU-funded projects. In one such article at the time, the author listed the equipment which had been purchased: “384 vehicles”, “200 off-road vehicles”, “5 semi-rigid boats”, “120 multi-purpose police vehicles”, “26 minibuses or vans for the transport of irregular emigrants” (*Canarias7* 2019). The description of this last piece of equipment made the fast violence of aid-funded border containment appear in a perfectly clear light. During my last interviews in summer 2019, I had talked to a number of people that had been forced on “minibus[es] or vans for the transport of irregular migrants” and then forcefully displaced to the South of Morocco, hundreds of kilometres away from

their houses. Patrick, the Cameroonian man I mentioned in Chapter 6, was forcefully displaced from Tangier to Agadir, and then had to sleep for three months at the bus station because he had nowhere to go. Daouda, the Cameroonian man that I mentioned in Chapter 4, had been displaced multiple times from the North to the South and Centre of Morocco. When I met him, he had sought refuge with three other Cameroonian men in a small city of the Moroccan interior, a place where finding a job was extremely difficult. At least, he told me, the risks of being arbitrarily harassed and arrested by the Moroccan police were considerably lower. In summer 2019, the Moroccan press reported the story of Timothy Hucks, an Afro-American US citizen that had been arrested and displaced from Rabat to Beni Mellal in March of that year, together with another group of men, all black. In the months following the arrest, he tried to police his own movements, and avoid contact with the authorities. In a Twitter thread published in summer 2019, he stated:

I tried not to leave my house. I always carried my passport. If the police were walking, I chose the other side of the sidewalk. If they were circling their wagons, I waited until they left to keep walking. I acted like I was fine. I don't think I realized I wasn't. (Hucks 2019)

The Moroccan newspaper *Yabiladi* argued that Timothy Hucks had been arrested because he had been “mistaken for a sub-Saharan migrant in Morocco” (*Yabiladi.com* 2019). But the reality is that he had not been “mistaken” for a ‘sub-Saharan migrant’. Like Patrick and Daouda, he had been profiled as an “irregular sub-Saharan migrant” because of his skin colour. By granting Morocco money to buy security equipment, the EU was directly fostering police violence against black people politically constructed as dangerous and expendable by border control policies.

When aid is used for hard border security, it is easy to see its migration containment potential. The technical language surrounding the description of the border equipment hardly masks the fast violence characterising its use. The purpose is clearly identifiable. The consequences are predictable and sinister. But as the different chapters of this book have argued, the border containment potential of aid is not always so explicit – there does not always seem to be something which can be clearly identified as control, and someone who can be unequivocally labelled as captive. In this book, I have taken the Moroccan migration industry as a vantage point to analyse the rise of

aid as an instrument of slow border control. When aid for migration-related purposes is channelled through non-traditional security actors, it enables the rise of a political architecture of potential, ordinary, and elusive containment, which expands the reach of the border on migrant communities by infiltrating everyday sectors of social life. Contrary to what Jill Williams calls “hard power” instruments of migration control (Williams 2019, 3), aid does not further the border project by physically immobilising migrants away from Europe. Rather, it creates a dispersed network of marginalisation that produces ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ into a category of outsiders – identified as a problem to be managed, subordinated to forms of exclusionary care, and relegated to minimal lives.

Slow border control does not work in ways that are neat, coercive, or eye-catching. Aid-funded projects assisting migrant people often do not incorporate containment by design. Control, rather, constitutes a lingering possibility – any of the actors involved in aid implementation could potentially become an agent of border control by participating in mechanisms of domination. To enact this form of slow control, aid relies on a number of indirect techniques that attract (rather than coerce) non-traditional security actors into the control of mobility.

In the various chapters of this book, I have highlighted how aid diffuses mechanisms of containment away from border crossing points, and more pervasively in other, mundane sectors of societal regulation – like public discourse, social assistance, and labour integration. What characterises these power mechanisms is that containment never manifests itself as a fully fledged intention. Rather, it looks like a side effect that somehow seems to pass unobserved. An account of immigration in Morocco as a ‘new’, ‘black’, ‘transit’, ‘irregular’ experience included in a project factsheet compiled by the EU does not expressively have the intent to physically prevent border crossings. The formal purpose of the document, one could say, is another one: to lay out the background, objectives, and expected results of an aid-funded project. But the inclusion of such a description of immigration in Morocco in the background section of the factsheet *does* have a controlling effect. It contributes to transforming the idea of Morocco as a recent ‘Immigration Nation’ into the hegemonic image of the country. It makes the case for ‘sub-Saharan migrants’ to be considered as a ‘problem’ to be managed. Aid-funded projects do not need to be explicitly connected to containment to be experienced *as* the border

by those in their orbit. As I highlighted for the field of labour integration, border control is so pervasively built into the political environment surrounding aid-funded projects that displaced people police their own behaviour as if labour integration projects were border control sites.

The diffusion of migration containment away from physical borders and into non-traditional security sectors triggers a hybridisation of care and control. At the beginning of this book, I stated that trying to read the ambiguities of aid work along logics of ‘benevolence’ and ‘malevolence’, alignment with or resistance to border control policies, risks missing the complexity and productivity of the aid industry as an instrument of migration containment. By blurring the boundaries between care and control, aid expands the reach of the border regime by facilitating the co-optation of non-security actors into borderwork. Because control is fleetingly built into practices of assistance, it can look a lot like care – so ordinary that the containment potential of aid becomes elusive. Aid, in other words, transform border control into a series of ‘quasi-events’ (Povinelli 2011): its negative effects cannot be easily identified, and the contours of responsibility cannot be clearly determined. In these circumstances, non-traditional security actors struggle to see themselves, or the work they do, as borderwork. And when they do, their concerns are quickly subdued: they enact sense-making mechanisms which enable them to not see the work they do as control, or to distance themselves from the complaints raised by migrant people. Co-optation processes fracture relations within Moroccan civil society, increasing the divide between organisations that accept aid, those who distance themselves from it, and those who are left on the doorstep of the aid market.

By infiltrating non-traditional security sectors, aid creates an expanded network of containment involving donors, NGOs, IOs, Moroccan authorities, embassies of countries of origin, and migrants themselves. The presence of such a high number of intermediaries, and the prevalence of indirect power techniques, unsettles our assumptions about who governs the border. Aid, in fact, creates a political architecture where power is so diffused that *any* actor within the aid industry could *potentially* become (or be perceived as) an agent of border control – the community-based worker conducting a vulnerability assessment, the Moroccan civil servant that negotiates an increasing involvement of the IOM in Voluntary Return, or the asylum seeker

hesitating about participating or not in a labour integration project. This, of course, does not mean that structures of racialised inequality are erased, and that all actors participate equally to the construction of the border project. But deciphering the workings of aid through normative binaries opposing powerful and powerless actors takes border power as a given. Containment, as I have shown, is rather the dynamic result of contingencies, historical processes of inequality, and autonomous strategies of the actors involved in the transposition of aid policy on the ground. Acknowledging the distributed implementation of aid-funded projects challenges existing understanding of power relations between European and African actors. Morocco, in fact, does not at all correspond to the image of the passive aid-recipient state, co-opted into border control through the promise of aid, or the threat of cutting it. Much to the contrary, Morocco manages to attract, direct, or obstruct the implementation of aid-funded projects, depending on how these fit the Kingdom's own political agenda.

The dynamics of aid power examined in this book raise some important questions about the future of migration politics in Morocco. As I mentioned earlier on, the renewed anxiety of the EU over the Western Mediterranean border has placed hardcore migration security at the heart of EU development policies. This, in turn, has brought Moroccan state security back to the fore of the aid market, after a decade where talks of “vulnerability” and “integration” had dominated the expenditure of aid budgets in the field of migration in Morocco. This new architecture of securitised development will likely mark a new, dark turn for the Western Mediterranean border. At present, it seems very likely that these projects will produce a further tightening of the Gibraltar Strait route. They will probably also dangerously reinforce the operational capacity of the Moroccan security apparatus, with worrying consequences in terms of respect of migrant rights in the country. These projects might also become new battlegrounds of migration diplomacy. In the past, in fact, the EU has recorded significant difficulties in obtaining the cooperation of Moroccan authorities in the implementation of similar projects, namely on issues of monitoring and reporting of expenditure (Statewatch 2019; Wunderlich 2010). Interesting, in this regard, is the fact that the implementation of the two border security projects approved between 2018 and 2019 has not been delegated to Moroccan authorities directly, but rather to two IOs – ICMPPD and FIIAPP. This seems to imply that the EU preferred to have

someone mediating its relation with Moroccan authorities. It is to be seen whether these projects will become terrains of negotiation and contestation between Morocco and the EU, and how the mediation role that has seemingly being attributed to IOs will unfold in practice.

Civil society activists have not remained silent vis-à-vis the sinister twists of events unfolding in the Western Mediterranean. More interestingly, human rights organisations have started using strategic litigation to contest the use of development funding for border security, in Morocco and beyond. In 2019, the Guardian reported that an Ethiopian asylum-seeking boy was to sue the UK Department for International Development (DfID) for funding detention centres in Libya where he had experienced abusive treatment. The legal challenge aimed at pushing the UK government to stop funding such centres, and at granting compensation to the plaintiff for the ill-treatment received (*The Guardian* 2018). In 2020, the Spanish NGOs, Access Info Europe and Andalucía Acoge, submitted a formal claim to the Supreme Tribunal to contest Spain's decision to grant Morocco €30 million to support the Alaouite Kingdom in border control. The argument foregrounded by the two organisations is that such a decision amounts to the improper use of the Spanish Contingency Fund, which should be only used in case of exceptional and unforeseeable emergencies (Andalucía Acoge 2020). If pursued, these two cases might set important precedents, and provide human rights activists with innovative examples on how to effectively contest the legitimacy of the use of aid for border control issues.

The outbreak and long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, furthermore, question how responses to the healthcare crisis are reshaping the workings of border control and of the aid industry in Morocco. The quarantine measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus have aggravated the exclusionary inclusion of migrants within Moroccan society. Stay-at-home orders and the shutdown of the economy at the beginning of the pandemic response have deprived the most vulnerable migrant people of their source of income. The need to track, trace, and isolate COVID-19 positive cases has further condensed the anxiety of the state over communities of poor foreigners – who, made vulnerable to exposure to the virus by racist structures of marginalisation, are conceptualised as dangerous to the body politic for their contagion potential. Moroccan security forces have been criticised for forcefully locking migrant people into 'quarantine sites'

(that could be more accurately described as improvised detention centres) waiting for their COVID-19 tests to be processed (Gross-Wyrtzen 2020a). The pandemic has also constrained the capacity of aid-funded organisations and of solidarity networks to deliver assistance to migrant communities, obliging them to revisit their geographies and modes of operation (GADEM 2020; *Le Monde* 2020). But it has also given organisations like the IOM a window of opportunity to make their work more relevant vis-à-vis both donors and Moroccan authorities (IOM Morocco 2020)– apprehensive now, more than ever, to police the ‘undeserving’.

The processes of border sophistication at work in Morocco illuminate the new architectures of migration control that aid is enabling in other countries of ‘transit’ and ‘forced settlement’ in Africa and in the broader Middle East. After the approval of the EUTF in 2015, the EU and its member states revamped and expanded their developmental strategy of border control in North, Western, Central, and Eastern Africa, with the ambition to create a region under surveillance from Rabat to Asmara, passing through Bamako, Niamey, and Cairo (Brachet 2016; Gabrielli 2016; Mouthaan 2019). In the Levant, the protracted temporality of the ‘refugee crisis’ has maintained the attention of donors focused on the countries that host the majority of Syrian refugees (Tsourapas 2019b). This has entailed an important mobilisation of both IOs and NGOs (Fine 2018; Wagner 2018), but also the affirmation of Southern donors, especially from the Gulf countries (Carpi 2020). Such an unprecedented mobilisation of aid as an instrument of border control opened new avenues of everyday and distributed containment in aid-recipient contexts, that merge and overlap with more traditional instruments of border security.

This book has opened a number of avenues of inquiry. The first one relates to the relation between the politics of remoteness and the production of border control. While discussing the work of frontline aid actors, I have argued that their proximity to the field affects their disposition vis-à-vis the migrant people they routinely deal with, and their way of understanding their position within the border regime. Exposure to the frontlines of aid work pushes street-level aid workers to enact sense-making mechanisms to distance themselves from their actual participation in border control. Proximity to the field therefore works as a self-making process, as it transforms the way people understand their roles as aid workers. But it is also a border-making process,

as it shapes the way care for and control over migrant people are performed at the border. But how does distance from the field impact migration control? By distance from the field, I mean the physical, psychological, and political remoteness of aid organisations from the areas and communities they operate in. This remoteness is dictated both by the operational structure of the aid industry, organised in headquarters and field missions, with only a minimal percentage of (generally local and precariously employed) staff directly interacting with beneficiaries (Pascucci 2018); and with the complex geography of risk calculation that keeps aid workers at a distance from the areas where they ‘operate’ (Andersson 2019; see Duffield 2010).

The various chapters of this book have investigated what aid does to the border project, and to the migrant communities impacted by border control. One question that emerged, but remained unanswered is: what do migrant communities do to aid, and to the aid industry more broadly? Migrants are not passive subjects of aid and migration policies. They mobilise against it, through the organisation of fully fledged protests or through mundane acts of contestation. They aspire to be part of the industry, either by claiming their seat at the funding allocation table, or by seeking employment in aid-funded organisations (Magallanes-Gonzalez 2020; Rodriguez 2019). They utilise aid-funded projects as part of their own survival and social mobility strategy (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014; Maâ 2019). The interaction of migrant people with the aid industry, however, is marked by the structural inequality that generate border control policies in the first place. Migrant civil society organisations integrate the aid market in a subordinate position (Chapter 3). Migrant aid workers are more precariously employed than their local or international colleagues (Andersson 2014). Their efforts to mobilise might be easily and violently bashed by police forces or dismissed by humanitarian organisations (Moulin and Nyers 2007; Pascucci 2014). But these encounters demonstrate the capacity of migrants to resist architectures of border containment, and beg further scholarly analysis.

The migration industry works at the intersection of multiple, long stories of domination and empire. As Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen and I highlighted in a recent article, migration scholarship has been marked by a presentist approach, hyper-attentive to the fast politics of the present but tendentially oblivious to “what is past but not over” (Stoler 2016, 25). However, the border project constitutes the latest

transformation of a long-standing European enterprise aimed at containing and extracting value from countries in the South – first through colonialism, then through neoliberal policies, and simultaneously through the development project (Gross-Wyrtzen and Gazzotti 2020). As I have argued throughout this book, the aid sector is a site where the afterlives of domination materialise in multifold ways. One field where the traces of colonial past(s) resurge more evidently in the Moroccan aid industry is within architecture – for example, a former Spanish military fort converted into an aid-funded child protection centre (Jiménez Álvarez 2011) and Catholic churches that bear the mark of the Spanish and French protectorates providing assistance to migrants in distress (Robin 2014; Tyszler 2020). What does it mean when buildings created for a very different purpose, in support of or in direct connection to the colonial enterprise, are reconverted to structures of “assistance” and “care” for migrants? How do the materialities, memories, and spatialities of those infrastructures affect their present workings, and their role within the border regime?

This book has focused mostly on aid projects operating in non-traditional sectors of border control. But as I have highlighted at the beginning of this Conclusion, donors are also significantly investing in traditional border security projects. This presents a series of questions about the relation between border control, state-building and authoritarian ruling in countries on the receiving end of externalisation policies (Frowd 2018; Tsourapas 2019a). Details about the kind of equipment delivered to Morocco through aid-funded projects clearly suggests that aid strengthens the Moroccan security apparatus, especially of the Ministry of Interior, and its reach over the country’s territory and population (see Wunderlich 2010). Researching this aspect of border externalisation, of course, is far from easy – not only because accessing sources inside or close to the security apparatus in hybrid or authoritarian contexts might be difficult or risky, but also because donors (such as the EU) can prove to be extremely reticent in sharing information about the implementation of aid-funded border security projects (Statewatch 2019). But research is also necessary at a time where, in Morocco as in Turkey, Libya, and elsewhere, international support for border security chronologically coincides with the escalation of authoritarian practices or of fully fledged civil conflicts.

Unveiling the mundane entanglements between aid and border control prompts a reflection about development and humanitarian practice

in the field of migration. Aid workers inhabit a position of authority in the communities where they operate. The decisions that officers of donors, NGOs, and IOs take as part of their everyday jobs have powerful reverberations in the lives of the people qualified as “beneficiaries”. This book, however, has also highlighted that aid workers do not always seem to be conscious of working at the intersection of multiple regimes of inequality, and of the power that emanates from it. The consequences of such power imbalances can reflect in both practices and in codified policies – as shown by the decision of Samuel’s organisation to hire community-based workers as volunteers rather than to contract and pay them as employees. This warrants the need for aid-funded organisations to engage in a deep effort of conscientisation about their own positionality in the field, and to establish stronger structures of accountability to the communities they operate in. This does not only mean reflecting on their projects’ political alignment, but also on the much more immediate effects that their protocols and operations have in aid-recipient sites. Such an endeavour is in line with the increasing pressures on the aid world to address its most exploitative practices – as demonstrated by the increasing calls to establish mechanisms of redress and reparation for victims of abuses perpetrated by aid workers (see REDRESS 2017) and the decision of some UN agencies to start paying interns (see Croxford 2018). Establishing protocols that make sure that all workers interacting directly with beneficiaries have been appropriately trained, reviewing hiring practices to make sure there is no undue or discriminatory use of unpaid and low-paid contracts, and starting a broader conversation about how the complaints of beneficiaries are received and dealt with in different organisations will not redress the inequalities and racism pervading the development and humanitarian system overnight, but would constitute important steps to at least mitigate its most obvious expressions.

When I discuss my research with aid workers, policy consultants, or informed citizens, I am often asked about what alternative aid policies should be pursued to improve the situation of migrants and refugees on the ground in non-European countries. I am always uneasy answering this question. It seems to imply that, even in absence of a change in context, it is possible to make aid policies work ‘better’ for migrant integration and the respect of human rights in Morocco. But if this book has done the job it was supposed to do, the reader will now have

understood that development work cannot work ‘well’ for migrant integration in contexts marked by pervasive border control. Integration cannot happen if the people that are to be ‘integrated’ in society are the same people that are racially constructed and profiled as expendable – their freedom of movement is curtailed, their existence is not free of the fear of encounter with the authorities, and they are subjected to everyday forms of discrimination. A project providing social assistance to destitute foreigners cannot undo the structural sources of violence that has produced that same destitution, especially when precarity is generated by those same governments that provide aid. What aid produces is a distorted understanding of integration, where migrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking people are rendered visible within society by virtue of their own ‘dangerousness’, but socially left at its doorstep – limited in their capacity to move, work, access services. If we are to take migrants’ rights seriously, the only policy recommendation that can possibly work in such a context is to decrease the structural causes of violence that place migrants in precarious conditions in the first place. Defunding border control is the first, immediate way to do this. Increasing avenues for legal migration and decriminalising irregular migration, both in the North and in the South, are the second, more comprehensive and challenging set of changes that need to happen for integration to work, in Morocco as everywhere else.